A Translocal Approach to Dialogue-based Art

RACHELLE MARIE VIADER KNOWLES

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A translocal approach to dialogue-based art

by

Rachelle Marie Viader Knowles

A thesis submitted to Plymouth University in partial fulfilment for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2017
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Declaration

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Graduate Sub-Committee. Work submitted for this research degree at the Plymouth University has not formed part of any other degree either at Plymouth University or at another establishment.

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Abstract

Rachelle Marie Viader Knowles
A translocal approach to dialogue-based art

This thesis is a practice-led investigation into a translocal approach to dialogue-based art. The research has been undertaken through the practice of the ‘artist/academic’, drawing on my professional experience in artistic research, academic leadership and teaching, each informing my methods and findings. The problem which emerged through the practice is how to devise an approach to dialogue-based art that is responsive to twenty-first century social relations and telecommunications and attendant to the politics of mobility that constrain and control human movement.

The research develops and tests out the application of ideas from the interdisciplinary field of translocality to the practice of dialogue-based art through the production of three collaborative projects. I argue that the practice of dialogue-based art, when informed by translocality, is better placed to critically reflect and act upon the conditions of contemporary life within networked and globalised society. In Translocal Geographies: Spaces, Places and Connections (2011) Brickell and Datta argue for a multi-scalar understanding of translocality beyond the discourse of national borders and international migrations, deploying the term as an expression of “simultaneous situatedness across different locales” (2011: 4). Viewed this way, the theory and practice of translocality presents a framework to understand the activities and goals of artists and artist-led networks seeking to bridge difference towards shared spaces of meaning. As the translocal research perspective develops towards ideas of local-to-local connectivities and a discourse of circulations and transfers, so translocality as applied to dialogue-based art proposes an expanded understanding of dialogue-based art across spatial, temporal and cultural distance.

Through three practice-based projects, QR Code Project, Let Me Tell You The Story Of My Neighbour and #3CityLink, presented within the thesis as case studies, the research reveals a set of characteristics that articulate a translocal approach to dialogue-based art. I argue that this approach enables the ‘translocal artist’ to draw on multiple modes of dialogue-based practice, contributing to understandings of ‘simultaneous situatedness’ within the translocal research perspective.
## Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Visualising the ‘artist/academic’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Visualising the ‘methodology matrix’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>International Dinner Party</em> (1979) Suzanne Lacy and Linda Preuss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>Hole in Space</em> (1980) Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><em>We Have A Situation!</em> (2013) Graz, Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td><em>We Have A Situation!</em> (2013) Graz, Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td><em>The Dialogic</em> at the Ruskin School of Art, University of Oxford, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td><em>Parc Victoria, Victoria Park</em> (2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td><em>QR Code Project</em> (2012) - video stills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td><em>Let Me Tell You The Story Of My Neighbour</em> (2012) detail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td><em>Let Me Tell You The Story Of My Neighbour</em> (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td><em>Let Me Tell You The Story Of My Neighbour</em> detail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td><em>Let Me Tell You The Story Of My Neighbour</em> (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td><em>MTM</em> Can Arabi, Binissalem, Mallorca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Can Gelabert Cultural Centre and Fundació Pilar I Joan Miró, Mallorca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td><em>Neighbours News 1</em>, detail, page 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Two beds from <em>Our Beds at Home</em> (2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td><em>Archive/Portal</em> (2013) at the ‘Urban Encounters’ colloquium exhibition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td><em>Crossing Over</em> project website: <a href="http://www2.uregina.ca/crossingover">http://www2.uregina.ca/crossingover</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td><em>Crossing Over</em> project website: <a href="http://www2.uregina.ca/crossingover">http://www2.uregina.ca/crossingover</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td><em>#3CityLink</em> (2014) logo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td><em>#3CityLink</em>, Regina, 5th Parallel Gallery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td><em>#3CityLink</em>, Coventry, Lanchester Gallery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td><em>#3CityLink</em>, Gyumri, Gallery 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td><em>#3CityLink</em>, Coventry University student feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td><em>#3CityLink</em>, detail - the final skype session</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................. i
Declaration .......................................................................................................................... ii
Abstract ............................................................................................................................... iv
Figures .................................................................................................................................. v
Introduction to the research ................................................................................................. 1
Approaching the problem ...................................................................................................... 7
Two formative experiences .................................................................................................... 9
Research structures .............................................................................................................. 10
The Transart/Plymouth University PhD programme ......................................................... 10
Research Ethics, Research Integrity .................................................................................... 11
Thesis format ....................................................................................................................... 12
Chapter summaries .............................................................................................................. 14

Chapter One: Methodological approach .......................................................................... 19
The artist/academic ............................................................................................................. 22
More on methods .............................................................................................................. 25
Considering an art history of translocal, dialogue-based art ............................................. 31
  International Dinner Party (1979), Suzanne Lacy and Linda Pruess .............................. 32
  Hole In Space (1980), Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz ........................................ 34
Considering current practice ............................................................................................. 37
  We Have A Situation! (2013), Helen Varley Jamieson .................................................. 38
In summary: the problem and the research approach ....................................................... 42

Chapter Two: Dialogue-based art ..................................................................................... 45
Perspectives on dialogue-based art: a source review ......................................................... 46
Dialogic ............................................................................................................................... 53
Expanding dialogues .......................................................................................................... 58
  Community of Practice: The Dialogic (2012 - present) .............................................. 60
Reflecting on past practice ................................................................................................. 63
  Stories and Conversations (1995) ................................................................................ 63
  Parc Victoria, Victoria Park (2008) .............................................................................. 65
From past practice to current research .............................................................................. 67
Practice-led case study 1: QR Code Project ................................................................. 68
In summary: an expanded definition of dialogue-based art .............................................. 81

Chapter Three: Translocality ......................................................................................... 85
The translocal research perspective ................................................................................... 86
Translocality in art ............................................................................................................. 88
Practice-led case study 2: Let Me Tell You The Story Of My Neighbour ...................... 95
  Let Me Tell You The Story Of My Neighbour (1), Gyumri (2012) ............................. 97
  Let Me Tell You The Story Of My Neighbour (2), Regina (2012) .............................. 101
Mallorca Translocal Meeting (2013) ............................................................................... 103
  Neighbours Newspaper 1 (2013) ............................................................................. 108
  Our Beds at Home and Our Beds in Mallorca (2013) ............................................ 111
  Archive/Portal (2013) ............................................................................................. 113
Neighbours Newspaper 2: Veins, the Catalan Edition (2014) ....................................... 115
The translocal artist ......................................................................................................... 118
In summary: towards a translocal approach to dialogue-based art ................................ 121
Chapter Four: A translocal approach to dialogue-based art .......................... 125
  Reflecting on past practice ........................................................................ 127
    Crossing Over (Regina – Istanbul, 2011) ................................................ 128
  An educational turn .................................................................................... 131
    Trans VSI connection NSCAD-NETCO (1969) ........................................ 133
  Translocal dialogues and Online International Learning ......................... 135
  Practice-led case study 3: #3CityLink ....................................................... 138
    Three-City Link (1989) ........................................................................... 141
    #3CityLink: Pre-project planning phase .................................................. 141
    #3CityLink: Student research phase (Sept 6 – Oct 31, 2014) .................... 143
    #3CityLink: Live phase (Nov 3 – Nov 14, 2014) ..................................... 144
    #3CityLink: Outcomes phase .................................................................... 150
  In summary: testing the approach .............................................................. 155

Chapter Five: Findings .................................................................................. 163
  Characteristics of a translocal approach to dialogue-based art .................. 164
  Dialogues in dialogue with dialogue .......................................................... 184

Afterword ........................................................................................................ 187

References ...................................................................................................... 189

Appendices ..................................................................................................... 199

Paper 1. .......................................................................................................... 201
  QR Codes and Traditional Beadwork: Augmented Communities Improvising Together. 201

Paper 2. .......................................................................................................... 209
  A response to ‘Provoking Failure: Unsettling a Research-Creation Framework’ by Glenn Lowry. 209

Paper 3. .......................................................................................................... 219
  The Dialogic: art work as method ............................................................... 219

Paper 4. .......................................................................................................... 231
  #3CityLink: a translocal art/pedagogy exchange project: disrupting the learning. 231
Introduction to the research

*A translocal approach to dialogue-based art* is a research project conducted through a practice-led methodology. This research investigates a mode of dialogue-based art production and dissemination constructed from methods situated within the two ‘worlds’ of art that art historian Edward Shanken has called “mainstream contemporary art” and “new media art” (2011: 1). For convenience I will refer to these ‘worlds’ throughout the thesis as ‘contemporary art’ and ‘media art’. Though closely interrelated, contemporary art and media art often exist as different disciplinary realms as exemplified by separate university departments, programmes of study, streams of funding and dissemination venues.\(^1\) Within each of these disciplines, creative practices have developed that facilitate direct acts of exchange, communication and/or interaction. The term I establish in this thesis to address a field of art practice that draws from communicative methods in both contemporary art and media art is ‘dialogue-based art’. Within contemporary art, evolving terms such as social practice (Fletcher, 2007), socially engaged art (Thompson, 2012; Helguera, 2011), relational aesthetics (Bourriaud, 2002), dialogical aesthetics (Kester, 2005), participation (Bishop, 2006), social sculpture (Beuys, 1970s) and littoral art (Barber, 2013), describe approaches to art practice that operate in the co-corporeal realm of the inter-social.\(^2\) Within the world of media art, terms such as telecommunications art (Kac, 2002), telematic art (Ascott in Shanken, 2003) and network art (Corby, 2006) describe participatory encounters via

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1 I offer here two examples from Canada. In reference to funding: The Canada Council for the Arts offers separate funding streams in ‘Media Art’ and ‘Visual Art’. See [http://www.canadacouncil.ca/](http://www.canadacouncil.ca/). In reference to exhibitions: within the Canadian network of artist-run galleries, specialist galleries present media art, such as Interaccess Electronic Media Arts Centre in Toronto. [http://www.interaccess.org](http://www.interaccess.org)

2 The term that appears most prominently in the UK and the term selected for the Tate Gallery ‘Glossary of art terms’ is ‘socially engaged practice’, but the Glossary states social practice art, socially engaged art and socially engaged practice as interchangeable terms. [http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/s/socially-engaged-practice](http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/s/socially-engaged-practice). The term ‘social practice art’ continues to gain traction within the art academy in North America, particularly on the west coast: Portland State University, Emily Carr University of Art and Design and the California College of the Arts all offer degrees, minors or concentrations in Social Practice Art. Participation is also a term used, such as in the title of the exhibition *The Art of Participation: 1950–Now* (2008) however I use the term ‘participation’ within this thesis in its common usage as *the activity of taking part*. 

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technological interfaces or mediated communications. Each of these terms carries
nuance and implications with regards to technologies, modes of engagement, degree of
participatory possibility, periods within media art histories and developments in
technologies. Shanken’s research aims toward a rapprochement between contemporary
art and media art through the development of a “hybrid discourse” of art and art history
that embraces all means of creative media within the same art world (Shanken, 2010).
In contrast to the hybrid model proposed by Shanken, this thesis takes an approach that
brings different dialogue-based aspects of contemporary art and media art into dynamic
inter-relation. This practice-led research draws on face-to-face and mediated
communications in art as both method of approach and subject of investigation, setting
aside the ridged and separating categorisations as defined within art and art history.

While art historians Claire Bishop (2012), Grant Kester (2004) and curator/art critic
Nicolas Bourriaud (1998) have each contributed to the debates around socially engaged
practices in contemporary art from divergent points of view (summarised most notably
in the pages of *Artforum* magazine, February and May 2006), one point of agreement
within this influential group of writers has emerged: each privilege social practices that
occur face-to-face, neglecting dialogue-based works that function through mediated
communications. In his 2008 essay *Towards Participation in Art* from the catalogue for
the exhibition *The Art of Participation: 1950 – now*, Rudolf Frieling, Curator of Media
Arts at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, articulates a “gap” between “works
that address social practice, and works that reflect and act upon our networked and
globalized society” (32). He elaborates this point in an interview with arts worker and
educator Beryl Graham, where he identifies the need to draw legacies of participatory
media art and contemporary art together into a “shared space” (Freiling, 2009). Bishop
similarly highlights what she terms the “digital divide” in art in *Artforum* (September,
2012) where she claims that contemporary artists have been unresponsive to the digital revolution, and asserts that media art is a specialised field of its own outside the world of contemporary art.³

For an *Art Basel Salon* dialogue in 2010, Shanken brought together Bourriaud and media theorist, curator and artist Peter Weibel to outline opposing positions on the relationship between contemporary art and media art.⁴ Bourriaud states his view that the “main impacts” of the development of new media technologies on contemporary art are to be found not within media art, but rather through the “indirect influence” of such technologies on contemporary artists, regardless of media (Bourriaud, cited in Shanken, 2010). Referring to the historical example of the indirect influence of photography on impressionist painting, he argues that while the “new possibilities of communicating” through technological means, namely the Internet and the screen, have clearly influenced artistic practices, investigating the “inter-human sphere” from the mid 90s onward, within what art historian Rosalind Krauss has called the “post-medium condition” (Krauss, 2000), this influence does not necessarily dictate the tools of artistic expression.

In response, Weibel rejects the argument of “indirect influence”, a tendency which he argues led to the celebration of the impact of the camera on the medium of painting in parallel to the rejection of photography as an art form, a tendency he labels as “media injustice” (Weibel, cited by Shanken, 2010). Weibel argues instead for acknowledgement of the “direct influence” to be found in works that utilise the tools of new media to create autonomous works of media art. These arguments demonstrate the

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polarised nature of the debate and the lack of sensitivity in each direction. This thesis develops an approach to dialogue-based art where contemporary art and media art meet.

In the early stages of my research I positioned my work in alignment with Shanken’s hybrid discourse with the aim of contributing art practice to this debate but as my thinking has developed, I have moved away from this position for two reasons. Firstly, I have come to regard the ‘hybrid’ position as one that inherently acknowledges and solidifies the status quo narrative of duality between contemporary art and media art and therefore narrows the confines of these artworld categories, leading to the second reason, a decision to look for an alternate approach to dialogue-based art that might be better placed to address and resist the significant challenges of globalisation and the attendant politics that contain and control mobility. I assert that upon closer inspection, Frieling’s “gap” reveals not an overlap as a hybrid practice might suggest, but a distinct zone of cultural production with its own particular characteristics that draw from both ‘categories’ of dialogue-based art – in contemporary art and media art - as and when appropriate to the context and conditions. The key questions I address in this thesis therefore are firstly, what are the characteristics of this zone of art practice that utilises dialogue to “reflect and act upon our networked and globalized society” (Frieling 2008: 32)? And secondly, why work this way? What is to be gained from this approach?

The research aims to articulate how an approach that draws upon dialogue-based methods from contemporary art and media art extends dialogues beyond the restrictions and therefore the limitations of contemporary art approaches that occurs within face-to-face proximities only.5 The nature of the dialogue and exchange that can occur within contemporary art ‘social practice’ approaches to dialogue-based art are restricted to

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5 The term ‘face-to-face’ is common in English-speaking contexts, but corporeal variations exist internationally. In Japan for example, the term ‘knee to knee’ offers a similar meaning.
communications between people who have the ability to be physically - corporeally - located together. Conversely, art practices conducted through ‘mediated communications’ are predicated on participants not being in the same space, communicating instead across some measure of distance, or selecting to utilise technological mediations instead of, or alongside, direct communication. My research investigates how dialogue-based social practices in art, extended and augmented by mediated communications, enables an expanded social practice in dialogue with geographer Tim Cresswell’s ideas of the (geo) “politics of mobility” (2006, 2010), the forces that affect and control the conditions of human movement.

As will be addressed in greater detail as this thesis unfolds, my primary collaborator during this period of research and moving forward is Armenian artist Mkrtich Tonoyan, Director of the Armenian Art Centre of Social Studies (ACOSS), whose mobility is conditioned by virtue of his citizenship, his economic situation, and his role within an extended family. The relationship with Tonoyan and my affiliation with ACOSS began during an artist residency in Yerevan in May/June 2011 and the subsequent invitation to myself and another artist participating in the residency, Dr Kenneth G Hay (Professor Emeritus of Contemporary Art Practice at the University of Leeds), to form an International Advisory Board for ACOSS. I have undertaken five visits to Armenia during the timescale of this research and the experiences garnered inform my understanding of the politics of mobility. Armenians need visas to travel to most countries and Tonoyan’s circumstances lie in stark contrast to my own status as a dual citizen of the UK and Canada that enables a freedom of mobility unequalled by the majority of the world’s citizens, and employment in a financially secure academic position in Canada at the commencement of this research, and in the UK at its
Introduction to the research

Cresswell’s terminology of the “kinetic elite” and the “kinetic underclass” are useful to consider here (2006: 255). Tonoyan and myself both travel extensively; we have worked together in nine countries since commencing our collaboration and share the social and cultural capital of movement. However, the forces of geopolitics shape the difference between our individual experience: the reasons for our movement, the routes we take, the velocity and rhythm of our journeys, the level of friction our movements produce, and the overall experience of travel. Perhaps most poignantly, integral to the politics of mobility is the embedded question of its inverse – must we move? (Cresswell, 2010). Tonoyan’s international career as a contemporary artist necessitates the status of economic migrant, spending months each year in North America, Asia or Europe undertaking opportunities for career development unavailable to artists within Armenia where no formal arts funding exists, where infrastructure for contemporary art is limited, and with minimal visibility in the global contemporary art world. Negotiating geopolitical disparity, economic imbalance, issues of mobility and cultural difference is the basis of the dialogue that informs our collaborative working relationship. It is the shifting dynamics of our relations and extended networked community, moving through space and time from in-person meetings to at-a-distance communications and working methods, that we see as the content of our collaborative dialogue-based practice, committed to social engagement. These working methods however are at odds with the rigid separations between social practice art and mediated communications art that germinal texts such as Kester’s Conversation Pieces (2004) and Bishop’s Artificial Hells (2012) would suggest.

Moving beyond Shanken’s hybrid art historical discourse, the research continued

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6 It remains to be seen how this might shift post-Brexit. This decision for the UK to leave the EU after the British referendum is a clear example of how larger political forces shape mobilities.

7 Tim Cresswell speaking as part of the Mobile Lives Forum: https://vimeo.com/76535371
towards locating a theoretical perspective for an expanded social practice that would instead address issues of mobilities, place, the multi-modal communications of twenty-first century experience and the impact of network technologies on societies globally. Other disciplinary perspectives have begun to address “the deep penetration of social and mobile media into everyday life” (van Mourik Broekman et al 2015: 31) and rigid distinctions between communication in the “internet and the lifeworld” have eroded (Zhao, 2007: 141). Such positions acknowledge the profound and direct influence of internet technologies across the structures and systems of human life. How might such an understanding be applied to the world of art? As media artist Eduardo Kac states in his early writing on telecommunications art, “contemporary artists must dare to work with the material and immaterial means of our time and address the pervasive influence of new technologies in every aspect of our lives” (Kac, 1992).

**Approaching the problem**

A seminar undertaken with Wolfgang Sützl, *Cultural Translation: Thinking and Re-thinking Difference* (2012) in my first Transart summer residency revealed beginnings and possible routes forward, but the most productive approach for addressing the problem this thesis sets out to investigate emerged through encounters with the concept of ‘translocality’. As a theoretical discourse which draws from the humanities and social sciences, I argue in this thesis that translocality is also enacted as a method of practice within the activities and goals of artists and artist-led networks seeking to bridge spaces between people through dialogue-based processes and inter-connective local-global flows. Translocality can be defined as a cross-disciplinary (or post-disciplinary) ‘research perspective’ most associated with the disciplines of geography, anthropology, history, area studies, cultural studies, and development studies (Greiner and
Sakdapolrak, 2013: 1). The concept of the translocal, understood most simply as connections between specific locations, began to gain traction within academic discourse in the 1990s within the context of furthering a theoretical discourse of “grounded transnationalism” (Appadurai, 1996). In Translocal Geographies: Spaces, Places and Connections (2011) geographers Katherine Brickell and Ayona Datta argue for a multi-scalar understanding of translocality beyond the discourse of national borders and international migrations, enabling the term to be deployed as an expression of “simultaneous situatedness across different locales” and “connectedness to a variety of other locales” (2011: 4), no matter the proximity. It is Brickell and Datta’s reading of translocality that this thesis employs, and in particular the evocative phrase simultaneous situatedness. The multi-scalar understanding of translocality enables translocal methods to be applied to connections and communication across the world, across town, or across the hallway, acknowledging that interconnectivities across boundaries are as likely to occur close to home in an urban encounter as they are across international borders.

Mapping this back to the apparent divide between face-to-face and mediated communications in dialogue-based art, translocality provides a mechanism for understanding dialogue as communication across and between, beyond recourse to a specified mode, technology or measure of distance. Within a globalised and networked society, we are situated in a specific physical locale and simultaneously inhabit other locales of meaning to us through a network of connectivity. As I will argue, translocality is inherently dialogue-based. It is a term that has been applied within communications research to address simultaneous situatedness within networked communications and the space of the internet itself (Leppänen, 2009: 1081). The question of how dialogue-based art approached through the ideas of translocality might address this condition of simultaneous situatedness between locales, and between the internet and the lifeworld is a central concern of this thesis.
Two formative experiences

I locate the germination of ideas that led to the development of the central questions concerning this thesis in two formative learning experiences. Firstly, as an undergraduate student at the University of Wales College Newport, UK, in the early 1990s, I participated in several international networking events involving telecommunication exchanges using fax and slow scan video transmissions and experienced networked projects such as *Text, Bombs and Videotapes* at the Watershed cultural cinema and digital creativity centre in Bristol in 1991. This experience was one of the most influential of my undergraduate art education. It formed the basis of my continued interest in dialogue-based artworks that function across distance, introduced me to concepts of communicative exchange as art, and to “distributed authorship”, a term used by Roy Ascott in relation to his 1983 work *La plissure du texte*, to describe a collaborative and generative creative process that moves beyond the monological voice of a single author (Shanken 2003: 64-67).

Secondly, from 2005 – 2008 I supervised Jennifer Delos Reyes in her MFA at the University of Regina, Canada. Reyes’s final MFA project, *Open Engagement: art after aesthetic distance*, was a conference on the topic of socially-engaged contemporary art, with the conference itself presented as a work of art. *Open Engagement* has subsequently grown into a major annual conference and Delos Reyes has emerged as an

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The title is a play on the 1989 film *Sex, Lies and Videotapes.*

9 For further information on Roy Ascott, see: https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/staff/roy-ascott

10 http://www.jendelosreyes.com. The most recent iterations of *Open Engagement* were: 2015, hosted in Pittsburgh by Carnegie Mellon University and the Carnegie Museum of Art; 2016, hosted in Oakland at the Oakland Museum of California; 2017, hosted at the University of Illinois in Chicago. See: http://openengagement.info/
influential educator. The first *Open Engagement* hosted by the University of Regina in 2007 drew delegates from around the world to present social practice projects and discussion panels, on campus and at participating venues across the city. Of particular note was the ‘keynote address’ by a leading artist in the field Harrell Fletcher.\(^{11}\) Instead of the usual formal location of a lecture theatre, Fletcher presented his talk from the alternative location of a domestic space, with the audience seated cheek by jowl on the living room floor. My participation in *Open Engagement* and the learning experience of working with Delos Reyes on her exceptional, ambitious MFA project, introduced me to the realm of dialogue-based artworks that function explicitly face-to-face.

**Research structures**

**The Transart/Plymouth University PhD programme**

The approach and content of this thesis are reflective of the context of the dialogue-based and translocal institutional framework that supported this research, namely the Transart Institute (TI)\(^{12}\) who provide an alternative low-residency route to obtaining a PhD degree through a partnership agreement with Plymouth University in the UK. TI delivers MFA and PhD degree programmes through a model which includes twice-yearly face-to-face residencies in Berlin, Germany (three weeks in the summer) and in the USA (one week in the winter), coupled with mediated communication throughout the rest of the year, actively encouraging approaches to art practice that are mobile and international in scope without emphasis on media specificity. TI forms a community of artists and researchers that operates across social and technical networks: a community that is multi-lingual and ‘translocated’ (students undertake practice situated and grounded within the context of their own located creative communities). Unlike

\(^{11}\) http://www.harrellfletcher.com/

\(^{12}\) http://www.transart.org/ . Transart is a private educational institution registered in the USA.
traditional learning environments, dialogues take place across media, time zones, seasons, languages and locations, in parallel to the dialogues that students may also have within their own ‘home’ locale. My cohort of fellow students in the TI/Plymouth PhD programme live in the USA, Canada, and New Zealand, while I currently live in the UK: our regular Skype-based critique sessions span mornings, afternoons and evenings, mid-winter to deep summer.\(^{13}\) My Director of Studies lives in the UK and my Second Supervisor lives between the UK and Denmark. The critical, supportive engagements that occur within this learning community happen both face-to-face and via technologies such as Skype, and in mixed modes of the two. Reflecting on my practice has revealed that translocal-dialogue-based enquiry acts as a useful means of understanding the dynamic relationship between peripatetic research environments and the fluid modes of communication that are increasingly an expectation of the contemporary research landscape.

**Research Ethics, Research Integrity**

The research design has been approached with consideration of the ethical implications of working in collaboration with others, both in terms of the governance of research ethics and the substantive issue of research integrity. The research for this thesis includes the participation of human subjects in distinct categories. Firstly, through the relationships with my direct collaborators with whom I have worked closely to design the overarching frameworks of the projects which form the case studies in this thesis. The voices of my collaborators enter directly into this thesis as co-artist texts, but the entire text is acknowledged as a dialogue formed through collaborative engagement with others. A second category of participation involves other artists and other individuals (including students) who have contributed to the collaborative/networked art

\(^{13}\) James Charlton, Lisa Osborn, Chris Danowski, Steven A. Evans
works that form the practice-based elements of the research. This research weaves together the intellectual and creative labour of many and all reasonable efforts have been made to name the participating contributors. The Faculty of Arts Research Ethics Committee (FREC) at Plymouth University approved my approach to ethical standards in this project in February 2013. Further ethical approval from Coventry University was received in 2014 by colleagues Jacqui Bleetman and Katherine Wimpenny as part of a parallel research project investigating #3CityLink, the third case study within this thesis that I address in Chapter Four.

As part of the ethical position that frames my research approach, I acknowledge that a permanent academic position, full-time salary and access to research and travel funding enables a privileged position of considerable mobility that contributes to my ability to perform this research. My primary collaborator Mkrtich Tonoyan, without whom two of the three practice-based case studies that anchor this research would not have been possible, lacks the purchasing power to progress within the knowledge economy. In exchange, my work on the International Advisory Board of ACOSS represents a long-term collaborative relationship with Tonoyan and a commitment to mutual and meaningful support.

**Thesis format**

The research findings are presented as a thesis in two formats, a document and a website. A pdf is the required thesis submission format for Plymouth University. Although this document can be printed as a physical object or otherwise read offline, reading this text on a web-enabled device enables connection to web links that augment

14 In “Artistic Research and the Poetics of Knowledge” (2009) Kathrin Busch also articulates the growing problematic of the commodity aspect of ‘knowledge production’ within which art-as-research finds itself. For further reading on the topic of the commodification of knowledge see Simon Sheikh’s article “Objects of Study or Commodification of Knowledge? Remarks on Artistic Research” *Art and Research*, volume 2 number 2, Spring 2009.
this text, such as sites that provide further information on the artists and organisations cited, and archive materials on the accompanying website, atatdba.net. Supplementary links are either placed within the footnotes, also blue and underlined, or embedded into the text and visualised in grey to lessen the visual disruption.

The three practice-led projects undertaken as an integral part of this thesis are presented within this text as case studies. Each project has been developed as part of ongoing collaborative relationships. Though the majority of this text is presented in my own voice as is appropriate for a single-author thesis, three sections of co-artist texts also appear as components of the case studies. The co-artist texts are akin to footnotes in that they provide further insight and are in addition to the main body of text, but unlike footnotes, the primary function of these texts is to enable the collaborations, the dialogues and the multiple voices that are integral methods of the research, to be acknowledged, articulated and visualised, with my own voice. In addition to the differences in physical placement, the three layers of text are also visually distinguished by font size:

The body text is presented in Times, at 12-point font.

The co-artist texts are presented in Calibri, in 11-point font, with a grey background.

The footnotes are presented in 8-point font.

The pdf thesis document is accompanied by an online research archive presented as a website: atatdba.net (a translocal approach to dialogue-based art dot net). It includes this document in addition to extensive documentation from the three bodies of practice undertaken and links to many of the people and organisations that have informed this research and/or participated as interlocutors. The site also hosts or provides links to dialogue-based and/or multi-authored research papers undertaken during the registration period.
The format of the thesis responds to the ideas explored within the research. As such it operates at the intersection of a face-to-face encounter between reader and text (document in hand as an intertext of ideas) and as a mediated dialogue between the reader, the intertext of ideas and the hypertextuality of the document with its embedded network of links. My approach to the format of the thesis reflects the approach to technology used in the research process: it is intended to be readily available, to be easy to use, and utilises common formats across platforms.

**Chapter summaries**

The thesis is divided into seven sections, starting with this Introduction which addresses the scope and aims of the project, outlines the germination of ideas which led to the development of the research questions, and situates myself, the researcher, in relation to the topic. It is followed by five chapters, an afterword and four papers in the appendices section.

Chapter One addresses the practice-led methodology of the research, undertaken from the position of the ‘artist/academic’. It presents a consideration of the translocal approach to dialogue-based art though the lens of art history by introducing two works, Suzanne Lacy’s *International Dinner Party*, created with Linda Pruess in 1979, and Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz’s *Hole In Space* from 1980. The chapter also provides an example of a contemporary project, *We Have A Situation!* (2013) led by Helen Varley Jamieson, that I participated in during the initial stages of the research and propose as an exemplar of current translocal dialogue-based art practice and artistic research.
In Chapter Two, I approach the interdisciplinary field of dialogue studies, the 
community of practice that supported the research, and explore dialogue and dialogue-
based art in depth. This chapter incorporates the first practice-led case study, *QR Code 
Project: Parallel Worlds, Intersecting Moments* (2012), a collaborative offline/online 
project initiated with Canadian Indigenous artist and educator Judy Anderson and a 
group of participants including colleagues, friends, family and students. This project 
was conducted while I was Head of Visual Arts at the University of Regina in 
Saskatchewan, Canada, and Judy Anderson was Programme Leader for Indian Fine Art 
at First Nations University of Canada, an Indigenous sister institution. The project was 
our contribution to a joint faculty exhibition, *Critical Faculties* (2012), that we 
conceived as part of our educational leadership roles and our collaborative mandate to 
use creative practice to develop stronger links between our two University departments. 
The exhibition engaged critically with the cultural differences between the two 
institutions that stand less than 500 yards from one another. Within the context of this 
thesis, *QR Code Project: Parallel Worlds, Intersecting Moments* is explored as an 
example of an approach to dialogue-based art that utilises methods drawn from 
contemporary art and media art, an approach that I argue reflects and reveals the 
complex negotiations embedded in the context of the project. The chapter proposes an 
expanded definition of dialogue-based art.

Chapter Three addresses the key theoretical ideas associated with ‘translocality’. It 
investigates how art practice might contribute to the interdisciplinary field of 
translocality research, and how translocality might contribute to an expanded 
understanding of dialogue-based art. Here I also consider the (my) subject position as a

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‘translocal artist/academic’, a grounded and situated position that I propose functions as a counter-narrative to the privileged position of the ‘international artist’ and/or the ‘artist-nomad’. This chapter provides description and analysis of the working methods my collaborators and myself used in the second practice-led case study presented in this thesis, *Let Me Tell You The Story of My Neighbour (2012 - 2014)*. This international multi-participant project unfolded in various iterations, publications, exhibitions and presentations including: an exhibition project developed for the Gyumri Biennial of Contemporary Art in Armenia; the *Mallorca Translocal Meeting*, a networking event for five artist-led groups from across Europe that I participated in for the month of April 2013; *Our Beds In Mallorca, Our Beds At Home*, and *Neighbours News 1*, were projects created for the associated exhibition; an exhibition project developed for the MacKenzie Art Gallery in Canada; *Neighbours News 2*, a multi-lingual community newspaper developed from the Mallorca experience; and *Archive/Portal*, a work that addresses the questions raised around documenting networked, dialogue-based art practices.

Chapter Four consolidates the outcomes of the previous chapters with dialogue-based art and translocality now understood through practice. It examines the translocal approach to dialogue-based art within the context of the educational turn in art, and the development of *#3CityLink (2014)*, the third and final practice-led case study undertaken as part of this research. *#3CityLink* was a collaborative research/teaching project between Regina (Canada), Coventry (UK) and Gyumri (Armenia) undertaken as an experiment in exploring translocal dialogue based art practice within undergraduate Fine Art curricula through a mixed mode of screen media and site-responsive practices.

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17 I gave two conference presentations on these projects; at the Trans-what? conference in Berlin (July 2013), and an updated version at the Urban Encounters public art and anthropology symposium in Halifax, Canada (October 2013).
The title #3CityLink makes reference to the 1989 telecommunications art project Three City Link (Eduardo Kac, Carlos Fadon and Dana Moser), which linked artists in Pittsburgh, Chicago and Boston. #3CityLink reframes that project twenty-five years later within a growing discourse of dialogue-based art in an era where telematic communications and interactive screens are ubiquitous, and a global context where new forms of translocal engagement are emerging.\(^{18}\)

Chapter Five presents the findings of the research, a set of ten interrelated characteristics that emerge from the translocal approach to dialogue-based art, and reflects upon the contributions to new knowledge that the thesis proposes to the fields of art and artistic research, and to translocal research perspective.

The thesis completes with an Afterword that indicates continuations and an Appendices section that compiles four papers written during the registration period, each using dialogue as a method or approach.

\(^{18}\) The results of the project were investigated in a colloquium at the 2015 Arts in Society conference, addressing the conference theme “The Work of Art in the Age of the Networked Society”. The participants were: Rachelle Viader Knowles, Jane Ball and Craig Barber (Coventry University, Fine Art); Jacqui Bleetman (Coventry University, Disruptive Media Learning Lab); and Dr Christine Ramsay (University of Regina, Department of Film).
Chapter One: Methodological approach

This research uses a practice-led methodology, where my own creative work as an artist and professional activities within academia form the primary testing ground for ideas, actions and reflective consideration. This methodological approach is informed by key sources from a growing body of writing investigating artistic research. As Beryl Graham makes clear in her web resource for training in art research methodologies at the University of Sunderland, the formative status of the methodology as a systematic approach for the development of new knowledge means “the exact rules for art-practice-led research are changing through precedent” (2010). We can understand from this that unlike more established disciplinary realms, projects in artistic research necessitate individualised frameworks of approach. Contributions such as, for example, Judith Mottram’s “Researching Research in Art and Design” (2009: 3) and Timothy Emlyn Jones’s “Research Degree’s in Art and Design” (2009: 31) in James Elkin’s Artists With PhDs: towards the new doctoral degree in Studio Art (2009), outline the debates around the development and reception of art-as-research that emerged in the UK in the early 1990s as the doctoral research degree in art and design began to take shape.

Since the 1990s researchers such as Christopher Frayling, Kathrin Busch and Katy Macleod have sought to articulate an increasingly nuanced understanding of differing positions within the ‘artist-as-researcher’ paradigm. Frayling’s early writing on the subject published in the Royal College of Art Research Papers (1993) is often cited as a

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19 Dr Beryl Graham is Professor of New Media Art at Sunderland University, UK. She is Research Student Manager for Art and Design and has developed a suite of online training materials for post-graduate art-practice-led research. See: http://www.berylgraham.com/learnmat.html and http://www.berylgraham.com/asunder/mods/met1.htm. Accessed December 7th, 2013. This site has subsequently been updated as of December 2014. Revised wording states “art methods are currently being forged and changed through a process of precedence”.
foundational text in the debates that followed. He defined three interrelated approaches to the relationship between art and research that today seem rather straightforward. The first approach, research into art and design, can be understood simply as the discipline of Art History or related investigations of what artists did or do, with research outputs following the traditions of a standard written text. The second approach, which I undertake here, is research through art and design, where creative practice is the laboratory, the testing ground for new ideas, with practice accompanied by contextualisation and analysis and may therefore incorporate research into art and design. It is this second approach that defines the output for many doctoral research degrees in art and design: a combination of an artistic outcome (which may itself be written) coupled with a contextualising framework for the research (which may itself be experimental in its mode of approaching ‘academic writing’ and methods). The third approach that Fraying sets out is research for art and design which he articulates as “research with a small r”, i.e. the gathering of materials to inform an artistic outcome where the knowledge is “embodied in the artefact” (Frayling, 1993: 5). At the time of writing Fraying remained sceptical of the viability of this final category to produce ‘Research’ (with a big R) given the implication that all artists in the history of art would then become eligible for posthumous research degrees.

In more recent scholarship, Busch (2009) further unpacks how artistic knowledge might be understood (cf. Fraying’s category two), by proposing variants of approach that incrementally shift the practice of art from what she defines as “the classical

20 The question of the form artistic research should take leads to a further question of how artistic research be ‘published’ within academia. One answer proposed by Michael Schwab and Henk Borgdorff is the publication The Journal of Artistic Research (JAR), an online publishing format that enables an interweaving of text, image and media files. Schwab and Borgdorff propose this format for “expositions” of new knowledge contained within an artistic research project (Schwab and Borgdorff, 2014). Accordingly, the online version of this thesis can be understood as an “exposition” research document: the written text with its embedded hyperlinks to sites, images and videos, the appendices, the documentation of the creative works that led this research and a listing of associated website links, are presented unbound by the limitations of the offline version.
philosophical notion that art is a sensual form of truth” towards what we would now understand as “artistic research” (2009: 1). Busch proposes *art as a different form of knowledge*, and explores the role artistic research might perform in subverting how knowledge has traditionally been understood. Busch suggests that art can “reveal the concealed, the flipside of knowledge” with the role of artistic researcher therefore to articulate a way of knowing “which cannot be articulated within the respective fields of knowledge” and in particular that which is excluded from the scientific methodology (2009: 4). While Busch posits an epistemological critique of the “scientification” of artistic knowledge which can be applied to how individual artistic researchers position their approach to knowledge production, a question that Busch’s position implies is how institutions construct the architecture of ‘third cycle awards’ in the field of artistic research, which, in the main, is the PhD qualification.  

Evoking Michel Foucault, Busch reminds us that the truth-claims of “objective, absolute, consistent, scientific knowledge” powerfully suppress alternative claims to knowledge (and from my own academic life examples of colleagues categorising ‘real’ or ‘proper’ versus ‘other’ PhDs are rife). In response to the previous category, Busch asks us to consider the practice of “knowledge criticism”, a position that casts a sceptical gaze on building artistic research on a foundation of scientific standards. Instead, she proposes *art as a poetics of knowledge* as a means by which to question and challenge the “construct” and primacy of scientific knowledge. Busch proposes an approach she describes as a *hybridization of art and research* that sits at an interdisciplinary border between art knowledge and science research traditions. It is from this position that the “open and discursive” qualities of art can impact on the sciences and “theoretical discourse”, towards the development of what Busch called “hybridized forms of knowledge”. In structure, this

21 The PhD, with its embedded traditions of scientific knowledge production, remains the most prevalent degree classification for artistic research in the countries that have developed a third cycle level. However, other doctoral degree classifications have been explored such as for example, the Professional Doctorate in Fine Art (University of East London, University of Hertfordshire etc.), and Doctor of Arts (University of Sydney etc.).
PhD submission can be understood in this way, with this text following the norms and conventions of a standard doctoral submission (an identified research problem, a methodology and a literature review etc.), but led by the production of creative works submitted as components of the thesis. Busch concludes by proposing artistic research as an intermediary “zone of knowledge” with the possibility of interconnection between artistic and scientific knowledge and a place for the “unknown”. Busch’s provocative naming of this liminal sphere indeed captures the uncharted terrain and the spirit of exploration of undertaking artistic research beyond a clear roadmap: *wild knowledge* (2009: 6). In imagining this wild approach, we can perhaps see its unpredictable and evasive knowledge in fleeting glimpses from multiple points of view (or the ‘polyphony’ of multiple voices to use the Bakhtinian term) but never understand its outcomes in their entirety from a singular disciplinary perspective or authoritative voice. I will return to this idea of *wild knowledge* in Chapter Four as it has proved to be a useful concept in the evaluation of the final practice-led outcome of this research, #3CityLink.22

**The artist/academic**

Katy Macleod’s scholarship addresses the artist/researchers themselves (2000). Her study of artistic researchers, their rationale for undertaking research and the approach they have taken to the written and creative elements of their projects identifies three loose, overlapping and interwoven categories. Macleod articulates Type A as a “researcher using the process of the research to ‘refresh’ or change their practice and in the process may offer new knowledge by refreshing or changing an established zone of

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22 I discuss Busch’s article in greater length in *A response to “Provoking Failure: Unsettling a Research-Creation Framework” by Glen Lowry* (Preprint). This paper was developed following participation in the ‘Research/Creation ThinkTank’ organised by Dr Natalie Loveless at the University of Alberta, Canada, 2013. This paper is included as part of this thesis submission as an Appendix.
practice”; Type B as “theorising of a practice exploring methodologies”. Macleod describes practitioners as “artist/teacher/researchers”, “artists who have been long-time employed in an ‘Art Institution’”; and Type C as “revealing of a practice”, which Macleod describes as “a see-saw relationship between written text and art-making, a process of stabilising and de-stabilising as the ideas explored between text and practice informed and contradicted one another” (Macleod, 2000: 1-2). In my own experience, each of Macleod’s three types have felt relevant to my approach at different points along the research journey. However, as an artist/teacher/researcher who has been employed full-time by higher education institutions over the last fifteen years at the conclusion of this research I most strongly identify with Type B, and the definition captures the inter-informative experience and focus on methods. What is also implied within this category by its emphasis on employment status are two interrelated additional points: firstly, the decision to undertake this higher degree at a mid-career and secondly, the considerable time-challenge of undertaking PhD research parallel to employment.

The questions addressed in this thesis are ones that have germinated in my own past works and therefore reflecting on the relationship between my current and past practice is a key method employed within this research - in this text and through the practice. A pivotal moment in articulating the methodological framework employed occurred around the mid-way point of the research degree when I was asked a seemingly simple question – what is your practice? This important question prompted a reflexive reconsideration of what I ‘do’: the activities I undertake; the methods I employ; the outputs I produce; the position I take; the identity I claim; and the zones of culture/knowledge/society to which I contribute. A return to Macleod’s categories of approach proved invaluable in the process of formulating a response to this question and
by doing so, reformulating my methodological understanding. Through an adaptation of Macleod’s Type B artist/teacher/researcher, I expand the list of activities to include academic leadership, reflecting on the importance this role plays within my practice and professional life. I therefore propose a variant of Macleod’s Type B appropriate to my experience: artist + (teacher/researcher/leader) = artist/academic. In describing the methodology of this research as ‘practice-led’ therefore, the practice that leads the research is not the practice of an artist as I envisioned at the onset, but rather the practice of the contemporary University-based artist/academic: the professional undertakings of an artist integrated with the interlinked activities of teaching, research and academic leadership, all of which may be approached through creative means (see Figure 1). I see this configuration as an active dialogue between Donald Schön’s distinctions of ‘professional’ and ‘academic’ roles (1998: vii - viii). The methodology employed in this research therefore is a triangulation approach led by three bodies of practice that each inflect towards one of the three directions.

Figure 1  Visualising the ‘artist/academic’
More on methods

Reflecting on the research process and outcomes has led to an understanding that the three key methods employed are dialogue, translocality and practice. The methods of approach were not clear at the commencement of the research and have emerged and gained a degree of clarity through, and as part of, the research process. The methods inter-relate, for example, I have come to understand translocality as dialogue-based exchange between locales. Each method might be better described as a ‘method cluster’ as each can be subdivided into groupings of methods, approaches and related techniques, for example, I use ‘practice’ broadly to include my own collaborative practice-led activity, but also participation in projects led by others, and art historical investigations. What I have understood as the research progressed however is that it is within the inter-relations (or dialogues) between the three methods of approach and the three activities of the artist/academic that the research practice has occurred.

To assist my own clarity of understanding, I devised another visualisation to show the multitude of interactions within what I refer to as a ‘methodology matrix’ that emerged from the research. My first attempt at this visualisation had the six lines intersecting in a loose grid, but the simplicity failed to capture the density and complexity of the inter-relations I was attempting to express. The second had the lines interconnect in a tight knot of squiggles. While this conveyed the ‘messy’ character of the research, an aspect I visit in Chapter Four, in the second visualisation this aspect was overly emphasised and the visualisation read as inaccurately chaotic. The final version (see Figure 2) attempts to capture the dense mesh of ‘method-interactions’ – or dialogues - that grew out of and shaped the research progress, nonetheless conducted within a systematic approach.

While visualisations of this sort can be reductive or confusing, ‘concept mapping’ is an established tool used in qualitative research towards developing the conceptual
frameworks of the research approach. I have decided to include this final version in the thesis to articulate the way in which my own reflection on and understanding of the framework of my approach as an emergent methodology has developed over the course of the research period.

Figure 2 Visualising the ‘methodology matrix’

The interrelated methods reflect the knowledge they are deployed to tease out, elucidate and explore. I have approached the research of translocal dialogue-based art through dialogue-based practices, theories, activities and processes. I can trace a formative understanding of inter-related methods and outcomes from my undergraduate education, reading Gregory Bateson’s “Why do things get in a muddle?”, one of his “Metalogues” from *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (2000), fictional conversations between Bateson and his daughter Mary Catherine. Bateson described metalogues as “conversations about problems between people [that] mirrors the problems themselves" (1972: 12). The short script is a confused and muddled duologue exploring the concept of muddle – as the method to explore why things get in a muddle. From this I understood two things: firstly, that we can find things out in many ways, including the circuitous and

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meandering, and secondly that how we find things out determines what we find. A metalogue therefore can be understood as a dialogue between an overview position outside of a topic and an embedded position within, and this has been a useful way to understand how to approach the methods used in this research. I’ll return to Bateson’s *Why Do Things Get In A Muddle?* in Chapter Two.

A metalogue is an apt description of *The Dialogic*, a series of events related to dialogue within contemporary art practice led by artist Simon Pope that I participated in throughout the timeframe of this research. Pope initiated these group dialogues about dialogue as an artwork contributing to his own practice-led DPhil undertaken at the Ruskin School of Art, University of Oxford (2015). Pope’s thesis *Who Else Takes Part? Admitting the more-than-human into participatory art* addresses his “concern for how participatory and dialogic art practice can come to terms with conditions after the Anthropocene, after the era when humans became a geo-physical force” (Pope, 2015).

Pope presents his practice-led artistic research as a series of eighteen pieces of correspondence to the people, committees and institutions he articulates as the ‘interlocutors’ of his dialogic research, including a correspondence to members of The Dialogic research group.

*The Dialogic* emerged from discussions about the practice of dialogue-based art with fellow artist and researcher John Hammersley. Hammersley’s practice-based thesis *Dialogue as practice and understanding in contemporary art*, undertaken at Cardiff

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24 A useful point of reference here is Paul Feyerabend’s *Against Method* (1975) and his proposition that the history of scientific advancement does not demonstrate the primacy of a singular methodology but instead reveals an ‘anarchistic’ history of knowledge production, otherwise stated as ‘anything goes’.

25 Over the course of my PhD research, I attended eight sessions of *The Dialogic*: at Loughborough University, two at the Ruskin School of Art in Oxford, at Birkbeck College at the University of London, at Coventry University, at the Welsh School of Architecture in Cardiff, at Karen Kihlberg and Reuben Henry’s studio in Deptford, south London, at John Hammersley’s house in Settle, Yorkshire and at the Danielle Arnaud Gallery in London.

26 See: https://sites.google.com/site/ambulantscience/Index/who-else-takes-part-publication

27 See: https://repository.cardiffmet.ac.uk/handle/10369/8076
Metropolitan University (2015), also engages dialogue as both subject and method. His work utilises interviews and conversational encounters as artworks to approach the question of “how dialogue may contribute to the increasing shift in critical art practices towards to more imbricated, uncertain, and performative approaches to knowledge, and provide an alternative to essentialised and foundationalist interpretations of dialogue” (Hammersley, 2015). The Dialogic as a ‘community of practice’ that supported my own practice-led research in dialogue-based art will be explored further in Chapter Two.

Collaboration, inherently a dialogue-based method of art production is central to the examples of practice investigated in this research. This includes three co-initiated collaborative art/research/pedagogy projects conducted as part of the research process; participation in two contemporary projects initiated by others (Helen Varley Jamieson and Pope); reflection on my own past collaborative projects; and analysis of projects by other artists relevant to the research. The practice elements undertaken as the three practice case studies that led this research were conducted through collaborative working relationships and networks developed over the last four years. QR Code Project (2014) was developed with Judy Anderson and group of participants and dialogue led both the development of the creative work and the approach to the co-authored article about this project.

Central to the development of this thesis is a collaborative working relationship with Mkrtich Tonoyan. The collaboration has developed through a series of projects, meetings and residencies, including participation in the 2012 Gyumri Biennale of Contemporary Art in Armenia. Establishing a productive working relationship and methods of communication between ourselves and our associated networks, across distance, with the added complexities of time and language difference, was an essential
first step in the research. As part of the collaboration with Tonoyan, we have developed a method of collaborative writing for applications such as funding bids, fellowships or project statements where I attempt to capture his ideas and experience through dialogue. This process begins together, we set general topics as starting points as per the requirements of the application, then we record a conversation between us, with each intervening to ensure understanding and clarity on both sides. From the recording, I then write a text in English that distils the key things he is expressing in a sympathetic tone to his voice, and then pass it back to him to check/revise/comment on, in order to produce a final text for his approval. Supporting Tonoyan in his career pursuits through this kind of activity is an important part of our collaboration and my role on the ACOSS International Advisory Board. The co-artist text in Chapter Three was written using this method, and is included to both bring Tonoyan’s voice into this thesis text, but also to present an outcome from the collaborative dialogue-based writing method we have developed together. Collaboration across distance and cultural difference through social networks and across technical networks, forms the basis of my investigation into translocality, including participation in the Mallorca Translocal Meeting, a month long artist’s residency organised by artist Marcos Vidal Font that I explore in Chapter Three.

Teaching, inherently a dialogue-based activity, is addressed in Chapter Four through the pedagogical project #3CityLink that emerged through collaborative working relationships with colleagues at Coventry University in the UK, the University of Regina in Canada and the Gyumri Academy of Fine Art in Armenia. My colleague Jane Ball from Coventry University co-led the Coventry site of the project and travelled to Gyumri, Armenia with me in the summer of 2014 to lay the groundwork for the project. Hratch Vardanyan and Karen Barseghyan led the project in Gyumri, two artists I have now worked with for four years. Christine Ramsay, a long-time collaborator, led the
project at the University of Regina, Canada. Myself and four other colleagues who participated in this project used a dialogue-based approach to reflect on this project, via five linked papers delivered at a colloquium session at the *Arts in Society* conference (July 2015, Imperial College, London), and in co-authored article #3CityLink: *assessing the disruption* by Wimpenney, Bleetman, Knowles, and Ramsay.

My experience garnered in collaborative work has led to an understanding that approaching collaboration as long-term relationships rather than short-lived projects is integral to a working method based in dialogue. This chimes with Kester’s assertion that “dialogue and trust necessary for dialogical interaction grow out of a sustained relationship in time and space: the co-participation in specific materials of existence” (2004: 171). It is essential to the practice-led methodology that this text adequately describes the experience and the intricacies of the collaborative processes implicit within this research as part of the larger project of art history. Artist and researcher Tom Corby states it thus: “artists should not just be the objects of histories, but… they should also directly shape them, because their experience of the material conditions of production represents a unique body of knowledge whose insights can add significantly to existing philosophical, critical and historical debate” (2006: 1). It is the dialogue between the activities and outcomes of art practice, and the articulation of how that practice holds knowledge contributing to “existing philosophical, critical and historical debate” (Corby, 2006: 1) that I understand as artistic research.

Alongside the collaborative approach reflected in the three case studies presented in this thesis, my research methods also encompass an investigation into art history in order to propose historical precedents for dialogue-based art practice that operate across multiple modes of dialogue. Locating examples that act as precedents to contemporary dialogue-
based art was a useful early step in the process of identifying the characteristics of an active zone of resistant practice, both currently and historically. I propose the terms ‘dialogue-based art’ and further extend this to ‘translocal dialogue-based art’, not to coin neologisms or launch a new genre, but rather to articulate what I now see as a coherent set of connected and connective practices otherwise obscured behind disciplining boundaries within art and media art histories.

While Shanken’s “hybrid discourse” (2011: 1) aims to reframe historical narratives of art to encompass a more inclusive range of media and approaches within emerging art and cultural forms, the position I take in this thesis is also grounded beyond “emerging art and cultural forms” in the more pragmatic and everyday manner in which communications technologies and social media blend with and augment face-to-face communications. Even in close proximity, when face-to-face communications can occur, it is now commonplace to use communications tools such as texting, messaging via social media sites or other forms of mediated communication to share images, video, music and messages, or search or save information during this contact. This research therefore also sits within the context of fluid, mobile and adaptable contemporary communications across locales, acknowledging the impact of such technologies and the resulting global interconnectedness on human social life.

**Considering an art history of translocal, dialogue-based art**

Situating dialogue-based art within a history of such practices has been a necessary and productive part of the methodological approach and the source review. The catalogue of the exhibition *Participation in Art: 1950 to Now* (Frieling and Groys, 2008) presents several works that exemplify historical precursors to the zone of translocal dialogue-based art I am seeking to articulate. The two projects I have identified as key examples
are: Suzanne Lacy’s *International Dinner Party* created with Linda Pruess in 1979, and Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz’s *Hole In Space* from 1980. As with my own projects, these historical references each emerge through collaborative working methods.

**International Dinner Party (1979), Suzanne Lacy and Linda Pruess**

Bringing together the now well-established elements of socially engaged and communications art practices, *International Dinner Party* combined the intimacies of food, conversation, conviviality and face-to-face encounters, with postal mail and telegram systems to form a global social network. The project was mounted at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, a major public art gallery, therefore presented within the scope of contemporary art. In a video interview with artist Suzanne Lacy upon the re-staging of the work as part of *Feast: radical hospitality in contemporary art (2012)* at the Smart Museum at the University of Chicago (which toured until 2015), Lacy describes the piece as a “performance art work” devised as “a gift, a tribute for Judy Chicago” her teacher and mentor, originally mounted to coincide with the opening of Chicago’s *The Dinner Party* at the Brooklyn Museum (Lacy, 2012).²⁸ Women around the globe were invited to host a dinner party, celebrating a woman from their local community, resulting in 200 dinners across the world’s time zones on March 14, 1979, positioning hospitality as “kitchen table diplomacy enacted in the art world” (Lacy, 2012). In describing the process of developing the work in the 2012 interview, Lacy states that “there was no internet, so we had to organize the project by phone which was massively expensive, by letters and by telegram”, a process of mass communications across social and technical networks that I argue forms a major element of the work. The artist describes the project as a feminist artwork that positions the nurturing act of

²⁸ [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aZGu8k1OIfU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aZGu8k1OIfU)  [http://smartmuseum.uchicago.edu/exhibitions/feast/](http://smartmuseum.uchicago.edu/exhibitions/feast/)
women feeding women as a “political and radical gesture” within the context of multiple real-time local events occurring face-to-face, connected via mediated communications, global in scope (Lacy, 2012).

Issues of time are particularly relevant in International Dinner Party. The feminist approach to staging the work at the dinner table suggests the repetitive and relentless daily routine of feeding a traditional family, with support and solidarity offered in the form of symbolic synchronicity; women around the globe performing the work together through the course of a day. While real-time communication occurred in the face-to-face dialogues of each individual dinner party, the asynchronous ‘dinner’ time of the world clock staggered the work across a 24-hour period, with the resulting documentation returning to Lacy within the timeframes of telegram services. 29

Figure 3  International Dinner Party (1979) Suzanne Lacy and Linda Preuss
With permission.

29 I use the terms ‘synchronous’ and ‘asynchronous’ in this thesis to describe the human experience of time within communications, however, it should also be noted that within telecommunications, the terms ‘synchronous’ and ‘asynchronous’ also carry a technical meaning in reference to the manner by which data is transmitted.
It is precisely the scope of this project, the positioning of local real-time acts of dialogue and hospitality in community-oriented contexts as ‘nodes’ within an interconnected global network, that identifies this project, I propose, as a valuable contribution to dialogue-based art and an approach that can be understood as translocal: “simultaneous situatedness across different locales” (Brickell and Datta, 2011: 4). The project builds a worldwide community with the women taking part located within the specificity of the cuisine and hospitality culture of a distinct domestic locale, but through their own agency, become simultaneously part of a global gesture.

**Hole In Space (1980), Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz**

Connecting Lincoln Centre in New York City and Century City in Los Angeles via a Telstar communications satellite link, *Hole In Space* created a live and life-size video black and white telepresence experience on the evenings of November 11\(^{th}\), 13\(^{th}\) and 14\(^{th}\) 1980, long before such telepresent technology became ubiquitous (see Figure 4). Celebrated widely as an important project in the history of telecommunications-as-art and “legendary in the ground it broke in geographically dispersed collaborative art” (Wilson, 2002: 515), what documentation of the event makes clear is that communicative interactions occur both at a distance via the live video image, and equally within the crowds that gathered in the party-like social spaces in front of each screen. On their website\(^{30}\) Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz describe the work as a “public communications sculpture” enabling participants in New York and Los Angeles to “see, hear, and speak with each other as if encountering each other on the same sidewalk” (Galloway and Rabinowitz n.d.). The participants’ experience of the artwork appears to be located within the interplay of the two forms of ‘synchronous’ communicative interactions they experience in the work: the real-time face-to-face

encounters on the sidewalk, and the real-time telepresent encounters with apparitions on
the screen. Both forms of encounter are imbricated in the reading of the work as the
audience experiences a new communications form and plays with its social possibilities,
and by doing so performs one mode of communication in relation to another.

Figure 4 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.
The image is available online – see:

We see here an example of a work that twentieth-century Russian literary philosopher
Mikhail Bakhtin might describe as ‘chronotopic’ (1981: 243), the idea of time-space
counters within a novel where “people who are normally kept separate by social and
spatial distance can accidentally meet”, a metaphoric concept that translates in useful
ways from the literary form to the encounters within dialogue-based art (Bakhtin, 1981:
243). Bakhtin’s essay “Forms of time and chronotope in the novel” in The Dialogic
Imagination (1981) presents a historical overview of forms of the chronotope. One
example is ‘the road’, which can be used as a literary spatial device where over the
course of a time-based journey, encounters can occur between characters who might not
otherwise cross paths. This device is one that readily shifts media, cinema being an
obvious example, but Hole In Space (1980) presents a clear example of how the
chronotope can progress from narrative device to literal and actual human encounters in
dialogue-based art.
*Hole In Space* challenges the fixity of spatial and temporal distance between the two cities through its use of telecommunications technologies, as if the cities themselves were asking one another: how close are we, and how can we meet? While Google informs us they are 2,800 miles apart, which would take 910 hours to walk, a 2 day 20-hour journey by bus, 255 hours to cycle, 40 hours to drive, and 6 hours to fly - or 3 hours apart if the measure of distance is time difference - the work constructs a space of direct encounter. Through the chronotopic disruption to the temporal and the spatial, the work invites participants to “collapse social distance” and therefore to transcend the barriers that stratify society (Bakhtin, 1981: 243) and, it might be added, the related constraints that restrict mobility.

*International Dinner Party* (1979) and *Hole in Space* (1980) are both projects that reflect collaborative working methods and ‘distributed authorship’ (in conception and in production), human interaction as both context and content, geographic translocation between locales, the movement of information across networks and communication systems, and a complex integration of time and space; characteristics that I would identify as indicators of a dialogue-based art practice-position “with both a local and a global face” to quote Erkki Huhtamo (1995: 4). Yet despite these commonalities, these artists/works are often referenced and certainly have been canonized within divided art / media art histories. Reference is made to Lacy in both Kester’s *Conversation Pieces* (2004) and Bishop’s *Artificial Hells* (2012) for example, both texts that claim to write art histories of participation-based art, but significantly neither text makes mention of Galloway and Rabinowitz. Conversely, *Hole In Space* (1980) features as a selected project for the Medien Kunst Netz database[^31] that claims to be the “overview of media art” where there is no reference to Lacy and her communications-based work.

These divisions come as no surprise given the tendencies that persist towards categorising artworks as either contemporary art or media art. What I contend however is that viewed from a translocal, dialogue-based perspective, these projects align in their investigation of dialogue as an interactive process towards the production of a shared space of understanding beyond corporeal co-presence, which is undertaken in both projects through local to local connectivity deployed through social and technical networks. In both projects, local to local dialogues unfold in multiple forms concurrently; face-to-face and through mediated technologies, and we might argue from the vantage point of historical distance, within the on-going dialogues within disciplinary fields that categorise and canonise these important works. I propose that these works are important precisely because they blur boundaries between modes of communications and by doing so pre-empt the eclectic multi-modal communication flow that we now experience as a central feature of the mobility of communications within contemporary cultural practice.

**Considering current practice**

Having identified historical precedents for dialogue-based art works that draw from methods in contemporary art and media art, where might these shared tendencies or approaches be identified in current cultural practice? In keeping with the dialogue-based method of this research, my interest was to locate a contemporary project that I could experience as a participant.
Chapter One: Methodological approach

*We Have A Situation!*(2013), Helen Varley Jamieson

In May 2013 I participated in an iteration of *We Have A Situation!* in Graz, Austria, hosted by the independent artists collective Schaumbad Freies Atelierhaus. Described by the project initiators as “a series of live, trans-border, online-offline participatory performances addressing current cross-cultural European issues”, *We Have a Situation!* was enacted across four initial iterations between March-May 2013. Led by Helen Varley Jamieson, an artist and writer with a background in theatre and a leader in the development of the genre known as cyberformance, *We Have A Situation!* was produced by a network of artist-led European organisations, with each addressing a thematic based on a problem of particular current concern in Europe:

**Situation 1** - Furtherfield, London. 19-23 March 2013. Situation: E-waste

**Situation 2** - APO33, Nantes. 9-12 April 2013. Situation: Recycling a Boeing

**Situation 3** - MAD, Eindhoven. 15-18 April 2013. Situation: Global Mobility

**Situation 4** - Schaumbad, Graz. 17-22 May 2013. Situation: Food Production

Each ‘situation’ involved a four day workshop onsite at the hosting artist-led organisation culminating in a live online/offline interactive performance work developed using the UpStage online platform and server application, and a facilitated discussion. The workshops were framed as opportunities to imagine creative solutions to the identified situations. The principle guiding the project was that each situation was developed in a transparent manner and the entire process made available online with the

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32 See project website: [http://www.wehaveasituaiton.net](http://www.wehaveasituaiton.net)
33 *We Have A Situation!* was funded in part by a €27,050 grant from the European Cultural Foundation.
34 “Helen coined the term “cyberformance” in 2000 to describe the new form of live, online performance that she was experimenting with. She has been one of the leaders of the UpStage project and community since its inception, and in 2008 completed a Master of Arts researching cyberformance (Queensland University of Technology).
35 UpStage is described as an online performance venue, and a server application. “The concept for UpStage was developed by Avatar Body Collision, a globally dispersed cyberformance troupe whose members have been experimenting with online theatrical performance since 1999, and together as Avatar Body Collision since 2002. UpStage was born from the desire to reach a wider audience and to make it easier for audiences and performers alike to participate in live performance via the internet”. “The UpStage server application is open source and free to download. It is available under dual licensing: A Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-ShareAlike 2.5 License and GNU General Public License (GPL).” See UpStage User Manual. Available at: [https://flossmanuals.net/upstage-v242-user-manual/](https://flossmanuals.net/upstage-v242-user-manual/)
aim of producing a performance model that could be adopted and adapted by other artists and organisations for their own situations. Therefore, the project was created with a multi-layered aim which firstly incorporated the creation of four workshop-driven online ‘cyberformance’ artworks as provocations for community discussion towards engaged citizenship, and secondly the creation of a working model that could be shared, copied, or otherwise co-opted into other projects. The project concluded with two electronic ISSUU publications that reflect the two aims of the project: the first is *We Have A Situation*… that documents the workshops, performances and dialogues of the workshops; and the second is *Make Your Own Situation* that sets out a model of practice for future projects.  

One aspect of the *We Have A Situation!* project that connects most pertinently with the argument of this thesis is the manner in which participation in the project workshops combined methods that utilised the technical network of the internet, the social and professional network of the artists and organisations leading the project, and the grounded and located activities within the host locations. For example, as part of the Graz workshop, the group of participating artists met with local food activists to learn about specific and particular issues of the factory farming of pigs in the Styria region; explored the Kunstgarten art/garden project developed by two local artists; collectively ate home-cooked meals together provided for us each day by local artists; visited the St Andrä church, a unique venue for contemporary art and a community food garden; and concluded the workshop with attendance at a new music concert in a local bar, engaging in the particular cultural scene of a specific locale.

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36 *We Have A Situation…* see: http://issuu.com/apo33/docs/whas-v11-web?e=0/4965012.  
*Make Your Own Situation…* see: http://issuu.com/apo33/docs/whas-model?e=6402316/5003931

39
The project organisers use the term ‘trans-border’ to describe the performances themselves, and this can also be understood in terms of the physical cross-border travel undertaken by the project organisers to participate in the workshops in four countries, and the multi-country funding sought from the European Cultural Foundation.\(^{37}\) I suggest however that the term translocal might also be applied to further understand the dialogue-based context of the work in relation to the network of connections between the artists that preceded and initiated the project, to underscore the interconnectedness of the problems the project seeks to highlight, and the web of connections that already link these cities. When considering the problems of e-waste in London, or the crisis of migration in Eindhoven from the translocal research perspective, these complex problems can be seen as both global and local, always in dialogue between multiple interconnected locations, in the context of a globally interconnected world.

The multi-scalar reading that ideas of translocality present are particularly resonant here. While the problems of e-waste can be understood in a trans-border macro context between nations, this problem can also be seen in the micro context of tensions between neighbours and within neighbourhoods when the lack of provision for easy disposal/recycling of old electronics translates into the hazard and toxicity of junk on the street. Similarly, the global issues of migration on a trans-border scale are felt most poignantly when the large-scale issue translates into the personal experiences of specific human need in particular social contexts. The outcome of each individual *Situation* therefore was the combination of the artwork and the concluding discussion, designed to reveal possibilities for creative dialogue-based practices to act as provocations for the

\(^{37}\) The term ‘trans-border’ implies relations between adjacent countries, but in the context of *WHAS!* the term expresses countries within Europe and closely located. A further example of trans-border practice that gives insight into how the term is deployed in art can be found in the work of Electronic Disturbance Theatre, and in particular *Transborder Immigrant Tool*, addressing the politics of mobility of the US/Mexico border. For an interview with EDT co-founder *Ricardo Dominguez*, see: [http://hyperallergic.com/54678/poetry-immigration-and-the-fbi-the-transborder-immigrant-tool](http://hyperallergic.com/54678/poetry-immigration-and-the-fbi-the-transborder-immigrant-tool)
development of active citizenship and local solutions to global problems, within translocal networks of connected communities.\footnote{Two further outcomes are of note: Jamieson, H. V., ‘We have a situation! Cyberformance and civic engagement in post-democracy’ – forthcoming chapter in Convergence of Contemporary Art, Visual Culture, and Global Civic Engagement, ed. Ryan Shin, published by IGI Global, 2017. We have a situation! Fostering active citizenship through creative networked collaboration, a Green Paper submitted to the European Cultural Foundation addressing the place of the arts within the European Commissions ‘Digital Agenda’. The production of this Green Paper was a condition of the WHAS! funding through the ECF. A research-focused documents, the Green Paper addresses questions such as, for example, “What new possibilities can networked arts offer in terms of engaging and empowering audiences/participants?”}
In summary: the problem and the research approach

The practice this research investigates is an approach to dialogue-based art that reflects and acts on twenty-first century social relations and telecommunications within contemporary globalised and networked society, in response to Cresswell’s notion of ‘the politics of mobility’ that control and constrain human movement (2010). A tendency that can be found within key texts (Bishop, 2012; Kester, 2004; Bourriaud, 1998; Kac 1993, 2004) that examine dialogue-based practices in art and artworld discourse is to suggest a separation of dialogue-based art into two fields of practice: dialogues that (can) occur face-to-face and dialogues that occur across and through via mediated technologies and communications networks. I contend that this separation is incongruous with the multiplicity and multi-layered modes of contemporary communications and out of step with the manner in which technological networks have impacted human social lives. Frieling reveals evidence of this problem in his essay “Towards Participation in Art” from the exhibition catalogue The Art of Participation: 1950 – now (2008), proposing that “a gap” still exists between “works that address social practice and works that reflect and act upon our networked and globalized society” (32). Further evidence of the problem is found in the writing of Bishop (2012) and Kester (2004), who, I contend, widen the gap by approaching the practice of dialogue-based art from an art historical perspective limited to co-corporeal practices in contemporary art.

While the work of Shanken (2010) proposes a rapprochement between the worlds of contemporary art and media art, his position nonetheless continues the tradition of
paragone debates that my own research aims to bypass. The approach I investigate shifts the debate away from aesthetic hierarchies of media towards the application of ideas drawn from the interdisciplinary research perspective of translocality to the practice of dialogue-based art. Ideas of translocality enable this research to extend beyond the dichotomies that Shanken’s perspective suggests. The aim of this research is to articulate how artists can and do employ dialogue-based methods drawn from contemporary art and media art that resist and disrupt the singular dominant narrative of globalisation which places all the countries of the world along the same timeline of development. Cultural geographer Doreen Massey expresses the necessity for such resistance in her assertion that such a singular perspective “obliterates the multiplicities, the contemporaneous heterogeneities of space. It reduces simultaneous coexistence to place in the historical queue” (2004: 5). She continues with a provocation to action: “what if we open up the imagination of the single narrative to give space (literally) for a multiplicity of trajectories? What kinds of conceptualization of time and space, and of their relation, might that give on to?” (2004: 5). It is an articulation of possible approaches for such resistance that this research seeks to address.

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39The term ‘paragone’ refers to an Italian Renaissance debate addressing the hierarchy of artistic media. I became aware of this debate through an article by Peter Weibel: [http://www.metamute.org/editorial/lab/post-media-condition](http://www.metamute.org/editorial/lab/post-media-condition)
Chapter Two: Dialogue-based art

If we consider society in the twenty-first century as networked and globalised, the meaning of dialogue-based art might both reflect and act on the conditions of networked and globalised societies. This chapter argues for just such an expanded definition of dialogue-based art that encompasses literal forms of dialogue and also dialogues that operate in a symbolic, conceptual or non-literal registers. Presenting alternative perspectives, this chapter proposes an understanding of dialogue and dialogue-based art that goes beyond the paragone hierarchies and factional biases of contemporary art and media art to envision dialogue-based art as a method of intertextual meaning-making that encompasses multiple points of view.

This chapter provides a critical context for the first practice-led case study undertaken as part of the doctoral research, *QR Code Project*, which used dialogue-based methods to construct a bridge between two physically close but culturally distant communities. Firstly, I discuss contrasting perspectives regarding dialogue-based art in the work of Kac (2004), Kester (2004), Bishop (2006, 2012), Hansen (2008), and Chandler and Neumark (2005). I then outline the importance of Bakhtin’s notion of the ‘dialogic’ for dialogue-based art before considering the more expansive terrain of dialogue studies and locating my research within a community of practice. Before discussing the case study, I present two pieces from my past practice that demonstrate my sustained engagement with constructed dialogues, *Stories and Conversations* (1995), and *Parc Victoria, Victoria Park* (2008). I reflect on how these projects have contributed to my understanding of dialogue in relation to location and identity formation. This leads to a discussion and presentation of the case study which articulates and demonstrates the need for an expanded definition of dialogue-based art.
Perspectives on dialogue-based art: a source review

Kac describes dialogue-based art as artworks that employ or reference “active forms of communication” and states that “these works can often be found among artists that pursue the aesthetics of telecommunications media” (Kac, 2004: 1). However, as outlined in Chapter One, dialogue as a method of art has also been claimed within another approach to participatory art, namely practices addressing the social realm that have developed through modern and contemporary art traditions. Much of the writing that has emerged from historians and theorists around the tendencies of dialogue-based art adheres to the conceptual division between the fields of contemporary art and media art. Kester explores dialogue-based art in his book *Conversation Pieces: Community and Conversation in Modern Art* (2004), where he investigates artists and practices engaged with the facilitation of dialogue among diverse communities, and plots a history of art practices that lead to what he describes as a “dialogical aesthetic” (2004: 82). However, despite Kac’s assertion that the dialogic aesthetic is often found in the realm of artworks using mediated communications, Kester’s *Conversation Pieces* ignores this realm of practice completely, acknowledging that his text neglects “the possible connections between the idea of a dialogic aesthetic and artistic paradigms based on concepts of networking and communications in recent digital media theory and practice” (2004: 189). Kester clarifies this further in an endnote where he quotes from Lev Manovich’s book *The Language of New Media* (from 2001) in which Manovich echoes Kac, by raising the question of a telecommunications or digital aesthetics (Manovich in Kester, 2004: 231).

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41 Kester’s endnote, *Conversation Pieces* p.231: “Although there are numerous sources for these ideas, one of the most cogent recent presentation of digital aesthetics comes from Lev Manovich’s *The Language of New Media*: “By foregrounding telecommunication,
is that he considers telecommunications in art as beyond the disciplinary reach of an art historian and a mode of practice that requires the specialist knowledge of a media theorist. We see here an example of what Bishop has called “the digital divide in art”, but whereas in her 2012 article in *ArtForum* magazine she claims that contemporary artists have been unresponsive to the digital revolution, in this example it is an art historian who places a problematic limit on the scope of his own inquiry, falling short of bridging the digital divide.\(^\text{42}\)

Where does this limit originate? The rationale for Kester’s position in regards to the necessity of dialogic art to occur face-to-face comes earlier in *Conversation Pieces* where Kester references Emmanuel Levinas and his ethical philosophy of self/other relations. Kester (2004:119) highlights how, “Levinas describes intersubjective ethics in terms of the concrete reality of the other experienced through a face-to-face encounter”, which Kester uses to ground his own position that “corporeal interaction is central to a dialogic aesthetic.” The difficulty that arises here is not that Kester adopts such a Levinasian position, indeed, I share the position that embodied communication provides dimensions of interaction potentially lost through other communicative forms, the difficulty is that he explores no other positions. This leaves the debate regarding the role of embodiment in communication unexplored, and omits any acknowledgement of the shift in landscape of twenty first century communications or the attendant politics and practicalities of mobility and their impact on dialogue. The question of embodiment and hierarchies of communicative forms is beyond the scope of this research, but the

\(^{\text{42}}\) The politics of the digital access and the cultural digital divide should also be noted. For a portal of entry into current research regarding culture and the digital divide, please see: [http://culturalpolitics.net/digital_cultures/cultural_divide](http://culturalpolitics.net/digital_cultures/cultural_divide)
question I see as more pertinent to ask is, if face-to-face encounters cannot be achieved, should we not strive to experience the other through alternate communicative means?

As an attendee of the InDialogue symposium[^43] in Nottingham UK in 2014 and 2016, I experienced Kester delivering keynote presentations via Skype and pre-recorded video. The disjuncture between his argument regarding the necessity for dialogue-based art to occur face-to-face while presenting his argument from his home in California via the convenience of mediated technologies are readily apparent. In the context of that on-the-spot situation, in 2014, I was able to ask Kester to address the question and he described his tendency as neither a philosophical position or as something beyond his disciplinary reach, but rather as “a blind spot” (Kester, verbal comment, 2014). This “blind spot” has steered Kester away from addressing the question asked by Frieling (2008: 32) that is central to this thesis of how can socially-engaged, dialogue-based art practice “reflect and act upon our networked and globalized society.” I argue that a position that constrains dialogue-based art to face-to-face interaction only, fails to address the complexity, multimodality and actuality of contemporary communications and mobility, or put more simply, it fails to address how we communicate in everyday life today.

Kester and Bishop occupy differing positions in their critique of dialogue-based art, which represents a disagreement played out most notably in 2006 following the publication of Bishop’s article “The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents” in the February edition of ArtForum. Here, Bishop suggests that Kester:

> Challenges us to treat communication as an aesthetic form, but, ultimately, he fails to defend this, and seems perfectly content to allow that a socially collaborative art project could be deemed a success if it works on the level of social

[^43]: The InDialogue Symposium in Nottingham UK was founded by artist/researchers Heather Connelly and Rhiannon Jones. Connelly and Jones have also both completed practice-led PhD’s investigating topics related to art and dialogue. For Connelly’s thesis, see: [https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/dspace-jspui/handle/2134/17999](https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/dspace-jspui/handle/2134/17999)
Bishop defends what she argues as an essential position for the socially and politically engaged artist: aesthetic authority and autonomy. She is critical of artistic approaches that concede aesthetic control, arguing that the political power of art depends on the artist’s ability to antagonise and challenge, not ameliorate through well-meant but ineffectual social work. Bishop places her “commitment to the aesthetic” in diametric opposition to the “ethical turn” in art criticism, a position she defines as an over-emphasis on the ethics of production and under-emphasis on the resulting art works, a charge she specifically applies to Kester. Where Kester and Bishop do find common ground however, and where my research takes a contrasting point of view, is with their mutual lack of engagement with dialogues that go beyond the co-corporeal human inter-social.

In *Artificial Hells* Bishop examines the current “return to the social” in art (2012: 3, author’s emphasis) historicising participatory practices in a timeline she connects to three historical moments of social and political upheaval. The first she identifies as “the historic avant-garde in Europe circa 1917”, namely the rise of Dada in the wake of the Great War; and the second as “the so-called ‘neo’ avant-garde leading to 1968” (Bishop, 2012: 3). She posits that the current third wave of activity in participatory art activity developed in the mid-1990s in response to the fall of communism. Bishop argues that the collapse of state-led collectivism in the Soviet Union and across Eastern

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Europe led to the “migration” of socialist thinking into “Western European artistic production” and practices that continue to unfold within the current third-wave social turn in art (2012: 193). Bishop works with a definition of participatory art, “in which people constitute the central artistic medium and material in the manner of theatre and performance” (2012: 2). Though not tied to a specific philosophical perspective such as Kester’s use of Levinas, Bishop nonetheless privileges projects that engage an approach of physically co-present collectivism, reinforcing her own mechanistic arguments regarding the catalyst for her so-called third-wave social turn.

Bishop begins Artificial Hells with an opening paragraph that mentions eight sample projects that for her exemplify a “surge of artistic interest in participation and collaboration since the 1990s” (2012: 1). Although she does include one work utilising mediated communications on her initial sample list, Tenantspin (2000) an internet TV station set up for a group of elderly residents from a Liverpool housing estate facilitated by Danish collaborative group Superflex, she mainly uses the project to critique an article written about it by Charles Esche and the project itself and the technologies it employs remain unexplored (Bishop, 2012: 16).

Kester’s Conversation Pieces opens with a short description of Intervention to Aid Drug-Addicted Women (1994 - 1995), a project by Austrian arts collective WochenKlausur that brought together politicians, journalists, activists and sex workers to participate in a floating ‘dialogue’ on a boat on Lake Zurich, that addressed the topic of local drug policy (2004:1). In describing the work, Kester places an emphasis on the charged social debates between the human participants, with the boat affording a situation for the participants to step outside of their usual identities and job.

45 http://www.wochenklausur.at/
roles, but he does not explicitly mention the interlocutive potential of the boat or how other aspects of the situation, namely the lake and the weather might actively participate in the re-location and destabilisation of the dialogue. This example illustrates Kester’s tendency to limit the parameters of dialogue-based art within literal, synchronous, inter-human and face-to-face exchange.

In neither of these prominent texts by Kester and Bishop is there mention of any of the highly influential dialogue-based projects such as Galloway and Rabinowitz’s *Hole In Space* (1980), or Ascott’s *La Plissure du Texte* (1983) to give just two examples of participatory works where (in addition to being out of step with the post-communist timeframe that Bishop proposes), the technological interface of the mediated dialogue actively engages within the dialogue. By performing such exclusions, Bishop and Kester perpetuate, if not widen, the gap that persists between approaches to dialogue within contemporary art and media art.

An alternative history of dialogue-based art is presented in Annemarie Chandler and Norie Neumark’s edited collection *At A Distance: Precursors to Art and Activism on the Internet* (2005). This collection of essays addresses a pre-history of current networked and telematic artworks, from fluxus experimentation, through mail art, to telecommunications and digital networks; works that utilise a growing array of technological tools and systems to communicate and co-participate in dialogues between people and to transmit between nodes in networks. Ascott’s chapter “Distance Makes the Art Go Further: Distributed Authorship and Telematic Textuality in La Plissure du Texte” describes his 1983 work *La Plissure du Texte* that used an early conference-communication network to enable a group of participants in dispersed locations to write a story together through a process Ascott calls “distributed
authorship”. In this approach to authorship, the role and therefore the authority of an individual author is surrendered to a process of collective creativity (2005: 282).

Simone Osthoff’s chapter “From Mail Art to Telepresence: Communication at a Distance in the Works of Paulo Bruscky and Eduardo Kac” (2005: 260) also explores a similar history of artists creating dialogue-based art from a process of experimentation with emerging communications media. For these artists, the development of participatory and dialogue-based art practices that explore real-time communication across distance is connected to “the popularisation of the personal computer and the rise of the global electronic network” (Osthoff, 2005: 270). For the artists working within this approach, it is the technical apparatus and network that enables, and partly constitutes, the work. Networks can therefore play an integral role in dialogues.

The separation between modes of dialogue within contemporary art and media art seems to echo an omission in Kester and Bishop’s thinking on the inter-relationship between humans and things in dialogue. As writer and art critic Rikke Hansen suggests such exclusions “cut out half of the equation by sidelining the material things that are either part of the stage set to begin with or produced from the encounter itself” (Hansen: 2008) and disregard the recent ‘nonhuman turn’ in the humanities and social sciences, a turn away from anthropocentric thinking towards the nonhuman (Latour, 2005; Bennett, 2010; Haraway, 2008; Grusin, 2015). I have begun to observe how these ideas are entering the practice of dialogue-based art though the work of Pope, whose doctoral research, following Whatmore (2006), Harman (2011), Bennett (2009) and DeLanda (2006), focused on dialogue-based art positioned “after the Anthropocene” (2004: i) to

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46 [http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/la-plissure-du-texte/](http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/la-plissure-du-texte/) This project was remounted as part of the 2012 Shanghai Biennale. As part of the research for this thesis, I participated in this remounting as one of the distributed storytellers, playing the role of the Magician. In 2013 I met by chance another participant. Our conversation revealed a shared dissatisfaction with our experience of the project, which erased our identities and therefore the possibility of making real connections though the project, to support the creative vision of the project, which encourage participants to remain in character and therefore to remain anonymous to one another and to potential audience/readers.
admit “the more-than-human” (Pope after Whatmore, 2015: 4). To offer an example from Pope’s practice, his 2014 work *Primary Agents of a Social World* explored the development of a community coalesced in relation to, and in dialogue with, a large lump of coal, now residing in the National Museum of Wales, National Collection Centre. According to Pope, the work “encourages us to explore the way coal is transformed by humans, and the way human lives have been transformed by coal”, establishing the possibility for relations between people and things to be mutually transformational. Hansen reminds us that such thinking is not new in the arts, quoting Soviet constructivist Boris Arvatov’s description of things as being “connected like a co-worker with human practice” (Arvatov quoted in Hansen, 2008). The relationship between dialogue and the nonhuman turn is emergent in my thinking and peripheral to this research project. It is mentioned as an acknowledgement of the attention that ideas that counter human exceptionalism have received in recent years in the arts, humanities and social sciences.

**Dialogic**

Despite their differing positions, both Kac and Kester use the Bakhtinian (1981, 1984, 1986, 1990) term ‘dialogic’ to describe dialogue-based art practices. Bakhtin’s thinking uses the form of the novel as a starting point towards a broader philosophical project in which the term ‘dialogic’ carries a complex set of meanings that resonate with creative practices beyond the literary art form of the novel and indeed with creative acts of identity formation. Broadly speaking, the dialogic can be understood as relating to dialogue in its common usage as the exchange of utterances and the back and forth

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47 The film *Primary Agents of a Social World* can be seen at: [https://sites.google.com/site/ambulantscience/Index/primary-agents-of-a-social-world](https://sites.google.com/site/ambulantscience/Index/primary-agents-of-a-social-world). A bookwork that transcribes a dialogue from the project was produced in an edition of 130 to accompany a tour of the film around the South Wales coalfields in 2015.
exchange of speech or messaging between individuals, or as Michael Holquist,\textsuperscript{48} Bakhtin’s main translator in English puts it, the medium of dialogue is “natural language” (1990b: 31).

In another view, the dialogic counterpoises monologic tendencies in culture. As Bakhtin (1984: 292-3) suggests, a monologic work or utterance, “denies the existence outside itself of another consciousness with equal rights, with equal responsibilities, another “I” with equal rights (thou).” While the opposition of the idea of monologic singularities versus dialogic inter-relations begins with the dynamic between ‘I’ and ‘thou’, Bakhtin’s investigation of the monologic extends beyond individuals and into the broader implications of monologic thought within society through forms of ideology and the dominant perspectives expressed by singular voices that admit no others. As Bakhtin (1984: 292-3) says, monologue always has the final word, whereas dialogue represents the unfinalisability of communicative exchange and interaction.

Political theorist and activist Andrew Robinson (2011) describes the monologic as “the discursive ‘death’ of the other, who, as unheard and unrecognised, is in a state of non-being.” Robinson gives the example within society of the police, offering them as the “epitome of monologism. Police power is constructed around the assertion of a non-debateable demand, sometimes analysed as a fundamental refusal of dialogue and creativity” (Robinson, 2011). I see a further pertinent example of monologism in the powers that control national borders and restrict the free movement of people through decisions and conditions of entry that are also presented as a non-debatable imbalance.

\textsuperscript{48} Michael Holquist is Professor of Comparative Literature Emeritus at Yale University. A noted Slavic scholar, Holquist has edited and translated a number of Bakhtin’s texts into English. As a non-Russian reader, I have relied heavily of Holquist’s translation and interpretation of Bakhtin.
of power. In contrast, a dialogic disposition is one that resists such singular or fixed points of view.

In Bakhtin’s theory of the ‘dialogic’, he posits thought as an interplay between the mind and the world, a process that he interprets as ‘dialogue’ (Holquist 1990b: 4) which is central to the process of identity formation. We develop our sense of being in collaboration with others (people, things, contexts) as an ongoing and unfinalisable process (Robinson 2011). Bakhtin’s theory of the ‘dialogic’ - which Holquist describes as both an “exercise in social theory” (1990b: 37) and “a general theory of human subjectivity” (1990a: xix) – conveys a sense of dialogue beyond natural language towards the complex process of interrelatedness, of meaning-making, of self and other, of community and of existence (Holquist, 1990b: 37). Within Bakhtin’s (1986: 111) dialogic theory, “understanding is always dialogic to some degree”, all meaning therefore is achieved through relations, through the inter-subjective struggle of negotiating self, other, and the dynamic between, both within ourselves, and in relation to others. As Bakhtin (1986: 92) states, “our thought itself - philosophical, scientific, and artistic - is born and shaped in the process of interaction and struggle with others’ thought” and he describes this process as one of authoring, the process by which we metaphorically narrativise our existence through “a text that is then called our life” (Holquist, 1990: 30), a text lived in and through dialogue with others. As Bakhtin argues, “my time and my space are the time and space of an author” (1990: 106).

Bakhtin’s dialogic theory uses an analysis of the form of the novel to explore both the realm of literature and discourse and the actual realm of human social relations, proposing dialogue as the creative processes of authoring. Dialogic theory is a useful tool for addressing multiple interpretations and registers of communicative exchange in
the inter-human realm of the social and the discursive, but also, as Robinson states, it is useful for understanding the inter-relational context within which all things, human and non-human, come into being, exist, interact and acquire meaning (2011).

Kac in his essay Negotiating Meaning: The Dialogic Imagination in Electronic Art (2004) makes a forceful argument for artworks created using multidirectional telecommunications media as the logical progression of Bakhtin’s literary and philosophical ideas of the dialogic towards creative forms that perform the “living experience of dialogue” (2004: 209). Kac concurs with Kester (2004) that dialogic engagement in art can indeed also occur face-to-face citing example projects by artists Suzanne Lacy and Lygia Clarke, but however he concludes that it is dialogic works engaging digital technology that are better placed to speak “the language of our time” and provide an articulation of contemporary lived experience in “a networked world in a global economy” (2004: 209).

In Kac’s comparison however, his points of reference are not face-to-face versus technological mediation, but rather actual exchange versus symbolic exchange in art, in other words, works that can literally perform “interrelationship and connectivity” versus forms of art that exists as monologic contemplative objects (2004: 209).

Acknowledging a central concern in Bakhtinian thought, namely the unfinalisability of meaning, Kac’s argument progresses the concept of the dialogic in art beyond the symbolic and the fixity of the novel (or ‘wall hangings’, Kac’s term for paintings), proposing instead creative forms that are inherently dialogue-based, and that unfold as

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50 Kac’s critiques Deborah Haynes position in *Bakhtin and the Visual Arts* (1995) by asserting that traditional painting and sculpture also remain “irreversibly monologic” (Kac, 2004: endnote 6).
literal communicative exchange. While Bakhtin’s dialogic theory emerges from the discourse examining the form of the novel, Kac’s draws on Bakhtin’s writing on Dostoyevsky and the innovation of the polyphonic novel which led Bakhtin towards imagining “special polyphonic artistic thinking extending beyond the bounds of the novel as a genre” and an acknowledgement that while the novel can hold a dialogic approach, the form is inherently monologic. It is this form of “special polyphonic artistic thinking” that Kac (2004: 209) applies to the practice and potential of what he terms “multilogical interactions”, which are “complex real-time contexts in which the process of dialogue is extended to three or more persons in an ongoing open exchange.”

Though the primary aim of Kac’s essay is to develop an argument for mediated communications art as the logical progression of the Bakhtinian dialogic for art practice, he nonetheless develops a rationale for dialogue-based art that encompasses a multi-modal approach to communicative forms. For example, Kac states that:

Technology does not exist in a vacuum, and the world, with its smooth and rough surfaces, is analogue. The postbiological metaphor, for example, reflects a mixture of organic analogue tissue and inorganic digital components and techniques, perhaps to the point of erasure of distinctions. It is exactly as a negotiating agent between the two, in the interface between analogue and digital, that the new electronic art is emerging (2004: 209).

However, Kac presents a confusion here. His reference to the ‘postbiological’ position addresses the body as a site of analogue and digital fusion to form a new ontological status. Yet rather than extending this thinking towards a unified creative practice we might simply call ‘art’, or more specifically in the context of this thesis ‘dialogue-based art’, he rejects an analogous ‘post-media’ position (Guattari, 2013) which we might understand as a similar analogue and digital fusion in art, and instead emphasises a media-based category defined as “the new electronic art” (Kac, 2004: 209). Once again, we see a division between approaches to art reinforced by a position that seeks to
‘claim’ and colonise a mode of practice that negotiates between analogue and digital inquiry, a position in keeping with the development of a distinct discipline of media art separate from contemporary art. I hope it is clear at this point in the thesis that I support neither the Kester, Bishop nor Kac approaches but rather I seek to stress the dialogic relation between disciplines/fields towards an integrated dialogue-based art practice, reflective of contemporary multi-modal communications and the process of authorship.

**Expanding dialogues**

This review of perspectives on dialogue-based art maps a terrain that encompasses literal communications as art across multiple modes, and from Bakhtinian dialogic theory we can understand how dialogue-based art might also expand into a symbolic or representational realm of authoring, exchange and intertextual meaning-making. Beyond the Bakhtinian dialogic, further investigations of dialogue can be found across the emergent interdisciplinary field of dialogues studies. While dialogue has been of interest to thinkers certainly since Plato, becoming significant for philosophy (Bakhtin, 1981, 1984, 1986, 1990), theology (Buber, 1923; Levinas, 1996), anthropology (Tedlock and Mannheim, 1995), psychoanalysis (for example, through the development of the therapeutic ‘talking cure’ (Freud, 1995; Wollheim, 1981), cultural and literary studies (Gadamer, 1975), education (Freire, 1970), art (Bishop, 2012; Kester, 2005; Kac, 2004; Haynes, 1995), and interdisciplinary realms (Bohm, 1996), dialogue studies has also emerged in recent years as a distinct academic field.

The inaugural issue of the *Journal of Dialogue Studies* published in 2013 by the Dialogue Society describes its focus as “the theory and practice of dialogue, understood provisionally as: meaningful interaction and exchange between people (often of
different social, cultural, political, religious or professional groups) who come together through various kinds of conversations or activities with a view to increased understanding.” 51 This definition has been a useful point of departure for my own thinking around dialogue, and the necessity to comprehend its social resonance and epistemological project, across a broader sphere of knowledge and human interaction.

The Dialogue Society offers an MA in Dialogue Studies 52 addressing “crucial issues of intercultural dialogue, social cohesion and citizenship”, reflecting the Society’s aims of promoting human rights, equality and democracy through dialogue-based processes. 53 Dialogue can therefore be seen as a tool to navigate social and cultural difference, enhance social cohesion, and in the case of the practice-led case study that parallels and anchors this chapter (QR Code Project), to reveal social fractures.

David Bohm’s text On Dialogue (1996), a key source in the literature of dialogue studies, describes dialogue as an act of creativity that enables the production of openness and shared meaning through language. Bohm proposes that it is dialogue that holds people and societies together. Bohm positions the transformational possibilities of dialogues to achieve understanding, in contrast to ‘discussion’ which he suggests means to break things apart, or ‘negotiation’, which he characterises as situations of shallow small trade-offs. Unlike discussion, where “the basic point is to win the game”, Bohm suggests that a characteristic of dialogue is that “nobody is trying to win”, rather, participants strive to achieve situations of shared understanding and participatory thought of benefit to all (1996: 8). Writing in a historical moment of rapid technological

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52 The MA in Dialogue Studies is offered in collaboration with the School of Politics, Philosophy, International Relations and Environment at Keele University, UK.

change, growing divisions between East and West and the collapse of the so-called
grand narratives of history, Bohm proposes the practice of dialogue as a solution to the
ingrained and often unquestioned beliefs he calls the “fundamental assumptions” –
points of view we each hold, formed through the external forces of politics, religion,
education, nation states, and our families and peer groups.

Bohm, whose academic pursuits stretched from theoretical physics to the philosophy of
the mind, developed what is now referred to as ‘Bohmian dialogue’, in essence a
strategy designed to enable a group of individuals to bridge across difference through
the suspension of assumptions, towards the possibility of increased understanding of
shared preoccupations. While the practice may hold individual therapeutic value,
dialogue in this context is deployed towards addressing the very largest challenges
facing humanity. Bohm’s perspective is useful to my research as it provides insight into
the meaning dialogue holds beyond common usage, towards the production of spaces
for “shared meaning”. It both re-enforces the Bakhtinian reading of dialogue as
creativity, as a process where we author ourselves, but also grounds dialogue as a
practical tool towards revealing and questioning the “fundamental assumptions” (Bohm,
1996: 8) that we as individuals each hold, and the on-going struggle towards
understanding and peaceability. 54

Community of Practice: The Dialogic (2012 - present)

My introduction to Bohmian dialogue, in theory and in practice, occurred through
participation in The Dialogic, a dialogue-based art research group and series of ‘events’

54 Here, we can see a marked difference to the position of Bishop for example whose exploration of dialogue-based art (the term she
champions is ‘participation’) favours antagonistic rather than accommodationist practices. On this point, see Kris Cohen’s review of
initiated by Pope\textsuperscript{55} in 2012 to explore the possibility of a community of practice \textit{as} a work of art, and vice versa. \textit{The Dialogic} has been formative and instrumental in the development of this thesis as the primary ‘community of practice’ where I locate my research. The approach undertaken in \textit{The Dialogic} is informed by the Bohmian method, with an emphasis on addressing shared preoccupations without a requirement for a preferred discursive or material outcome. A constituent element of Pope’s (2015) doctoral research project\textsuperscript{56}, \textit{The Dialogic} research-group includes five artist/academics\textsuperscript{57} who have each undertaken doctoral research on topics related to dialogue-based art.

Pope describes the activities of the group in the following way:

Each meeting focuses on the general theme of 'dialogue in contemporary art practice' and lasts approximately 2 - 4 hours. On some occasions, especially when held within an institutional context, the meetings coincide with reading groups, and sometimes open up to wider discussion of the project with other researchers or artists.  

(Pope, no date, a).

Pope sees \textit{The Dialogic} as a peer group that performs the role of a ‘literature review’ in action and a locus for a contribution to the field of art. I joined \textit{The Dialogic} in its second iteration at Loughborough University and have attended all subsequent meetings, including acting as host at Coventry University in November 2014 as part of \#3CityLink (see Chapter Four). An iteration of \textit{The Dialogic} discussion group was undertaken at the Quaker Friends Meeting House in Oxford on November 20\textsuperscript{th} 2015, as a live event following (or an extension to, or continuation of) Pope’s viva voce examination, performed as a dialogue between Pope and the individuals that he identified as the interlocutors of the research. The July 2016 iteration of \textit{The Dialogic}

\textsuperscript{55} Pope defines himself as an artist, contests the term ‘artistic research’ and insists that the scope of his art making extends to research-based practices and written outcomes. On October 29 2015, Pope delivered a FACETS (Fine Art Coventry Talk Series) presentation at the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum. His position on art versus artistic research was clarified in the subsequent question and answer session.

\textsuperscript{56} Pope’s doctoral research addresses “how a participatory art practice can engage not only humans as participants, but also other ‘things’ that are seemingly inert or withdrawn and therefore not considered to ‘take part’ in social relations”.  

\textsuperscript{57} Simon Pope and Annemari Ferreira (University of Oxford), John Hammersley (Cardiff Metropolitan University), Rebecca Birch (Loughborough University/Lancaster University) and myself.
saw the project move for the first time to a domestic setting that of John Hammersley’s house in Settle, North Yorkshire, and the inclusion of participation via Skype (Pope joined the dialogue from Toronto, Canada). The peer group formed through The Dialogic meetings continues to provide an extended set of reference points beyond the perimeters of my own specific research questions. For example, discussion within this group has oriented me towards the philosophical tradition of dialogue, the emerging field of Dialogue Studies, Bohmian dialogue, and Pope’s own research interests which address how dialogue may be considered between human and nonhuman objects and materials.

Figure 7  The Dialogic at the Ruskin School of Art, University of Oxford, 2013

58 In an iteration of The Dialogic held at the Danielle Arnaud Gallery in London in September 2016, we were joined by philosopher Hannah Marije Altorf (St Mary’s University) who introduced us to the contemporary Socratic dialogues undertaken in the Nelson-Heckmann tradition.

59 The problem of ‘needing documentation’ of dialogue-based art practices was a topic discussed at the Ruskin School of Art iteration of The Dialogic. The problem remains a pertinent one throughout this thesis. Image: Rachelle Viader Knowles.
Reflecting on past practice

So far, I have identified some historical precedents for dialogue-based art works that draw on methods in contemporary art and media art. I identified where these might share tendencies or approaches and where they are located in current cultural practice. I noted that my understanding of dialogue-based art has been expanded through my participation in a community of practice. This has led me to reflect on how these tendencies have developed within my own artistic research. In keeping with the dialogue-based methods employed in this research, I will now address two pieces of past practice that demonstrate the emergence of ideas that led to the practice undertaken in this research.

*Stories and Conversations (1995)*

The first work I produced that I define as dialogue-based art was neither ‘literal’ in Kac’s terms nor face-to-face as per Kester’s model. The work explored an autobiographical narrative. A few days before my father died he made an audio recording of a conversation between himself and his father, a tape I was given after his death. My grandfather was in the first stages of Alzheimer’s. My father was suffering his own illness and the 20-minute conversation is a confused discussion about whether to have Brussels sprouts with dinner or not, whether they had had Brussels sprouts the previous night or not, and how many times they had had Brussels sprouts that week, repeated many times. Listening to the tape filled my head with multiple voices, one of which was the dialogue I was silently having with my father as I came to terms with his death. In this instance, I was reminded of Bateson’s metalogues as both dialogues expressed their meaning through a dialogue between the content *and* the structure as content, and the obvious parallel of conversations between fathers and daughters. I presented the work as a performed intertext between my live (corporeal) self and a pre-
recorded video self. The first section was borrowed from *Why Do Things Get In A Muddle* to frame the dialogue in the performance within the concept of a metalogue (Bateson, 1972: 13). The second section was a script transcribed from my father’s taped conversation. Therefore, in the performance I performed the roles of father and daughter, and father and son, and daughter and daughter; the meta-metalogue being my engagement in a dialogue-based performance with a projected apparition as a way of trying to mirror my own internal dialogue with my father.

The problem being addressed in the work was how to have a conversation when one of the parties is absent. Clearly, this is an example where a face-to-face corporeal method of dialogue would not function, as the work presents an internal process explored as a performative metaphysical dialogue between a corporeal self and a deceased other. Neither does this work fulfil the conditions of a mediated dialogue as one side of the conversation is fixed as pre-recorded material and the other also textually fixed as a script. I argue that this is a piece of dialogue-based art as it functions in dialogue with dialogue: dialogue is central to both form and content. It is precisely the lack of ‘literal’ dialogue, the break-down of possibility to hold a dialogue, and the performative polyphony of voices, idiolects and perspectives beyond resolution that positions the work within a realm of practice that I propose is most accurately described as dialogue-based.

The work constructs a performative and fictional shared space between my father, my grandfather and myself. It is not a shared space of meaning, rather it constructs a space in dialogue with Bohm’s idea of a shared space: it is a limited space where understanding can never occur. The work’s relevance to this research is its potential reading as a temporary portal connecting two specific locations; the location of the
performed work in a lecture theatre at the University of Windsor in Canada, and the location of the audiotaped conversation in my grandfather’s flat in Clevedon, UK where the conversation had first occurred a few months before.

**Parc Victoria, Victoria Park (2008)**

Approaching dialogue as a shared space that connects locations can also be seen in this further example of my own past practice. *Parc Victoria, Victoria Park* was commissioned for the exhibition “The Sun Never Sets: Victoria Park in Context” at the Dunlop Art Gallery in Regina, Canada, located at the edge of Victoria Park, the city’s central square. As the curatorial essay in the exhibition catalogue proposes, “Victoria Park has two contexts: a local context as the main square of downtown Regina and a global context as a member of a worldwide club of Victoria Parks that were created during the reign of Queen Victoria in the colonies of the British Empire” (Flaman, 2008: 27).

My response to the commission brief was a dialogue-based synchronised two-channel video work located within the interplay of local and global contexts. Shot in Victoria Park in Cardiff, Wales (Parc Victoria in Welsh), *Parc Victoria, Victoria Park* features Ruby Ridgeway speaking about her life as a bilingual person in both English and Welsh. On the left-hand screen Ruby speaks in English, and on the right-hand screen, she is seen again speaking in Welsh (see Figure 8). In English, Ruby recounts to herself the history of language suppression imposed by the English on the Welsh in the late Ninetieth and early Twentieth Centuries and the use of the Welsh Not, a piece of wood that would be hung around the neck of children heard speaking Welsh, signalling the physical punishment that would follow. This was the story recounted at her Welsh

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60 Dunlop Art Gallery: [http://www.dunlopartgallery.org](http://www.dunlopartgallery.org)
language high school to pupils caught speaking English. As the dialogue goes back and forth, Ruby addresses the question of her identity: is she a different person when she inhabits each language? The work separates viewers into four language categories: bilingual English/Welsh speakers; English only speakers; Welsh only speakers; viewers who understand neither language.

Figure 8  *Parc Victoria, Victoria Park* (2008)

Once again, this is a work that fulfils neither the literal dialogic criteria of Kac nor Kester but instead performs the Bakhtinian idea of identity-formation rooted in language as a dialogic process. In this example, it is clear how Bakhtin’s notion of the dialogic can easily - and productively - be transposed from the context of the novel into the broader sphere of cultural production. I’m reminded here of the Nigerian writer Ben Okri’s description of humans as “homo fabula”, storytelling beings who build our collective and individual identities through the narratives we tell (1996: 24), a perspective that reflects the Bakhtinian notion of self as constructed through relations - dialogue with others and internal dialogues with one’s own self. Equally important in the work is the parallel dialogue between the two locations positioned within a global context: Victoria Park (Parc Victoria) in Cardiff, the site of the video-shoot, and Victoria Park in Regina, the site of the exhibition, where the issue of colonial language suppression also resonates.
From past practice to current research

Reflecting on these two pieces of past practice, I now re-articulate these works as dialogue-based art approached through translocality, as the meaning of the works emerge at the transversal of dialogue and location. In *Parc Victoria, Victoria Park*, the dialogue between the shared space of the specific locations admits us into Ruby’s internal dialogue. Translocality emerges in the description of the two Victoria Parks as places that can be understood and considered within the imbrication of multiple concerns. The work places subjective experience in dialogue with social, historical, political and global contexts that in this work draws a thread of connection between two pieces of land 4,030 miles apart but nonetheless linked by shared histories of colonisation – within two cities central to my own subjective experience of translocality. These two pieces of past practice represent turning points in my understanding. *Stories and Conversations* represents a point in the development of my practice where a concern with dialogue became apparent and *Parc Victoria, Victoria Park* marks the moment when I developed an awareness of the meaning of place as unfixed and ever-changing. These works have informed the sense of responsibility I now feel to participate in the dialogues that shape the places where I live.
Practice-led case study 1: QR Code Project

This is the first of three practice-led case studies undertaken as part of this doctoral research. Within the triangulated activities of academic leadership, research and teaching that I define as the characteristic activities of the ‘artist/academic’, this case study is approached with an inflection towards to the role of academic leadership. QR Code Project: Parallel Worlds, Intersecting Moments was developed as part of my ongoing collaboration with Plains Cree artist Judy Anderson. The work was exhibited at the First Nations University of Canada Gallery in Regina, Canada in March 2012, in a group exhibition Critical Faculties that brought together work by teaching staff from the Department of Visual Arts at the University of Regina and the area of Indian Fine Arts at First Nations University of Canada. First Nations University of Canada is an Indigenous federated college of the University of Regina, located on the same campus, but physically and culturally dislocated. At the commencement of project development, Judy Anderson and myself both worked in leadership roles in our respective Departments; Anderson as Head of Indian Fine Arts, and myself as Head of Visual Arts. We devised both the broader exhibition and our specific collaborative project as an act of bridging between two very different educational contexts: the standard Western knowledge framework of the University of Regina, and an environment committed to the development of Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing at First Nations University of Canada.

I define the parameters of this first-case study as: A. a discrete artwork; B. a broader artistic research project that encompasses the process of production that began in 2011, the event of exhibiting the work in 2012, and an experimental dialogue-based process of

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61 A point of clarification regarding the timing of this first piece of practice undertaken as part of the PhD research. My application to the new Transart PhD programme was accepted for summer 2011 and my thinking towards this research project began at that time, however the commencement of this new programme was subsequently delayed to summer 2012.
reflection resulting in a co-authored article in 2013. The article “QR Codes and Traditional Beadwork: Augmented Communities Improvising Together”, published in the online journal *M/C Media Cultures*, is attached as an appendix to this thesis but excerpts from the dialogue between the three authors is included here as a co-artist text. This case study is therefore developed using a dialogue-based method to address dialogue-based subject matter, as outlined in the description of the practice-led methodological approach of this research in Chapter One.

In describing the artwork, the artistic research process, the context of exhibiting the work and the development of the article, it will be made clear by the dialogue in the co-artist text, that these activities were undertaken through a process of collaboration and are therefore the product of multiple voices and authorship. The QR Code piece as a discreet artwork consists of two elements (see Figure 8). The first is two wall pieces with black and white QR codes created using traditional Canadian Aboriginal beading techniques and framed within red Stroud cloth. A Quick Response (QR) code is a matrix barcode made up of black square modules on a white square in a grid pattern that is optically machine-readable. One was beaded by myself and the other by Judy Anderson with the work often undertaken together. Dialogue and the sharing of personal

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63 Anderson has described Stroud cloth to me as a heavy wool cloth originating in the UK that has been used in North America as trade cloth since the 1680s, and has become a significant part of First Nations fabric traditions.
stories was a key part of my experience of undertaking this work, particularly in the laborious process of learning and creating the beaded pieces. The time Judy and I spent together at our kitchen tables was rich with cultural learning, and a safe space opened for my own questions, in particular regarding Aboriginal spirituality and Indigenous concepts of time. As Judy mentions in her co-artist text, the number seven has sacred meaning in her spiritual life, one example being that within Indigenous teachings the so-called ‘seventh generation principle’ states that any decisions made should consider the impact of those decisions forward seven generations.

The second element is a series of online video files of dialogues, accessible via scanning the beaded QR codes with a web-enabled device and QR code-reading software. The videos feature fourteen people from Saskatchewan, Canada. Seven people who self-identify as Aboriginal and seven non-Aboriginal people were paired with each other and asked to share stories about their own personal experiences with ‘new technologies’. The participants in the work were: Judy Anderson and myself; Rebecca Caines and Novalee Fox; Lionel Peyachew and John Campbell; Riel Gauthier and Willow Goddard; Katherine Boyer and Eileen Anderson; Deb Murray and Jesse Goddard; Cruz Anderson and Elijha Goddard. The participants were invited to compose a short story and send the stories to Judy and myself. We then paired the stories, simplified them, and interwove the texts to create simple back and forth scripts. When the beaded QR code wall pieces are scanned, each one of the two wall pieces connects the viewer to one half of a video conversation, hosted on the web. To view the work in its entirety therefore, two camera-enabled and internet-capable mobile devices were required. The website was programmed to change to the next dialogue every 10 minutes. This work used mixed-reality, combining the physical objects of the beaded QR codes and the online video
media, and relies on the augmented reality (AR) qualities of the QR code.

The broader research framework of the project is undertaken via an experimental dialogue-based process of reflection. This main body text is written in my voice. The co-artist text that follows moves between three authors, myself, Judy Anderson and Rebecca Caines, with each author responding to questions posed by the other authors, and the resulting text edited by all three authors. Reflective of the process of collaborative, dialogue-based making and authoring, this approach incorporates the varied research perspectives, ideas and references brought forward by its three authors, performing the ‘heteroglossic’ and ‘polyphonic’ framework of the approach. These Bakhtinian terms which Holquist (1981: 430) argues are textual attributes typically used together, are particularly apt for this interdisciplinary mix of visual and theoretical concerns and languages. Heteroglossia or ‘other-languageness’, can be understood as the intricate interweaving of points of reference and contexts that renders the meaning of a text specific to the moments and locations of encounter. Polyphony, or ‘multiple voices’, and its related term ‘orchestration’ utilise a musical metaphor to notate the harmony/dissonance/cacophony of many voices, each with their intermeshed heteroglossia. While Bakhtin developed these terms in relation to the form of the novel, Bakhtinian philosophy extends across the social and the discursive and these ideas relate to the broader terrain of all ‘texts’ and human existence rooted in language. Bakhtin sees the literary genre of the novel, a site of the discursive, as a device that records and synthesises the social voice of its era. This case study proposes that the same might be said of dialogue-based art as the complex interplay of voices within the work and the context of its production and exhibition revealed the particular situation of its chronoscopic time/space.
We might then ask how a ‘research output’ as part of a process of artistic research might reflect the heteroglossia, polyphony and broader ‘social voice’ of a dialogue-based artwork. How might a dialogue-based method of writing reflect on the conversation between the contexts of two institutions that the *QR Code Project* opened up? How might such a reflection on an artwork and the role of academic leadership that shaped its production and context and aims, translate into an academic ‘journal article’? The next steps of this research process were led by project participant Rebecca Caines who initiated a collaborative interview and writing process that began with each of us posing questions to each other. Caines collated the written responses, which we collectively discussed and revised. This process formed the starting point for a journal article for *M/C, a Journal of Media and Cultures*, in an edition Caines co-edited with Michelle Stewart on the theme of ‘augmentation’. Continuing the method of ‘skills sharing’ that began the project with Judy Anderson and I teaching each other to bead and to edit video, this final output of the project, under the mentorship and leadership of Caines, expanded our knowledge of academic writing, peer review and publishing.

The final output, the co-authored article, weaves excerpts of statements written by Judy Anderson and myself as part of the project development phase, descriptions of artistic process and audience observation, and the collaborative descriptive and critical writing. These conversations and responses explore the cross-cultural dialogue and leadership imperatives that led to the work’s creation, and describe the results of the technological and social disruptions and slippages that occurred in the development phase and in the gallery as viewers improvised with the technology, and with each other. The artwork

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64 Dr Rebecca Caines is a performance artist and scholar, and an Associate Professor of Creative Technologies at the University of Regina. She is co-editor (with Ajay Heble) of *The Improvisation Studies Reader: Spontaneous Acts* (2015).

65 The collaborative interview process formed the text of the journal article and *this* text here. The journal article is attached as Appendix 1 but can be read online with images, alongside other articles addressing the topic of augmentation: [http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcj/article/viewArticle/734](http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcj/article/viewArticle/734).
encompasses the acts of storytelling and traditional beading that collide and transverse during this project, exploring the tension and opportunity inherent in the cross-cultural dialogue. Each author brought their particular concerns, perspectives and areas of experience to the dialogue and the project. Anderson for example, introduces herself as an Indigenous artist, and locates her place and context of origin, the Gordon’s First Nation in Saskatchewan, and her practice in relation to traditional and contemporary Indigenous knowledge, ways of making and her Cree belief system. I brought to the project my own interest in expanding a definition of ‘dialogue-based art’ and the context of this project as the first piece of practice undertaken as part of my PhD research. For Anderson and myself, the context of the work as part of the broader Critical Faculties exhibition and our efforts towards bridging the gap between our academic departments and institutions was paramount. Caines brought ideas of augmentation and improvisation to the reading of the work, grounded in her own unfolding research project on ‘improvisation’ from a multidisciplinary perspective.66

Reflecting on the multiplicity of research interests led to a consideration of the project in relation to Bakhtin’s notions of an “excess of seeing” (1990: 22). An excess or surplus of seeing can be described by the simple situation of two people sitting across from one another. While both see the space between, each sees what the other cannot from the context of their own unique point of view: the face of the other and the landscape behind that defines a context, in excess to what we can see ourselves. As Bakhtin states it, “as we gaze at each other, two different worlds are reflected in the pupils of our eyes” (1990: 23). In the context of the gallery setting, the two round beaded pieces exist as crafted pictorial abstractions, but with the aid of a seeing tool, hidden (surplus, excess)

66 The approach to multi-voicedness I use in this text is through the inclusion of co-artist texts, a further demonstration via textual means of the fracturing of narrative that occurs in the work.
layers of content and context are revealed. It is as if the works themselves function as a pair of eyes that see and speak of the context behind the viewers’ backs: the rest of the exhibition, the door way, out into First Nations University of Canada and through the windows into the distance and across the gap that separates the two institutions.

In this first practice case study, the project used dialogue-based art to bridge the gap between two communities, physically close but culturally distant where dialogue remains problematic. The politics of mobility in this case are the result of residual colonial legacies still deeply embedded in Western Canadian society; without the provision of a context, students and teaching staff from the University of Regina rarely enter the First Nations University of Canada building and vice versa. The difference can perhaps be most starkly visualised on the two University web portals. Though the University of Regina declares itself “committed to Indigenization” on one of the fourteen scrolling banner images on the front page of its website, the First Nations University of Canada website welcomes visitors in five Indigenous languages in addition to English.

While the face-to-face aspects of the work and the Critical Faculties exhibition in general provided a dialogue-based interaction between the two institutions and two sets of individuals that was welcomed on both sides, I argue that it was “the possibility of risk and disruptions” (Caines, 2013) in the excess-space beyond the studio production and the conviviality of the Gallery reception, that spoke to the broader dialogues that remain difficult to hear. At times, the dialogue breaks down completely with the glitch of technological error, and we experience the augmentation of the post-

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67 http://www.uregina.ca/
68 http://fnuniv.ca/
biological dialogue when “bodies and code interact” (Caines, 2013), but we encounter disruption most powerfully in the decision that participant Lionel Peyachew makes to tell his story in his first language of Cree, dismantling the possibility of direct communication. By locking out non-Cree speakers, both colonial settlers and the majority of the Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan, Peyachew draws our attention to the painful issue of Indigenous language suppression, a legacy of the Residential School system and the broader project of ‘cultural genocide’.69 His decision challenges the very notion of giving voice to Indigenous positions: give voice in whose language? By highlighting the tensions inherent in ‘multilinguality’, Peyachew’s knowing intervention reveals the politics of language and the awareness that language is never neutral.70 Peyachew positions English as the immigrant, non-Indigenous, ‘colonial settler’ language, unsettling the status quo. The notion of ‘unsettling’ is politically nuanced in the context of Regina, Saskatchewan – to unsettle is to resist and challenge the dominance and sovereignty of the ‘settlers’. Peyachew’s approach disrupts this particular dialogue with his fellow participant John Campbell, and instead moves beyond literal dialogue towards an example of what Bakhtin calls a “social and historical heteroglossia” (1981: 263), an intertextual dialogue between voices and positions that moves beyond the momentary towards the broader “verbal ideological life of the nation and the epoch” (273).

69 On 31 May 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released their findings. The Executive Summary document, ‘Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future’, begins with the following statement: “For over a century, the central goals of Canada’s Aboriginal policy were to eliminate Aboriginal governments; ignore Aboriginal rights; terminate the Treaties; and, through a process of assimilation, cause Aboriginal peoples to cease to exist as distinct legal, social, cultural, religious, and racial entities in Canada. The establishment and operation of residential schools were a central element of this policy, which can best be described as “cultural genocide”’. The Executive Summary document is published in English and French. It can be found at: http://www.trc.ca/website/trcInstitution/File/2015/Findings/Exec_Summary_2015_05_31_web_o.pdf.

70 Peyachew’s intervention was pivotal to my own understanding that considering the politics of language is an integral characteristic in translocal projects.

71 The field of colonial settler studies seeks to address the ongoing situation of settlers who stay and establish “sovereign capacity” and “political order” in the new location, distinct from but resonant with the ‘home’ location. Canada is such an example. “Settler colonialism is not colonialism: settlers want Indigenous people to vanish”. See: https://settlercolonialstudies.org, a scholarly blog site and accompanying Journal central to the establishment of this field of investigation. The blog was previously maintained Edward Cavanagh and currently Lorenzo Veracini.

Judy Anderson:
I am a Plains Cree artist from the Gordon’s First Nation, in Saskatchewan, Canada. As a Professor of Indian Fine Arts at the First Nations University of Canada, I research and continue to learn about traditional art making using traditional materials creating primarily beaded pieces such as medicine bags and drum sticks. Of particular interest to me, however, is how such traditional practices manifest in contemporary Aboriginal art. Rachelle had the idea that we should bead QR codes and make videos for the upcoming First Nations and University of Regina joint faculty exhibition that we initiated. Over the Christmas holiday we visited each others homes, beaded together, and found out about each other’s lives by telling stories of the things we’ve experienced. I felt it was very important that our QR codes were not beaded in the exact same manner; Rachelle built hers up through a series of straight lines, whereas mine was beaded with a circle around the square QR code, which reflected the importance of the circle in my Cree belief system. It was important for me to show that even though we, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, have similar experiences, we often have a different approach or way of thinking about similar things. I also suggested we frame the black and white beaded QR codes with bright red Stroud cloth, a heavy wool cloth originating in the UK that has been used in North America as trade cloth since the 1680s, and is now a significant part of First Nations fabric traditions.

Since we were approaching this piece as a cross-cultural one, I chose the number seven for the number of stories we would create because it is a sacred number in my own Plains Cree spiritual teachings. As such, we brought together seven pairs of people, including ourselves. The participants were drawn from family and friends from reserves and communities around Saskatchewan, including the city of Regina, as well as colleagues and students from the two university campuses. There were a number of different age ranges and socioeconomic backgrounds represented. We came together to tell stories about our experiences with technology, a common cross-cultural experience that seemed appropriate to the work.
Rachelle Viader Knowles:
As the process of making the beadworks unfolded, what became apparent was the time-scale and the work as a social practice. We also worked together on the video component. Each participant in the videos was asked to write a short text about some aspect of their relationship with technology and communications. We took the stories, arranged them into pairs, and used them to write scripts. We then invited each pair to perform the scripts together on camera in my studio. The stories were broad ranging. My own was a reflection of the profound discomfort of finding a blog where a man I was dating was publishing the story of our relationship as it unfolded. Other stories covered the loss of no longer being able to play the computer games from teenage years, first encounters with new technologies and social networks, secret admirers, and crank calls to emergency services. The storytelling and dialogue between us as we shared our practices became an important, but unseen layer of this “dialogical” work (Kester, 2004).

Rebecca Caines:
I came along to Rachelle’s studio at the University of Regina to be a participant in a video for the piece. My co-performer was a young woman called Nova Lee, a student at First Nations University of Canada. We chatted and sat knee-to-knee together to film our stories about technology, both of us focusing on different types of internet relationships. We were asked to read one line of our story at a time, interweaving together our poems of experience and by doing so transforming our texts from monologues to duologues. Afterwards I asked Nova Lee where her name was from. She told me it was from a song called Don’t Go Near the Indians by Rex Allen from 1962. She found the song on YouTube and played it for us. Here is a sample of the lyrics:

I told my daddy I’d found a girl
Who meant the world to me
And tomorrow I’d ask the Indian chief
For the hand of Nova Lee
Dad’s trembling lips spoke softly
As he told me of my life twangs then he said I could never take
This maiden for my wife
Son, the white man and Indians were fighting when you were born
And a brave called Yellow Sun scalped my little boy
So I stole you to get even for what he’d done
Though you’re a full-blooded Indian, son I love you as much as my own little fellow that’s dead
And, son, Nova Lee is your sister
And that’s why I’ve always said
Son, don’t go near the Indians
Please stay away
Son, don’t go near the Indians
Please do what I say

Judy explained that this was a common history of displacement in Canada, people taken away, falling in love with their relatives without knowing, perhaps sensing a connection, always longing for a home (Campbell, 1995, n.p.). I thought, “What a weight for this young woman to bear, this name, this history.” Other participants also learnt about each other this way through the sharing of stories. Many had come to Canada from other places, each with different cultural and colonial resonances. Through these moments of working together, new understandings formed that deeply affected the participants. In this way, layers of storytelling form the heart of this work.
Judy Anderson:
Storytelling holds a special place in Aboriginal peoples’ lives; through them we learn the laws, rules, and regulations that govern our behaviour as individuals, within our family, our communities, and our nations. These stories include histories (personal and communal), sacred teachings, the way the world used to be, creation stories, medicine stories, stories regarding the seasons and animals, and stories that define our relationship with the environment etc. The stories we asked for not only showed that we as Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people have the same experiences, but also work as traditional stories. For example, Rachelle’s story taught a good lesson about how it is important to learn about the individual you are dating—had she not, her whole life could have been laid out to any who may have come across that man’s blog. My story spoke to the need to look up and observe what is around you instead of being engrossed in your own little world, because you don’t know who could be lifting your information. They all showed a common interest in gossip, and laughing at mistakes and life lessons.

Rebecca Caines:
This work relies on the augmented reality (AR) qualities of the QR code. Pavlik and Bridges suggest AR, even through relatively limited tools like a QR code, can have a significant impact on storytelling practices: “AR enriches an individual’s experience with the real world. ... Stories are put in a local context and act as a supplement to a citizen’s direct experience with the world” (Pavlik and Bridges 2013: 21). Their research shows that AR technologies like QR codes brings the story to life in a three dimensional and interactive form that allows the user a level of participation impossible in traditional, analogue media. They emphasize the different viewing possibilities in AR storytelling, as the new media storytelling model is nonlinear. The storyteller conceptualizes the audience member not as a consumer of the story engaged in a third-person narrative, but rather as a participant engaged in a first-person narrative. The storyteller invites participants to explore the story in a variety of ways, perhaps beginning in the middle, moving across time, or space, or by topic (Pavlik and Bridges, 2013: 22). In their case studies, Pavlik and Bridges show AR has the “potential to become a viable storytelling format with a diverse range of options that engage citizens through sight, sound, or haptic experiences... to produce participatory, immersive, and community-based stories” (2013: 39).

The personal stories in this artwork were remediated a number of different ways. They were written down, then separated into one-line fragments, interwoven with our partners, and re-read again and again for the camera, before being edited and processed. Marked by the artists clearly as ‘Aboriginal’ and ‘non Aboriginal’, and placed alongside works featuring traditional beading, these stories were marked and re-inscribed by complex and fragmented histories of indigenous and non-indigenous relations in Canada. This history was emphasized as the QR codes were also physically located in the First Nations University of Canada, a unique indigenous space.

Due to the way the videos were accessed and played back through augmented reality technologies, stories in the gallery were experienced in nonlinear fashions, started part way through, left before completion, or not in sync with the partner they were designed to work with. Audience experimented with the video content, stopping and starting it to produce new combinations of words and images. This experience was also affected by chance as the video files online are on a cycle, after a set period of time, the scan will suddenly produce a new story. These augmented stories were recreated and reshaped by participants in dialogue with the space, and with each other.

In her 1997 study of the reception of new media art in galleries, Beryl Graham surveys the types of audience interaction common to new media art practices like AR art. She “reveals
patterns of use of interactive artworks including the relation of use-time to gender, aspects of intimidation, and social interaction”. In particular, she observes “a high frequency of collective use of artworks, even when the artworks are designed to be used by one person (Graham, 1997: 2). What Graham describes as “collective” and “social,” I see as dialogue and improvisation engaging with difference, differences between audience members, and differences between human participants and the alien nature of sophisticated, interactive technologies. Improvisation “embodies real-time creative decision-making, risk-taking, and collaboration” (Heble, n.d). In the improvisatory act, participants participate in active listening in order to work with different voices, experiences, and practices, but share a common focus in the creative endeavour. Notions such as “the unexpected” or “the mistake” are constantly reconfigured into productive material. However, as leading improvisation studies scholar Ajay Heble suggests, “improvisation must be considered not simply as a musical or creative form, but as a complex social phenomenon that mediates transcultural inter-artistic exchanges that produce new conceptions of identity, community, history, and the body” (Heble, n.d).

I watched at the opening as audience members in QR Code Project: Parallel Worlds, Intersecting Moments paired up, successfully or unsuccessfully attempted to scan the code and download the video, and physically wrapped themselves around their partner (often a stranger) in order to hear the quiet audio in the loud gallery. Audience began to help each other through the process, to improvise together. The QR code was not always a familiar or comfortable object. Audience often had to install a QR code reader application onto their own device first, and then proceed to try to get the reader to work. Underfunded university Wi-Fi connections dropped, Apple ID logins failed, devices stalled. There were sudden loud cries when somebody successfully scanned their half of the work, and then rushes and scrambles as small groups of people attempted to sync their videos to start at the same time. The louder the gallery got, the closer the pairs had to stand to each other to hear the video through the device’s tiny speakers. Many people looked over someone else’s shoulder without their knowledge. Sometimes people were too close for comfort and behaviour was negotiated and adapted. Sometimes, the pairs gave up trying; sometimes they borrowed each other’s devices, sometimes their phone or tablet was incompatible. Difference created new improvisations, or introduced sudden stops or diversions in the activities taking place. The theme of the work was strengthened every time an improvised negotiation took place, every time the technology faltered or succeeded, every time a digital or physical interaction was attempted. Through the combination of augmented bead practices used in an innovative way, and augmented technology with new audiences, new types of improvisatory responses could take place.

Initially I found it difficult to not simplify and stereotype the processes taking place, to read it as a metaphor of the differing access to resources and training in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, a clear example of the ways technology-use marks wealth and status. As I moved through the space, caught up in dialogue-based, improvisatory encounters, cross-cultural experiences broke down, but did not completely erase, these initial markers of difference. Instead, layers of interaction and information began to be placed over the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal identities in the gallery. My own assumptions were placed under pressure as I interacted with the artists and the other participants in the space. My identity as a relative newcomer to Saskatchewan was slowly augmented by the stories and experiences I shared and heard, and the audience members shifted back and forth between being experts in the aspects of the stories and technologies that were familiar to us, and asking for help to translate and activate the stories and processes that were alien.
Judy Anderson:
There is an old saying, “If it doesn’t move, bead it.” I think that this desire to augment with the decorative is handed down through traditional thoughts and beliefs regarding clothing. Once nomadic we did not accumulate many goods, as a result, the goods we did keep were beautified through artistic practices including quilling and eventually beadwork (painting too). To beautify the clothing was to honour your spirit. I think that this belief naturally grew to include any item, after all, there is nothing like an object or piece of clothing that is beaded well—no one can resist it. There is, however, a belief that humans should not try to mimic perfection, which is reserved for the Creator and in many cases a beader will deliberately put a bead out of place.

Rebecca Caines:
When new media produces unexpected results, or as Rachelle says, when pixels “go out of place”, it can be seen as a sign that humans are (deliberately or accidently) failing to use the digital technology in the way it was intended. In QR Code Project the theme of cross cultural encounters and technological communication was only enhanced by these moments of displacement and slippage and the improvisatory responses that took place. The artists could not predict the degree of slippage that would occur, but from their catalogue texts and the conversations above, it is clear that collective negotiation was a desired outcome. By creating a QR code based artwork that utilized augmented art practices to create new types of storytelling, the artists allowed augmented identities to develop, slip, falter, and be reconfigured. Through the dialogue-based art practices of traditional beading and participatory video, the work began to build new modes of communication and knowledge sharing.

I believe there could be productive relationships to be further explored between what Judy calls the First Nations “desire to bead” whilst acknowledging human fallibility; and the ways Rachelle aims to technologically augment face-to-face conversations and storytelling through video practices despite, or perhaps because of the possibility of risk and disruptions when bodies and code interact. What kind of trust and reciprocity becomes possible across cultural divides when this can be acknowledged as a common human quality? How could beads and/or pixels being “out of place” expose fault lines and opportunities in these kinds of cross-cultural knowledge transfer? As Judy suggested in our conversations, such work requires active engagement from the audience in the process that does not always occur. “In those instances, does the piece fail or people fail the piece? I’m not sure.” In crossing back and forth between these different types of augmentation impulses, and by creating improvisatory, dialogue-based encounters in the gallery, these artists began the tentative, complex, and vital process of cultural exchange, and invited participants and audience to take this step with them and to work “across traditional and contemporary modes of production” to “use the language and process of art to speak, listen, teach and learn” (Knowles and Anderson, artist statement 2012).
In summary: an expanded definition of dialogue-based art

This chapter presents a practice-led example of an open, expanded and unfinalised understanding of dialogue-based art that challenges Kester’s face-to-face only parameters for social practices in contemporary art, and Kac’s assertion that electronic media art is “uniquely suited” to perform “literal” direct communications and dialogic exchange (Kac, 2004: 199). I argue for a definition of dialogue-based art that remains open to both literal approaches, but also open to dialogue used in conceptual or symbolic ways, an approach I define as dialogues in dialogue with dialogue – or meta-dialogues – where dialogue becomes both subject and verb.

Therefore, I propose an expanded definition of dialogue-based art practice to include literal dialogues and dialogues that move beyond the literal.

Literal dialogues encompass works exemplified in contemporary art social practices that address direct co-corporeal engagement in the inter-human sphere, and works that augment human communications through the utilisation of technological apparatus or other forms of interface as exemplified in mediated communications art. Literal dialogues unfold in time, synchronous or asynchronous, as fractured or fragmented, or reflective of diverse cultural understandings.

Dialogues that move beyond the literal expand the definition of dialogue-based art towards Bakhtinian dialogue, or the dialogic, as a creative process of authoring identity, understanding and relationships, within ourselves and with others. Moving beyond the literal might place dialogue in dialogue with dialogue, such as in the development of meta-dialogues or dialogue as a method of addressing dialogue; incorporating exchange between ideas, disciplines and histories as an intertextual process of interdisciplinary meaning-making. An expanded definition of dialogue-based art might also encompass
dialogues that reflect their own limits, to reveal the potentiality and actuality of misunderstanding, failure, silence, dissonance, resistance, monologue, and the glitch of technological, social, cultural, physical, corporeal and emotional breakdown implicitly embedded within dialogue. Such an expanded understanding of dialogue might also incorporate and reflect non-human participants or influences, such as the social and technical networks that facilitate and form communications, post-biological dialogues between bodies, code and other augmentations, and the potential significant effects of objects and locales within such dialogues.

I propose this expanded and provisional definition of dialogue-based art that emerge between varied positions on dialogue-based practice. The frame of reference is literal dialogue, and although this ‘expanded’ definition moves beyond the literal and into conceptual, symbolic or meta-discursive modes and the realm of the non-human, dialogue-based art is nonetheless understood as tethered to call and response interactive communications in the human social world. As the QR Code Project uncovered, it is by reading the work through this expanded definition of dialogue-based art that the social fragilities, fault lines, limits and contexts of dialogues across difference become apparent. The work did not produce a Bohmian shared space of meaning, nor was that the goal of the project. Moreover, the disrupted dialogue between Peyachew and Campbell revealed that the attempt to build such a space between the staff and students at First Nations University of Canada, and the University of Regina - and across Canada more generally - is still in an early stage of formation and {re}conciliation.\textsuperscript{72} The work

\textsuperscript{72} ‘Reconciliation’ (as used most prominently in the title of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada) is a contested term and as such an alternate term ‘conciliation’ has been proposed by Indigenous groups as a more appropriate expression of a relationship where trust is being built, and no former harmony exists to now be restored. See: http://speakingmytruth.ca/?page_id=266 for an example of this contestation from an Inuit perspective. In recognition of the cultural tension that has developed between usage of the terms reconciliation and conciliation, the Canada Council for the Arts names its “groundbreaking” funding initiative which “aims to promote artistic collaborations that look to the past & future for new dialogues between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada” as: {Re}conciliation. See http://canadacouncil.ca/funding/reconciliation
amplified the difference between the physically close proximity and the cultural distance that separates the two very specific locations linked within the project. As much as the work was a literal and synchronous dialogue between the two collaborators (Anderson and Knowles), the participants at the video shoot, and in the interactions in the gallery (and afterwards in the collaborative authorship of the article initiated and led by Caines), it was also a symbolic dialogue between the institutions, their structures and the histories that caused their foundation, the on-going contestation of the territories they inhabit; two different world views and the balance of power. If we understand dialogue as a process that addresses an idea of shared spaces of meaning, how can this articulation of a metaphoric ‘space’ address Frieling’s call to develop social practices in response to our global and networked society? In other words, how can the spatial be applied to the dialogic? This question frames the thinking in Chapter Three, which considers the application of theoretical ideas of the ‘translocal’ to this expanded set of characteristics for dialogue-based art.
Chapter Three: Translocality

In the previous chapter, I developed an argument for an expanded and open definition of dialogue-based art, widening the scope beyond multi-modal forms of literal communication across the human-social and the technical networks that carry contemporary communications. Frieling’s provocation towards a dialogue-based art that acknowledges and functions within our global and networked society leads to the question of spatiality and how to approach dialogue-based art from a position that acknowledges location, connectivity and the complex geopolitical issues of mobility central to globalisation. Massey provides a pertinent list of propositions ‘for space’ that assist in connecting dialogue with the spatial. Firstly, she proposes space “as the product of interrelations”, with such interactions understood across the broadest of spectrums from the intimate interpersonal to the “immensity of the global”; secondly she proposes space as always holding the possibility of “multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality”; and finally that space is always incomplete, (forever unfinalisable in Bakhtinian terms), or as she evocatively phrases it, “a simultaneity of stories-so-far”, with the implied continuity of stories to follow (2005: 9).

Massey’s propositions for space prompted a consideration of how dialogue might be understood across and between locations that led me towards the growing academic research perspective of translocality. In this chapter, I will first define the key ideas of translocality, as both an interdisciplinary research perspective and as it is deployed within the realm of art. I will then identify the ways in which my collaborators and I have explored and interpreted translocality through this research, leading to a consideration of how the subject position of the ‘translocal artist’ might function as
counter-narrative or alternative to the position of ‘international artist’ or ‘itinerant artist nomad’.

This chapter is framed around the second practice-led case study undertaken as part of the doctoral research. *Let Me Tell You The Story Of My Neighbour* was performed in varied incarnations including two installation works, two ‘newspapers’, and participation in the *Mallorca Translocal Meeting*, a month-long residency in Mallorca and an example of a translocal artists network in action. *Let Me Tell You The Story Of My Neighbour* concluded with an experimental artwork-cum-documentation project *Archive/Portal*, exhibited at the Khyber Gallery in Halifax, Canada. I presented two conference papers related to this research during the timeframe of the project, at the *Trans - what?* symposium in Berlin, Germany (2013), and the *Urban Encounters* conference in Halifax, Canada (2013). Reflecting upon the theoretical ideas of translocality and the practice undertaken, Chapter Three concludes with interim findings; a summary of characteristics identified thus far within a ‘translocal’ approach to the expanded understanding of dialogue-based art.

**The translocal research perspective**

While ‘the translocal’ can be understood as simply meaning across and between locals, the concept of translocality began to gain traction within academic discourse in the 1990s. The text often cited as key to launching the concept is cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai’s 1996 book *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalisation*, where he introduced the term within the context of furthering a theoretical discourse of “grounded transnationalism”. Through continued development over the last two decades, the term translocality has expanded from a term developed as
a finer-grained subsidiary of transnationalism to a research perspective in its own right, and further, to an overview perspective where transnationalism “appears more as a special case of translocality” (Freitag and Von Oppen, 2010: 12). In *Translocal Geographies* Brickell and Datta argue for a multiscalar understanding of translocality beyond the discourse of national borders and international migrations, enabling the term to be deployed as an expression of “simultaneous situatedness across different locales” and “connectedness to a variety of other locales” (2011: 4), no matter the proximity. Within transnationalism the border of transgression is delineated as a cartographic line, whereas the possibilities of transgression within the term translocal are expanded beyond physical spatiality and issues of migration and mobility across international borders. The multi-scalar understanding of translocality loosened from transnationalism enables a translocal approach to be applied to connections across the world, across town, or across the street, acknowledging that interconnectivities across boundaries are as likely to occur close to home in an urban encounter as they are across international borders.

While some authors have positioned tranlocalities as places with interactions between them, Frietag and Von Oppen define translocality as “the sum of phenomena which result from a multitude of circulations and transfers” (2010: 5), broadening the perspective and lengthening the threads from the fields of geography and anthropology towards a more conceptual, interdisciplinary investigation of interconnectedness. While Greiner and Sakdapolrak (2013: 1) list the disciplines most associated with the translocal research perspective as being geography, anthropology, history, area studies, cultural studies and development studies, I propose art and artistic research as disciplinary fields where contributions are also located.
Translocality in art

How have the ideas of translocality impacted on art practice, and how is the term deployed in art contexts? Early experiments in telecommunications art, such as *Hole In Space* discussed in Chapter One and Kac and Fadon’s collaborative *Three-City Link* project from 1989, can be understood as translocal, not only in the live phase of the project that we might define as ‘the artwork’, but also through the multiple connectivities that led to the social network that fostered the conceptualisation of the projects. *Three-City Link* connected a group of participating artists in three American cities (Chicago, Pittsburgh and Boston) using a slow-scan television system and a three-way conference call, enabling the artists to send and receive images across the temporary network, exploring the relationship (or the dialogue) “between urban and telematic space” (Kac, no date).73

In addition to multi-scalar understandings, multi-temporal understandings can also be applied to translocality: what is it to return to a place you left for example, where the location stays the same but the time shifts? Or to reconnect to a location that has experienced rapid social or physical change? To return to Massey once again, multi-temporal understandings of place (and space) invite a consideration of geological timelines that destabilise any notion of place as fixed or stable. Massey proposes therefore that places can be understood as “*spatio-temporal events*”, formed in the here and now through understandings of interconnecting forces, both geological and socio-political, and therefore always open and subject to change (2005: 130-31).

A pertinent example of an artwork that resonates as a translocal echo and a dialogue,

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73 See description on Eduardo Kac’s website: [http://www.ekac.org/threecitylink.html](http://www.ekac.org/threecitylink.html)
connecting a multi-temporal destabilisation of a single locale is Jeremy Deller’s *Battle of Orgreave*[^74], a live historical re-enactment in 2001 of a well-known conflict from the 1984 miners' strike in South Yorkshire. In this work, former miners and former police officers who found themselves on opposing sides in the original conflict participated in its reconstruction which took place in the same location sixteen years later. However, those involved did not necessarily play the same monologic (or singular narrative) roles they played in the original event, with the original participants taking part alongside members of historical re-enactment societies. In this instance, the construct of the chronotope assists with understanding how the artwork facilitates a convergence of diverse individuals in a particular time and place to enact a ‘spatio-temporal event’. The forms of dialogue occurring here are multiple: between opposing sides of a conflict; between hierarchies of power and political ideologies; between the former and present day subjectivities of the participants; between the temporalities of 1984 and 2001; between monologic positions and dialogic interactions, between the actuality of the lived role of the historical conflict and the performed role of the re-enactment, in the gaze of an audience, each other and the cameras capturing the performance for a documentary by writer and director Mike Figgis (2001).[^75]

Referring back to the proposed expanded definitions of dialogue-based art in Chapter Two, *The Battle of Orgreave* includes a combination of approaches: literal dialogues between the participants in the work; identity formation through the roles and political ideologies represented; the location of Orgreave itself as influential to the dialogue; the construction of the dialogue through the process of re-enactment and documentation[^75];

[^74]: An art project by Jeremy Deller, filmed under the direction of Mike Figgis for Artangel Media and Channel 4. An excerpt of the film can be seen at: [http://www.jeremydeller.org/orgreave/orgreave_menu.htm](http://www.jeremydeller.org/orgreave/orgreave_menu.htm)

and the failure of the miners and the police – as a monologic apparatus of the State - to achieve a shared space of understanding. What the documentary by Mike Figgis makes clear is that this is a dialogue between the two cultural landscapes of the one location across time: in 1984 Orgreave is a place framed within the identity of a working mining community; in 2001 Orgreave is described by residents as crime-ridden, derelict, and riddled with poverty (Figgis, 2001). In this way, I propose The Battle of Orgreave as an example of trans-temporal translocality in art practice.

The term translocal also operates as a highly apt descriptor of artist networks and practices that aim to bridge across locations and between people. An earlier example is The Syndicate Network, a platform for media culture and art that in 1997 spanned thirty-one countries across the West, former ‘East’ and adjoining Europe. In his article A Translocal Formation, V2 East, the Syndicate, Deep Europe published on the V2 website in 1997, Andreas Broeckmann, Director of V2 in Rotterdam during the years The Syndicate was developed, describes his interpretation of the term: “Translocal means you are dealing with individual local situations but they are distributed within a larger geographical and cultural system. The global is locally embedded” (Broeckmann, 1997). I would add that within the translocal perspective the opposite holds equally true, the local is also globally embedded, with the global understood as the entirety of all local-local connectivity. He goes on to describe The Syndicate as an “informal network”, and an “intercom” for people in the media art community in Europe and beyond. “At the same time” he continues, “this intercommunication effects a re-mapping of cultural and mental territories that transcend the political, religious and territorial separations which we regard as a temporary nuisance, rather than as the last word on this imagined continent/container” (Broeckmann, 1997).

Similarly, in her 2002 article *Global vs. Local? The Art of Translocality*, media art researcher Ewa Wojtowicz proposes the online listserv and net art community *Nettime* as “the good example of translocal artistic community”, and a constituent element in these early years of network culture towards a project of artworld decentralisation. Like Broeckmann, Wojtowicz presents tranlocality as a postcolonial and resistant position that transposes geographic location to form new ‘locales’ in the dispersed geographies of the Internet.

The positions that both Broeckmann and Wojtowicz present in their writing align with the ideas developed in this thesis, namely that translocal thinking enables artists to propose and enact alternative formations and communicative strategies towards neighbourhoods of like-mindedness and cultural affiliation. As demonstrated within the *Battle of Orgreave*, translocality also has the potential to offsets the risk of the formation of echo chambers of encounter, either within the local or in exchange between people of like minds across distance. Translocal interactions can occur between alternate points of view informed by the position of the ground from other locales, or by facilitating the formation of communicative strategies which allow similar positions to be refracted by the cultural difference between translocal sites. I propose that these alternative formations contain the potential to resist and transcend the imposed segregations of geography, the controls enacted on free movement of people, and other cultural, social or geopolitical inequities.

To return to the central concern of this thesis and the forms of dialogue-based art, the translocal conditions of communication can be stated in the simplest and most pragmatic formula: meet face-to-face when you can or when desired; use

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communication tools when you can’t meet face-to-face or where preferred; blend as required. As these early examples of the term translocality from the realm of media art suggest, translocality defines the network of formation and affiliation, structures that may be enabled, enhanced or expanded by mediated technologies. To use an example relevant to the case study presented further in this chapter, and to bring the idea of translocality and communications closer to home, I will discuss the communicative structure that has developed within my community of neighbours in the Bartleman Building in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada as an example of what I mean by ‘a network of formation and affiliation’ that operates across multiple communicative modes.

Figure 10 is a digital collage I produced as my contribution to the Let Me Tell You The Story Of My Neighbour project (introduced later in this chapter) that represents my neighbourly community on the top floor of the Bartleman apartment building. The ‘Bartleman community’ is a group of people who either own or rent a condominium or apartment within the Bartleman Building so the group extends to the people currently living in the building, or owners such as myself (and my neighbours imaged above) who now live in disparate other locations. While all the day to day and face-to-face

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78 By “communication tools” I am referring to the gamut of telematic communications such as: email, file transfers, Skype, text, Google aps, Facebook and other social media, and ‘community’ tools such as Streetlife and Basecamp; in other words, the growing array of communications technologies currently available. As has been noted, within the history of telecommunications art and mail art, artists have used a wide array of tools and methods as available such as the mail system, fax, slowscan TV, telegram etc.
interactions between neighbours continues, an additional layer of communications exists though a Basecamp online messaging and discussion forum, where members share news, information and concerns no matter their physical location. This translocal community of neighbours transcends the specific geographic location of its members, but nonetheless reflects a connection to a central geographic location: The Bartleman condominium building in Regina, Saskatchewan. Applying this understanding to the digital collage of myself and my neighbours, we are ‘neighbours’ whether or not we are together in the hallway, separately behind closed doors, or out of town. I propose this as an example of a locally embedded global, in this example enacted via social media.

A further example of the term ‘translocality’ in art can be found in the large-scale project *Rhyzom: collaborative network for local cultural production and trans-local dissemination*, a European interdisciplinary network and cultural platform in operation between 2009 and 2011.79 This network brought together five partners: atelier d'architecture autogérée (coordinator - Paris, FR), Platforma Garanti Contemporary Art Center (Istanbul, TR), AGENCY (University of Sheffield, UK), Paragon Studios Ltd (Belfast, UK) and public works (London, UK). Within this example, we also encounter a range of communicative modes and methods of engagement. The *Rhyzom* project unfolded through a series of workshops, fieldtrips and dissemination tools including a book, *Trans-Local-Act: Cultural Practices Within and Across* (2010) published in hard copy and distributed free online in the form of a pdf.80 The *Rhyzom* project network continued in the form of an ‘eco nomadic school’ until 2015, with events such as the *Urban Agriculture and Community Growing* three day workshop, introducing “farming, growing and cooking initiatives across Rotterdam”.81

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80 The book *TransLocalAct* can be downloaded at: [http://rhyzom.net/2011/02/02/translocalact.pdf](http://rhyzom.net/2011/02/02/translocalact.pdf).
The introductory essay in the book *Trans-Local-Act: Cultural Practices Within and Across* sets out the broader context of the project and questions addressed:

We live in a moment of re-assessment of cultural practice and redefinition of the role of culture in a society which faces a number of economic, social, political and environmental crises. Globalisation has demonstrated its critical effects and localism is becoming a key term for the way we envision the management of the future. We are moving towards ‘deglocalisation’, to quote French landscape designer and ecologist Gilles Clement, which translates into a localised consumption and production of goods. What is the role of culture in such a deglobalisation process? How is culture ‘produced’ and ‘consumed’ in a ‘deglobalised’ world? How can local forms of cultural production circulate and be connected through alternative channels? And also, what should be considered ‘culture’ and what are the criteria to assess it?

(Awan et al, 2010: 19)

What is to be gained from this translocal approach to art? The aims that emerge from the writings of Broeckmann and Wojtowicz that examine the nascent years of network culture, early projects such as *International Dinner Party* and *Hole in Space*, and the position addressed in recent projects such as *We Have A Situation!* and *Rhyzom*, suggest acts of cultural resistance towards disrupting the dominant narrative of free-market globalisation. The projects described present counter-narratives that productively engage situatedness, connectivity and a critical engagement with mobility towards re-mappings and alternative imaginings of global formations of communities.

What these examples of art practice make evident I propose, are that contributions to translocality research are possible within the field of art practice. Furthermore, the projects described contribute to an expanded view of translocality, widened beyond a discourse of transnational migration and mobility specifically, to “circulations and transfers” more generally (Frietag and Von Oppen, 2010: 5).
Practice-led case study 2: Let Me Tell You The Story Of My Neighbour

With an understanding of translocality as a research area and the key translocal concerns of situatedness, connectivity and flow identified, this second practice-led case study sets out to determine what characteristics are revealed when a translocal approach is applied to the practice of dialogue-based art. Within the triangulated activities of academic leadership, research and teaching that I define as the activities of the ‘artist/academic’ in the methodological framework of this research, this case study is approached with an inflection towards artistic research.

Let Me Tell You The Story Of My Neighbour is the overview title for a series of creative and scholarly projects and outcomes undertaken between 2012 and 2014. Central to the development and production of each of these projects is a collaborative working relationship with Mkrtich Tonoyan. As mentioned in Chapter One, Tonoyan’s mobility lies in stark contrast to my own and is greatly restricted by virtue of his Armenian citizenship, which necessitates frequent applications for travel visas and as mentioned in Chapter Two, monologic encounters with border agencies. Through our collaborative work, I have witnessed first hand the frustration and anxiety around the “unreliability” (Tonoyan’s term, see upcoming co-artist text) that the situation provokes and the solutions Tonoyan has developed in resistance. Together, these experiences have led me towards a more nuanced understanding of the politics of mobility, and a profound shift in my thinking that is clearly reflected in my practice. The Henley & Partners Visa Restrictions Index ranks countries according to level of their citizens travel freedom.\(^82\) I maintain dual citizenship of the UK and Canada, countries ranked first and second

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The 2016 index can be requested via https://www.henleyglobal.com/visa-index-form/
respectively in 2014 (falling to third and sixth in 2016). It remains to be seen how the 2016 British referendum decision to ‘Brexit’ the European Union will impact the ‘travel freedom’ of British citizens. According to the index of two hundred and eighteen countries, in 2014 I was able to enter one hundred and seventy four countries without the need of a visa. Armenia was ranked seventy-third with visa-free entry to only fifty five countries, a list that excludes Canada, the US, Australia, the UK and most of Europe.

What these official statistics don’t reveal are the additional layers of uncertainty and requirements, and the vagaries and inconsistency of outcomes within the visa application systems. Canadians entering Armenia currently require a visa, but this can be acquired through a fast and low cost formality of a ‘visa-on-arrival’ scheme at the airport in Yerevan. Armenians travelling to Canada also need a visa, but in contrast the process is lengthy, expensive, and requires the passport of the traveller to be sent to the Canadian Embassy in Moscow with letters of invitation and a rationale for the visit, with a successful outcome not guaranteed, and a rationale for an unsuccessful outcome not necessarily forthcoming. Tonoyan’s co-artist text, later in this chapter, addresses what he calls the “double standards”; the imbalance of power and integrity between what is required by the state versus what is offered to the individual. We can also relate the “double standards” that Tonoyan identifies to the duality of free market globalisation that Massey articulates, namely the free movement of capital and its interrelation to the restricted movement of people (Massey 2005: 4). In concluding his text, Tonoyan outlines the formation of his resistance strategies that have developed into an ethos for

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83 Canada maintains a Consulate in Yerevan, but not an Embassy. The Canadian Embassy to Russia in Moscow provides services for Russia, Armenia and Uzbekistan.
84 To give just one recent example, in 2016 Meri Tonoyan, co-director of ACOSS, was refused a visa for entry into France to accompany Mkrtich Tonoyan on ACOSS business.
creative practice, individually and for his organisation ACOSS, towards a democratised re-mapping of situatedness, connectivity and flow.

**Let Me Tell You The Story Of My Neighbour (1), Gyumri (2012)**

This project began with an invitation to ACOSS (the Armenian Arts Centre of Social Studies) to participate in the Gyumri Biennale of Contemporary Art in Gyumri, Armenia. The Gyumri Biennale, founded in 1998 as the first international art biennale in a post-Soviet country, grew out of the rubble of the Spitak earthquake and the fall of the Soviet Union as both a healing mechanism for the city and as a portal for communication within the international contemporary art world. For many of the contemporary artists working in Armenia today, including Tonoyan, the Gyumri Biennale was the catalyst for the development of their professional careers, but also provided their first encounters with artists from other countries.

Tonoyan proposed to the ACOSS International Advisory Board the opportunity to develop a project for the eighth iteration of the Gyumri Biennale. Through discussion via email and Skype, Tonoyan, Hay and myself collectively agreed that the overarching aim of the project would be to develop a proposal that would further crystallise ACOSS as an international network of artists. We agreed the following criteria as the basis for the project:

1. The possibility for many artists to participate, Armenian artists affiliated with ACOSS and artists from other locations who had participated in ACOSS residencies, namely artists with an awareness of the conditions on the ground;
2. A guiding thematic appropriate to the context of Gyumri and the spirit of the Gyumri Biennale project: art as alternative to war;
3. A material presentation style that would be low budget, and created in situ.

Collaboratively we agreed on ‘neighbours’ as the guiding thematic, responsive to two key aspects of the geography and history of the city of Gyumri. The first is Gyumri’s
status as a border town in a country shaped by millennia of conflict and contested territories. Armenia’s relationships with its neighbours east and west remain strained at best and hostile at worst. Its border with neighbouring Turkey just four miles to the west of Gyumri is still closed with no formal diplomatic relations between the countries, and a tense situation continues with Azerbaijan following the unresolved Karabakh (Artsakh) war of which Tonoyan and many of the artists and cultural organisers involved in the Gyumri Biennale are veterans. Russia maintains a military base at the western edge of Gyumri, housing three thousand soldiers and an airbase outside the city that houses a fleet of MiG-29 fighter aircrafts. The second aspect is Gyumri’s recent history as a site of devastation from the 1988 Spitak earthquake that reduced large swaths of the city (at that time named Leninakan), to rubble, killing thousands of residents and leaving many more homeless. The questions of neighbourliness therefore became central to a project: as the fundamental human need for housing; as the diplomacies and negotiations of domestic life; in the larger context of international relations, geopolitical forces and resultant restrictions on mobility.

Based on the agreed criteria, I developed the proposal, a call for submissions, and a title: Let Me Tell You The Story Of My Neighbour (LMTYTSOMY). Posing the question of how we navigate the borders and boundaries of our homes and the complex relationships that surround us, the project invited participants to contribute texts and photographs that presented their relationships with their neighbours. We distributed the open call through the ACOSS artist network, inviting potential participants to consider the strategies they use to navigate the borders and boundaries of their homes and to send us images and texts in response to the following short project statement that we wrote collaboratively:

The relationship and role of the neighbour is an archetype that transcends geographic location and historical period. It is the closest thing beyond our doors and the ethics that guide our laws. It is the
realm of international relations and geo-politics. The neighbour is somewhere beyond, whether they be known to us or exist as the unknown other. It is the quotidian minutia of daily life, and the magnitude of war and peace. It can last a lifetime or be short-lived. It is a performed ritual, a mediated threshold, a formal treaty. It is a zone of comfort and of conflict. While the hope may be to find peaceful, diplomatic and negotiated resolutions to clashes of culture and desire, the reality is whether it be between neighbouring people, or between neighbouring countries, compromise can be difficult, painful, sometimes seemingly impossible.

Eighteen artists from the ACOSS network from Armenia, across Europe and North America sent us images and texts responding the LMTYTSOMN call. We hired emerging ACOSS artist Ofelya Suqiasyan to translate all the texts submitted in English into Armenian and vice versa, and organised the materials into three categories: body texts, headline texts, and images. Although at this point our mode of installing the materials was not clear, our guiding principle was to consider the installation as something akin to a wall-based magazine in layout. Arriving in Gyumri with a set of digital files, we set out to find a print shop to output the images, texts and headlines. This proved to be a lot more complex than anticipated. With a shop finally located, and the owners persuaded to stay open after hours to complete the job, an initial thought between the collaborators that perhaps it would have been more ‘professional’ to arrive with the materials pre-printed led to a shift in thinking and critical re-mapping: this approach was an integral part of a process that we have subsequently understood as translocal. We met local people, we supported a local business, and while waiting for the prints to complete the print shop owner taught me to say ‘thank you’ in Armenian: “shnorhakalut’yun”.

Our exhibition space was humble, in the hallway of the Gyumri Branch of the Yerevan State Academy of Fine Art (herein referred to as the Gyumri Art Academy) in a high traffic route for people (see Figure 11). On the wall opposite this display of images and
texts in Armenian and English from the eighteen participants, a digital photo screen displayed images of ‘diplomatic handshakes’ between world leaders and their counterparts from their neighbouring countries, placing the local narratives and the performative gestures of global diplomacy in dialogue (see Figure 12).

A point to emphasise here is the timeframe and context of this initial exhibition. Located within the Gyumri Art Academy for three days only, the project was a locus for discussions between the project coordinators, other Biennale artists, and students from
the Academy. Tonoyan, Hay and myself each gave artist presentations to students studying Art Criticism. These interlinked artists’ talks presented three different perspectives on dialogue-based art practices that incorporate face-to-face and at a distance works and the development of our networked practice, leading to question and answer sessions across topics stimulated by the work and the presentations. In this context, the work led to what might be described as an extended dialogue-based seminar on dialogue-based collaborative art practices across artist-led networks. What became clear at this stage was the extent to which the project aims were not satisfied by the static ‘exhibition’ element of the work as we had initially envisioned, but were more productively addressed through the interactions and dialogue that unfolded in response and in parallel to the work.

*Let Me Tell You The Story Of My Neighbour (2), Regina (2012)*

A second iteration of the project was exhibited at the MacKenzie Art Gallery in Regina, Canada between December 2012 and March 2013 in a re-worked format and in a different context, as part of the University of Regina Faculty Exhibition *The Synthetic Age*. Tonoyan was in Regina during the production and installation of this work, and the exhibition offered us the opportunity to reflect on the Gyumri experience and reconsider the form of the work to instead visualise/diagram the ‘tactics’ the participants had used to navigate, avoid, and negotiate their own on-going relationships with their neighbours, in a manner that would nonetheless function within a three-month exhibition in a traditional museum-type gallery. In this iteration, the aesthetic mode was not directly dialogue-based in the manner of the Gyumri exhibition where myself, Tonoyan and Hay were present to engage in dialogue with Art Academy staff and students and other artists and the work therefore functioned as a ‘catalyst’ for dialogue. In this iteration the materials were considered as three categories of visual material: the texts (in this case
only in English) and the images (manipulated to have more of a newspaper look) were laid out to look like news clippings; the headlines, reconceived as tweets or sound-bites flowing around and between the other obstacles, were applied directly to the gallery wall as vinyl lettering; and the diplomatic handshake images were exhibited with more prominence as slide shows on eight digital screens, each displaying a different continent in a vague suggestion of a world map (see Figure 13).

The project presented a visual, diagrammatic display that was global in scope, but constructed through the specifics of locality and the performativity of interconnected diplomatic relationships. While this re-working and re-framing of the work from a production method to a context of display proved to be an interesting experiment in thinking through and visualising the performance of diplomatic negotiations at domestic and national levels and the developing ideas of this thesis, it raised further questions about the format such a project could take. How could the format move beyond the
static towards a strategy better placed to perform the translocal concern of circulations and flow? Our answer to the question of format was to re-configure the materials once again into a translocal ‘community newspaper’ - Neighbours Newspaper 1, which we launched four months later at the Mallorca Translocal Meeting. I will first outline the context of the MTM, then address the Newspaper.

**Mallorca Translocal Meeting (2013)**

I first encountered the term ‘translocal’ in 2012 in the early stages of this research via an invitation to participate in the Mallorca Translocal Meeting, an artist-led art residency on the Spanish island of Mallorca for the month of April 2013. This informal residency brought together a network of artists and arts organisations from across Europe, and formed the starting point of my own creative investigations considering how ideas of translocality might be applied to the practice of dialogue-based art, as a means of moving beyond the ‘two camps’ structure that divides mediated communications and social practice art. The initiator of this event, Mallorcan artist Marcos Vidal Font claims the term came to him “in the air” as a set of ideas currently in circulation in cultural contexts. The Mallorca Translocal Meeting (MTM) brought together artists representing organisations from across Europe, who over five years prior developed myriad interconnections. This network remains fluid and unnamed, the architecture is built on cooperation, with a goal of supporting mobility and cultural flows across Europe and the creation of spaces for cultural exchange. We can see here a similar set of goals and inter-connective ethos to *The Syndicate* as described by Broeckmann earlier in this chapter. While the network has no name and no centre,

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85 A 10 minute video by Françoise Polo documenting the Mallorca Translocal Meeting is posted on vimeo: https://vimeo.com/74140932

86 Artist and cultural organizer Marcos Vidal Font leads an artist-run initiative Sant Marc in his home village of Sineu in the centre of Mallorca. Vidal has been instrumental in developing links between other such small cultural initiatives across Europe and developed the Mallorca Translocal Meeting as a point of convergence between artists associated with five such organisations.

87 In conversation with Marcos Vidal Font during the MTM residency.
many of the artists involved in the MTM had at some point met and exhibited at the annual Water Tower Arts Fest in Bulgaria.\textsuperscript{88} Nia Pushkova, Artistic Director of the Water Tower Arts Fest brought artists Rumen Dimitrov and Anna Simeonoff to MTM. The second organisation Moorland Productions\textsuperscript{89} represents artists Seetha A and Ken Hay who have worked together since 1996 with a host of collaborators including Tonoyan and myself. I joined the Mallorca Translocal Meeting as part of Moorland Productions. Tonoyan brought four Armenian artists to represent ACOSS\textsuperscript{90}, Hratch Vardanyan (a collaborator in the #3CityLink project in Chapter Four), and his brother Avetik Vardanyan, Yevgenya Baldalyan and Vruz Tiziyan to the meeting. Hilvaria Studio\textsuperscript{91}, located in Tilburg in The Netherlands is an artist residence and a site for landscape intervention projects. Jan Doms, Director of the Hilvaria Studio brought artists Paul Bogaert, Martin Pollens and Olga Doreva to MTM. VB_exposición visible, who conduct urban intervention projects and publish a magazine, are based in Palma de Mallorca. VB are Jordi Pallares and Javier Siquier. Together they generate and make visible unpublished curatorial projects, often in the form of street posters. Six other artists participated in the Mallorca Translocal Meeting: Adriana Cerecedo, Ana Laura Alaenz, Blanca Alonso, Julia Garcia, Jaume Orejuela, and MariJo Rivas are all artists located in Mallorca, and finally Aleksandra Rasulic from Belgrade, Serbia, was invited by the organisation Espai Sant Marc.

\textsuperscript{88} http://www.watertowerartfest.com/en/Water Tower invites artists to investigate the specificities of Sofia through installations in derelict or disused buildings, and other alternative spaces and has become an important convergence point for artists interested in located and site-responsive art practices. I use the term site-responsive practice here to indicate methods of approach that considers the specificity of a given site in terms of its materials, structure, and/or social/historical usage or resonance. A site-responsive approach may or may not take in to consideration a translocal approach which would consider the sites dialogic relations to other sites, the global context through which we can understand the site, or connections with its own past or possibly future versions of itself.

\textsuperscript{89} http://www.moorland-productions.com

\textsuperscript{90} http://www.acoss.org

\textsuperscript{91} http://www.hilvariastudios.nl
The Mallorca Translocal Meeting organiser Marcos Vidal Font runs Espai Sant Marc, a small studio and cultural space in the village of Sineu in the centre of Mallorca. He describes and reflects upon the rationale and experience of the MTM in the following way:

This was an experimental translocal initiative promoted by artists. We gathered for a month to create a forum for sharing ideas that evolve new management structures and other channels within the field of contemporary art to develop common projects and to create a network of contacts that allows the interchange of artists from different countries. The idea of the Mallorca Translocal Meeting is like a plumber’s, to connect an international gathering in Mallorca and the local art scenes of different locations in Europe, with a kind of ‘pipe’ called a ‘translocal connection’, with the understanding that no organisation aspires to represent a whole country but just the local scene from which it comes. They came to speak, to make projects, and exhibit together. They shared debates, the dinner table and the bottle of wine, with artists from across Europe, and across Mallorca.

(Veïns: Neighbours Newspaper, Catalan edition, 2014)

How might translocality be understood in this art-based context? Vidal Font’s metaphor of “structures”, “channels” and a “pipe” to describe on-going interconnection and flows between local cultural scenes is certainly resonant of Frietag and Von Oppen’s definition of translocality as “the sum of phenomena which result from a multitude of circulations and transfers” (2010: 5) and indeed Broeckmann’s description of The Syndicate network as an “intercom” (Broeckmann, 1997). For the fourteen artists coming from outside Mallorca, the majority of our time was spent in the acts of negotiating the considerable challenges of language difference, an age-range of twenties to sixties, and living in close confines in a farmhouse called ‘Can Arabi’, run by the municipality of the village of Binissalem as a youth hostel and donated to us free of charge for the project (see Figure 14).

92 http://santmarc.tumblr.com/
Can Arabi, I propose, became a translocal residency in stark contrast to the philosophy of the ‘retreat’ or ‘colony’ style art residencies that claim to ‘liberate’ artists from the ‘distractions’ of domestic life to enable them to focus on ‘art’, in hotel-style accommodation. Instead, the dominant strategy at play in the organisation of the Mallorca Translocal Meeting was undoubtedly the act of fourteen artists living together in a house left entirely in our care. Each day we negotiated access to only two sets of keys, the sharing of domestic tasks and the subsequent tensions if they weren’t shared collectively, the lack of internet access, and the problem of how to best address the reality of the divergent economic circumstances between the different artists from Western and Eastern parts of Europe. This last problem was resolved in part by rarely eating out and instead placing the acts of communal shopping, cooking and eating together as central to our temporary shared experience. In the face of what Vidal Font describes in his writing about the project as “this agonising journey through the desert of culture”, namely the economic crisis within which Spain was particularly gripped at the time and the resulting collapse of national and regional arts funding, our translocal home Can Arabi became a site of resistance, a space developed through a similar ethos to that expressed by Tonoyan in his co-artist text a space which “gave us keys to

93 A term has developed to describe residences that offer alternatives to ‘retreat’ model: ‘microresidency’. See http://microresidence.net/
understand and empathise with the different perspectives of Europe” (Vidal Font, 2014).

The MTM also addressed different perspectives locally with an exhibition in two venues: the community-focused Can Gelabert Cultural Centre in the village of Binissalem, and the prestigious, well-appointed Fundació Pilar i Joan Miró a Mallorca in Palma (see Figure 15). Mallorcan society functions on three levels: inland rural villages; Palma, the cosmopolitan capital; and the coastal centres of tourism. In the press conference for journalists covering the event for local media, all based in Palma, Vidal Font gave an overview of the primary goal of the project, as forging a sustainable network of connections between Mallorcan artists and the group from specific locations across Europe living together in a house in Binissalem. The first question was: “Where is Binissalem?” rendering the multi-scalar approach of the MTM apparent: the project was as much about building a dialogue across a divided Mallorca as it was about connecting outwards. In the MTM example, a multitude of circulations and transfers occurred between the network of organisations and artists involved. Connections were made across urban and rural, across shifting landscapes of Europe, across languages and economic disparities and an open space for dialogue – and understanding - was created.

Figure 15  Can Gelabert Cultural Centre and Fundació Pilar I Joan Miró, Mallorca

94 http://cangelabert.blogspot.co.uk/
95 http://miro.palmademallorca.es/
Chapter Three: Translocality

*Neighbours Newspaper 1* (2013)

The invitation to participate in the *Mallorca Translocal Meeting* in April 2013 provided a context to reconsider our methods of production and dissemination towards a new tactical modality, more closely aligned with the aims of this research. The call for works for the *MTM* exhibition emphasised projects in print media and a goal of facilitating cultural flows. This led us to reconfigure the eighteen submissions from the *LMTYTSOMN* participants from divergent geographies into the portable and distributable format of the first *Neighbours Newspaper*, representing neighbourly communities on three levels: the home lives of the contributors represented in their submissions; the new constructed translocal community within the pages of the paper; and the artists networks where we circulated the open call.

A major issue in the development of this *Newspaper* was the question of language, discussed at length between the three project organisers, Hay, Tonoyan and myself. Whereas the original project texts had been exhibited in Gyumri in two languages, Armenian and English, as appropriate to the context, Tonoyan felt strongly that this publication should be in English only, making the argument that from the Armenian perspective, to publish in English is to claim a position that speaks to the world. Within Armenian, they talk only to themselves, and to a non-Armenian readership their language and unique alphabet is reduced from communication to exoticism and otherness. Hay and myself found Tonoyan’s position compelling: to publish in Armenian speaks inward; to publish in Russian speaks to a region and a history of Soviet domination; to speak in English liberates Armenians from both the isolation of speaking only to themselves and to the geopolitical history/specificity of the Caucuses region. To position this within the

*Neighbours Newspaper 1* was designed in Armenia by Mikayel Yalanuzyan and printed in Armenia in an edition of 500 by the Tigran Mets publishing house.
Bakhtinian idea of dialogue as a process of ‘authoring’ identity, publishing in English empowered the Armenian participants to shift their own dialogue away from the specificity of singular locality and instead position their narratives and experience in dialogue with others within the pages of a translocal publication.

The launch occurred at the *MTM* exhibition at the Can Gelabert Cultural Centre in Binissalem and through a strategy of ‘putting’ at cultural venues around Palma during the annual ‘art brunch’. The correspondents received copies mailed from Mallorca, and more recently, the papers were distributed at the Corridor Gallery at the University of Leeds and at various other locations internationally where the collaborators have given presentations. The front page appears in this text and links to the fullsize version of *Neighbours Newspaper 1* on the atatdba.net archive.
Chapter Three: Translocality

Figure 16 Neighbours News 1, detail, page 1
Our Beds at Home and Our Beds in Mallorca (2013)

Our Beds at Home was devised prior to the Mallorca Translocal Meeting while Our Beds in Mallorca was conceived and developed in situ, in response to our temporary home in Binissalem. Both projects were realised in Mallorca, and produced using digital print facilities provided to us free of charge at the Fundació Pilar i Joan Miró in Palma. The works were exhibited at the Can Gelabert Cultural Centre in Binissalem, Mallorca as part of the MTM exhibition. I wanted to make something that acknowledged the key factor that enabled a group of artists from diverse economic situations to come together for the MTM: the provision of free accommodation.

The project grew out of two considerations. The first were the terms ‘bedroom community’ (in North American) and ‘dormitory town’ (in British), terms that imply the sleeping spaces of commuters, translocal migrants whose working and home lives happen across different places. The second was prompted by the introduction of the so-called ‘bedroom tax’ in the UK that requires tenants of council or housing association property in receipt of housing benefit to pay extra if the number of bedrooms in their
property is deemed excess to requirement.\textsuperscript{97} The ensuing debates gave me cause to consider my own commitment to hosting guests, and how much my own mobility has been facilitated by the provision of beds and the hospitality of others. Ahead of the residency, I invited all the participating artists to submit images of their beds at ‘home’ and planned to collect these images and ‘translate’ them visually into a unified collective dormitory, representative of our ‘translocalities’.

Responsive to our bunk beds and temporary encampment at Can Arabi, the work evolved into two parts: the individual submissions of the beds at home, coupled with a constructed bedscape-landscape panorama, the new terrain of our translocal home away from home, where perspective in three dimensions formed topography in two. Our Beds in Mallorca\textsuperscript{98} was scaled in response to the specifics of the exhibition space, and mounted between two windows looking out into the town of Binissalem to emphasise the situatedness of the work, and the context responsive method of production. The project became a collaborative portrait of our collective translocality and the journey from the separated images of ‘home’ to the collective image of our beds at Can Arabi. Viewed through the framework of the politics of mobility, embedded between the start and end points represented in the work is the journey undertaken between one bed to the other: while the European Union participants were able to confirm participation well in advance and travelled to Mallorca with ease, the journey of the Armenians was characterised by the friction of anxiety and uncertainty awaiting the results of visa applications and the attendant problematic of “unreliability”.

\textsuperscript{97} As part of UK Welfare Reform Act, 2012, changes to Housing Benefit now include a penalty for under-occupancy in rented accommodation. It is this penalty that is referred to colloquially as the ‘Bedroom Tax’.

\textsuperscript{98} Our Beds in Mallorca is too large to reproduce in these pages. It is viewable at: http://atatdba.net/OBIM.html
Chapter Three: Translocality

Archive/Portal (2013)

In October 2013 I was invited to exhibit ‘documentation materials’ relating to my investigation of translocality through art practice, in the exhibition Urban Encounters: Documents and Situations at the Khyber Gallery in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, as part of a symposium called Urban Encounters. The question of how to provide documentation/archival materials of dialogue-based translocal art practices presented a set of challenges, worked through ‘in practice’ with the development of a work that operates as both documentation and artwork.

Archive/Portal was constructed as a grid of nine digital photo screens showing hundreds of images of photo-documentation from the projects undertaken as part of LMTYTSOMN and snap shots from the travels and residencies attended with my collaborators in Binissalem, Mallorca; Gyumri and Yerevan, Armenia; and Larroque, France (see Figure 18). The images were taken primarily by Tonoyan, Hay and myself, and therefore represent multi-perspectival and polyphonic recollections of moments of shared experience. Presented as a matrix of slideshows, each screen was programmed to present its set of images at a different rate, with the instability of the overall grid of images reflective of the mutability of the network of formation and the circulations it facilitates. Interspersed within the archive of photographic images, QR codes offered viewers the possibility of linking to online materials and to augment the installation with the addition of their own portable devices. The QR codes linked to various sites that provided further documentation such as: the video of the Mallorca Translocal Meeting posted on Vimeo and online photo-albums; websites of the participating organisations in

99 Urban Encounters organized as a component of a larger three-year interdisciplinary research project Tracing The City, initiated by Kim Morgan (Department of Sculpture, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design), Solomon Nagler (Department of Film, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design) and Martha Radice (Department of Anthropology, Dalhousie University), to investigate intersections of art and public space from the perspective of creative practitioners and social scientists.

100 Debates regarding ‘live’ versus ‘document’ and the blurred space between that Archive/Portal presents are of relevance here and worthy of further investigation. In addition to the text referenced, see: Phelan, Peggy (1993) Unmarked: The Politics of Performance Routledge: New York as a text central to the field of Performance Studies regarding the role of documentation in recording live works.
the network including *ACOSS* - with instructions of how to apply for a residency or submit neighbours’ stories for future publication; [Hay’s website for his artist-run space in Larroque, France](#); and many other sites all offering information, calls for submission and links for onward exploration. The work therefore performed both multi-temporal and multi-spatial dimensions, as a temporary installation showing documentation of past events, and the invitation towards future participation in residency opportunities in international locations.

Starting with a consideration of the form the work would take, the title *Archive/Portal* proposes a re-articulation of the images from collective personal snapshots and documentation materials to the status of ‘archive’ via their relocation and presentation in the institutional space of the Gallery. The work sought to disrupt a monologic or definitive account of the translocal creative activities undertaken by Tonoyan, Hay and myself by firstly presenting a multi-perspectival view, and secondly through an invitation to viewers to interact. This approach sought to challenge the supposed fixity
of an archive with the mobility of a portal, inviting viewers to enter into the network of organisations and events that the work links via the database of the Internet. The work can be understood as an example of a recognised shift in approaches to the archive in art practice that Simone Osthoff (2006: 24) describes as a movement from “archive of artwork to archive as artwork”. For Osthoff, this shift responds to Derrida’s (1996) investigation of the archive and the instability inherent in the process of representation.\(^{101}\)

Also noteworthy is the context of the *Urban Encounters: Documents and Situations* exhibition, as a constituent event of the *Urban Encounters* symposium where each of the artists also delivered presentations/papers alongside other academics. As a forum for ‘artistic research’ (rather than ‘art’ or ‘research’), the creative works were presented as ‘documents’ and ‘situations’ that led, initiated, documented or evidenced research activities further articulated in texts and discussion. We can therefore see here an example of a new mode of dissemination emerging from Frayling’s second category of “research through art and design” (Frayling, 1993: 5), in this example through the formation of a temporary ‘translocal’ network linking the Anthropology Department at Dalhousie University, the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, and the Khyber Centre for the Arts: a university, an art school, and a gallery.

*Neighbours Newspaper 2: Veïns, the Catalan Edition* (2014)

The approach to documentation undertaken in Archive/Portal was applied to the next iteration of *Let Me Tell You The Story of My Neighbour*, a bi-platform and multi-lingual edition, *Neighbours Newspaper 2: Veïns, the Catalan Edition (2014)*, that features a

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special report from the *MTM* with Vidal Font as guest editor. All the participating artists were invited to contribute recollections, creative responses and documentation for the newspaper and parallel web-materials accessible from the paper via the embedded QR codes. The front cover of the paper features an article by Vidal Font that outlined the *Mallorca Translocal Meeting*, and a QR code link to a video documentary about the MTM project with interviews with participating artists, directed and shot by Françoise Polo throughout the residency. This second iteration of the *Newspaper* is both a translocal site and a translocal portal to accommodate multiple forms of media across two platforms: face-to-face in the physical paper and at a distance through the use of web materials. *Veïns* was published in February 2014 and launched at the *Supermarkt Alternative Art Fair* in Stockholm, Sweden.

Unlike the first *Newspaper*, this edition was produced in a multilingual form, with stories printed in Catalan, Spanish, Dutch, English and Armenian. Vidal Font’s main article is printed three times, in Catalan, Spanish and English. Adding to the language debate mentioned earlier, in this second edition of the *Newspaper* we explored a different ‘translocal’ approach that moved away from a single language perspective towards multiplicity. Rather than publishing stories in one version only, contributors were invited to make their own decision to submit their texts in the languages that made sense to their own contexts, positions and desired audiences. In the case of Vidal Font, the decision to repeat his text in three languages Catalan, Spanish, and English, was a decision that firmly located his position politically and culturally at the meeting point of local, national and global agendas, without compromise of one for another.

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102 [https://vimeo.com/74140937](https://vimeo.com/74140937)
January 2016
Co-artist text: In dialogue with Mkrtich Tonoyan:

There are two issues on the topic of visas I would particularly like to speak about. The first is ‘double standards’ and the second is how the situation forces an ‘unreliability’. But I also want to speak about solutions.

In 2013, in my first attempt to visit Canada, I was told that my only option was to apply for a visa in Moscow. As the plan was to visit you and do work in Regina as a side trip after the residency I was already undertaking in the United States, I asked if it would be possible for me to apply for a Canada visa while I was in the US. I was told absolutely no way was that possible. To apply for the visa required many documents and to send my passport to the Canadian Embassy in Moscow, already very risky. After at least two months, I still did not have the visa, and I was forced to request that my passport be returned so I could travel to Los Angeles. I remember this was a very anxious time, you and I were just starting to work together and it was the beginning to getting to know other colleagues in Regina with proposals for new projects. To be left in a situation of unreliability was horrible, and also, as the plan was to come to Regina, for those weeks I had nowhere to stay in the US. In Los Angeles, I found that there was a Canadian Consulate that dealt with visa applications and although the officials at the Embassy in Moscow had told me that there was no way that would work, I thought, well let’s try. And you remember what happened there? I had the visa the next day! At the time we were just so shocked and pleased that it worked, but now I think more about this within the context of human rights. Why do they tell you one thing and then the reality turns out to be something different? How can these decisions rest just on someone’s mood?

This is just one example of now many many that I could tell, from my own experience but also from trying to help young artists in Armenia to be part of the world, to travel to other countries to meet people and exhibit their work. It took me many years to find a way to be able to travel outside the Caucuses until finally I had the opportunity to go to Taiwan for an artist’s residency in 2006 at the age of 31 years old. But even now, with so much experience of travel, with the ability to speak English and the knowledge of how to navigate all the forms, jump the hoops and provide the documents to meet the always-changing requirements, and how to propose to hosts they should word their invitations letters... even with all this the outcome is unpredictable.

Of course beyond the issues of visas for Armenians there is usually a money problem. But my solution has turned out to be something that I am still very interested in now, and that is the principle of exchange. All my first international artist guests I hosted in Armenia stayed here in my home with my family in Yerevan, and they stayed with us for free, with the idea that this was a project of cultural exchange, and that maybe I could then have the possibility of places to stay in other countries. And it worked. All my first travel opportunities, to Taiwan, to Germany, to the USA, they all started like that. So what I am interested in thinking about, is how can these things like visas and money, these issues that present barriers between people, instead become possibilities for developing alternative ways of building art networks?
The translocal artist

In the various iterations of *Let Me Tell You The Story Of My Neighbour*, and in the broader context of working within networks as the practice, strategies of collaboration, dialogue and site-responsiveness contributed to a multi-scalar translocal perspective in art practice. In considering the aims of the translocal approach to art, the question that has emerged through my on-going collaborative working relationship with Tonoyan is what might it mean to call oneself a ‘translocal artist’? Could such a descriptor more accurately describe the local/global dialogues, engage an active position in response to the politics of mobility and reflect translocal concerns of situatedness, connectivity and flow central to our collaborative endeavours? We now see ourselves as artists working within and towards a ‘translocal artworld’ that is globally interconnected but operates as a counter-narrative to the ‘international art world’, the term associated with the global commercial art market exemplified by art fairs, biennales, dealers and auction houses and therefore also to the ‘two worlds’ of contemporary art and media art.

Joaquín Barriendos Rodriguez describes the task of the translocal artist as “to put into circulation new means of reflection about the geography of art and global forms of representation and diversity” (2007: 352). For the ‘kinetically elite’ artists and cultural workers with mobility-enabling passports, access to travel budgets, and the requisite social/professional networks, (a set of conditions that certainly reflects my own situation) global mobility has become the marker of success, and for some artists, a medium of creative practice in itself. Indeed, for artists who associate with the term ‘artist-nomad’ mobility has become the preferred position for production. Art historian

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103 *Seven Days in the Art World* by cultural sociologist Sarah Thornton (2008) is a text often cited as an insight into the workings of the zone of commercially driven culture to which the term ‘international art world’ most generally refers.
104 Joaquín Barriendos Rodriguez teaches at Columbia University (Department of Latin American and Iberian Cultures) and is visiting professor at University of Barcelona (Department of Art History).
James Meyer unpacks the term ‘artist-nomad’ into what he defines as two differing approaches: the “lyrical” nomad characterised by a personalised and everyday “aesthetic contemplation” of a poetic subjective drift through the details of everyday travel-life, in contrast with the “critical” nomad who, Meyer contends, frames the nomadic drift within historical contexts, institutional critique and frameworks of movement. Notwithstanding these critical distinctions, we understand from Meyer that the practice of the artist-nomad is at root “focused on the theme of travel” (2007: 10). While Barriendos presents the position of a ‘translocal artist’ as a critical engagement with the *politics* of geography and representation, Meyer’s definition of the “artist-nomad” even in its critical approach, is located in the physical mobility of the body of the artist.

As Miwon Kwon identifies in *One Place After Another*, a state of constant travel has emerged as an indicator - if not the key marker - of art-career success (2002: 46). From the limited sphere of the ‘global’ or ‘cosmopolitan’ art-world circuit and the position of the mobile artist, it can be easy to forget that most of the world’s geography remains in the art-world margins, and for most of the world’s population movement remains restricted, whether by nationality or by economics. Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman’s statement on the political dimension of movement is as relevant to the world of art as to any other sector: “mobility has become the most powerful and most converted stratifying factor; the stuff of which the new, increasingly world-wide, social, political, economic and cultural hierarchies are daily built and rebuilt” (1998: 9). The identity and cultural capital afforded to the itinerant ‘international’ artist-nomad (and the academic traveller could also be included here), is only available to the kinetically elite with the credentials to move and/or the personal/cultural circumstances to support movement beyond positions of marginality.
The counter-narrative of translocality positions connectivity, dialogue, the struggle to understand language and cultural difference, engagement with the conditions and situations on the ground, and the acknowledgement that mobility is restricted or frictioned - or undertaken without choice as the result of economic migrancy - for much of the global population, as essential and integral ingredients. It is a position that stands in opposition to the homogenisation and globalisation of culture, and resists notions of centres and margins. Wojtowicz positions translocality in art as inherently connected to social and technical networks, and the relationships and connectivity they enable.

Echoing Broeckmann, Wojtowicz (2006) suggests that translocality “does not mean a location in a geographical sense, but rather networked individuals and groups of similarly-thinking people, the translocal agents existing within the cyberspace. Translocality means a series of individual, local nodes situated within the geographical and cultural system.”

Wojtowicz’s reference to ‘situatedness’ is important to note as once again we see the inherent double meaning of ‘situation’ between locale and points of view, with reference to feminist standpoint theory and situated knowledge. Therefore, to position oneself as a translocal artist is to place oneself in networks of formation and situated points of view, and the flow of communication inherent in dialogues: between self and other, between communities, between perspectives, between local and global concerns, between the social and the technical, and as Wojtowicz (2006) states it, between “the geographic and the cultural system.” I argue that to position oneself in this way enables a critical engagement with the “social, political, economic and cultural

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106 Available online at: [http://www.hz-journal.org/n8/wojtowicz.html](http://www.hz-journal.org/n8/wojtowicz.html)
hierarchies” that Bauman (1998: 6) draws our attention to. The translocal artist is therefore a position that aims to disrupt a singular narrative of globalisation, and of being in the world.

**In summary: towards a translocal approach to dialogue-based art**

Responsive to the artworld positions of Broeckmann, Wojtowicz, the *Rhyzom* and *We Have A Situation!* projects and the historical precursors identified in Chapter One, a translocal approach in art can be seen as a set of resistant practices positioned in opposition to the market forces of the ‘international art world’ and the dominant/singular narrative and ‘double standards’ of globalisation. Tonoyan identifies these double standards in his experience of applying for travel visas and the imbalance of power between what is required by certain States versus the support offered to the individual. Massey similarly identifies this problematic dimension of globalisation as the free flow of capital with the simultaneous restriction of human movement (Massey 2005: 4). Wojtowicz (2006) states it thus, “the difference between globality and translocality is very important. If the globalisation means a transnational flow of global capital, translocality means rather putting the local issues in the global context and making it widely accessible.” It is possible to see Wojtowicz’s point here as one that emphasises the dialogic interaction inherent in translocality, namely the interrelation between local and global concerns. I argue that the critical position of the translocal artist is one inherently based in a continual process of re-mapping and re-visioning alternative formations of the local in dialogue with global conditions, a position that *reflects* and *acts* upon globalised societies and Massey’s imaginings of multiplicities and “heterogeneities of space” (2005: 5).
Reflecting on the process and experience of the varied collaborative iterations of the *Let Me Tell You The Story Of My Neighbour*, the *Mallorca Translocal Meeting* residency, and the works created for and at *MTM* exhibition, I identify nine characteristics that emerge as constituent elements of a translocal approach to dialogue-based art practice (highlighted in bold in the following paragraphs). Perhaps the most central characteristic evidenced across each of the *LMTYTSOMN* projects is a focus on the local within the context of the global. In *Neighbours Newspapers* for example, participants contributed stories of their relationships with their neighbours from various international locations towards a collaborative publication that gave collective insight into the navigation of borders and boundaries. The *MTM* residency in Mallorca, devised, initiated and organised by local artist Marcos Vidal Font, presented multiple challenges with artists from different countries and contexts living and working together, navigating cultural difference and economic imbalance through dialogue. Font’s negotiation of free accommodation for the participating artists was integral to ensuring participation from artists of diverse economic backgrounds, and crucial to my own understanding of how challenges of cultural difference and economic disparity can be productively and creatively re-positioned through dialogue-based works. The most successful format for the stories and images collected in the *LMTYTSOMN* project was the *Newspaper*, a form that is inherently transportable in its materiality and ease of distribution. *Neighbours News* is also an example of the third identified characteristic, that of projects that operate through and reflect circulations, movement, transfers, networks and flows. Participants who contributed to the project were invited through their professional association with Tonoyan and the network of ACOSS alumni artists he has built over eleven years. My own professional network has expanded through my professional affiliation with Tonoyan and ACOSS.
The works in *LMTYTSOMN* were undertaken via modes of production developed in response to particular and specific issues of local concern revealing **context-driven thematics.** This resonates with a fifth characteristic, which emerged through the experience of preparing work for the Gyumri Biennale and the realisation of the importance of considering how **in situ production** can contribute to local economies and/or connect to local communities. Encounters such as our afternoon in a print shop in Gyumri can be understood as a part of the complete ‘work’ and not simply part of the working process towards an outcome. This characteristic was further exemplified in *Our Beds In Mallorca* where the decision to make a work on site led to the opportunity to improvise a work in response to the circumstance of free accommodation and the opportunity, also arranged by Font, to undertake a brief print residency at the Fundació Pilar i Joan Miró in Palma, Mallorca.

A distributed/shared/polyphonic approach to authorship was central to the production of works across the projects, with **collaboration with other artists and participants** pivotal to the multi-perspectival, dialogic and translocal approach to idea generation and production. This characteristic was foregrounded through my close collaboration with Hay and Tonoyan through the *LMTYTSOMN* projects. Locating solutions to the complexities and demands of **multi-lingual** situations was a particular challenge central to these creative works. The seemingly straightforward ‘pragmatic’ problem of accommodating submissions in multiple languages was addressed by Font as guest editor of the second *Newspaper* project published as a multilingual issue with participants determining how many versions of their articles to submit in languages of their choosing. This heterogeneous approach resisted the homogenising tendency towards using English as the de facto language of the artworld. Dialogues across all the works occurred between self and other, across the hall, or across the globe leading to an
understanding of **multi-scalar** elasticity as a characteristic that again, operates across local and global points of connection, and networks such as the Internet. Finally, the works demonstrated translocal dialogues across timeframes via synchronous and asynchronous exchange revealing **multi-temporality** as an integral characteristic.

These nine emergent characteristics demonstrate and emphasise the dialogue-based relations inherent in translocality: the dynamic of movement, accessibility and connection, and a resistance to singularity through unfinalisability and plurality. They are provisionally outlined here as interim findings, to be re-examined and tested in Chapter Four, towards a more comprehensive and revised articulation in Chapter Five.
Chapter Four: A translocal approach to dialogue-based art

Over the course of the last three chapters, I have developed a framework for understanding how a translocal approach might be utilised to orient dialogue-based art practice towards a position informed by the politics of mobility and responsive to the conditions of an interconnected world. My thinking has been led by on-going collaborations and a series of creative projects that have enabled me to develop methods of dialogue in translocal situations. In the translocal approach to dialogue-based art, modes of dialogue are selected as appropriate to the context of the situation and as such may move from direct verbal communications to written/textual forms, screen-based methods or other forms of telecommunication interfaces or transfers. Multiple modes of communication might occur simultaneously, or unfold by synchronous or asynchronous means.

This translocal dialogue-based approach to artistic practice draws from an art history that encompasses mediated communications and socially engaged practices. In this chapter I will address how such an approach might fit within the context of an undergraduate Fine Art curriculum.\textsuperscript{107} Within the methodological framework as described in Chapter One, this chapter addresses the role of teaching within the triangulation of activities undertaken by an artist/academic. The characteristics developed thus far as part of the initial findings of the research are applied and further tested in this chapter through \#3CityLink, a collaborative creative/teaching project devised and undertaken as part of this doctoral research.

\textsuperscript{107} I use the term ‘Fine Art’ in reference to the discipline within academia that includes current practices in contemporary art and related art histories and theories. Fine Art in the British context translates as Visual Art in the North American context.
I will first reflect upon my own past practice of devising teaching projects that connect students to counterparts in other locations, to provide a context for #3CityLink. I will then address the notion of the ‘educational turn’ in art to position how such pedagogical undertakings can be understood as art works that function as dialogues between education and art. I will also address my own educational turn in the context of a return to the UK and a new academic post at Coventry University, an institution with a mandate towards supporting the development of what it defines as ‘global graduates’. How might such a mandate be critically addressed within the context of Fine Art education? It is this specific question I address in #3CityLink, which linked first and second year students in Fine Art and Fine Art & Illustration at Coventry University with counterparts at the University of Regina in Canada and the Gyumri Branch of the Yerevan Art Academy in Gyumri, Armenia.

As emphasised in the approach to each of the three practice-led case studies undertaken as part of this research, #3CityLink was developed through a process of collaborative authorship and production and a dialogue-based method of reflection. The outcomes of #3CityLink are three-fold: as an art/education project with three linked exhibitions; a linked array of five academic papers presented by myself, Jane Ball, Craig Barber and Jacqui Bleetman/Katherine Wimpenny (Coventry University) and Christine Ramsay (University of Regina) as part of a colloquium session at the Arts In Society conference, responding to the special conference theme of ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Networked Society’\(^\text{108}\); and a co-authored journal article #3CityLink: assessing the disruption written by Bleetman, Wimpenny, Ramsay and myself (as yet unpublished).

The case study as articulated within this thesis reflects most specifically on the

\(^{108}\) Imperial College London, July 2015.
development and impact of the project at Coventry University, as they were the aspects of the project on which I led.

**Reflecting on past practice**

The #3CityLink project builds on a series of ‘special teaching projects’ undertaken at the University of Regina in Canada in collaboration with scenographic artist and researcher Dr Kathleen Irwin.\(^{109}\) Irwin and I devised three projects over a six-year period, each offered in several iterations, linking students in Regina with contemporaries in Belgrade, Utrecht, Toronto, Helsinki and Istanbul. The motivation for developing these projects was both pedagogical and research-driven. Regina, Saskatchewan is remote, with a three-hour drive to the next major city. Many students at the University of Regina grow up on farms or in rural areas and it is commonplace to encounter students with little experience beyond the Prairie Provinces. We observed that this context of over exposure to localised issues offered little in the way of practical opportunities to connect to larger dialogues. While the University of Regina maintains an internationalisation agenda, the emphasis thus far has aimed towards increasing the numbers of international students (and therefore revenues) rather than addressing the internationalisation of the educational experience provided. In response to this context, our special teaching projects were designed to broaden learning experiences through the use of web technologies to enable them to work in collaboration with counterparts across distance, through themed creative projects that addressed local-global issues such as immigration, the city and notions of cosmopolitanism. As a form of research, the

\(^{109}\)Dr Kathleen Irwin received her doctorate in site-specific scenographic practice from Aalto University, Helsinki in 2007, during the course of our collaboration. Witnessing Kathleen’s academic journey was influential to my own shift into the area of artistic research and her mentorship is acknowledged. [http://www.uregina.ca/finearts/faculty-staff/faculty/f-irwin-kathleen.html](http://www.uregina.ca/finearts/faculty-staff/faculty/f-irwin-kathleen.html)
projects developed out of a methodology that I would now describe as responsive to the combined roles of an artist/academic.

**Crossing Over (Regina – Istanbul, 2011)**

The *Crossing Over* project was offered as a workshop for students during the 2011 ISEA conference in Istanbul, connecting the Visual Communications Design programme at Sabanci University with students from Visual Arts, Film and Theatre Design at the University of Regina. Irwin and myself were appointed as University of Regina ‘Teaching and Learning Scholars’, a programme designed to challenge teaching staff to move beyond divisions between research, teaching and service and towards more multi-layered, interconnected and interactive conceptualisations of academic work, and how that might translate into educational innovations. *Crossing Over* was conceived as part of our tenure in these roles, using a ‘research informed teaching’ and ‘teaching informed research’ approach to perform a dialogue-based interaction between teaching and research, which have traditionally been seen as separate.

*Crossing Over* provided a framework for collaboration that engaged students in the two cities in a creative exchange of ‘identities’. Students in both locations were required to fill in an online immigration form (based on forms required by the Government of Canada), in order to construct an identity, based on themselves or imaginary others. Each student-participant packed a ‘digital suitcase’ with personal belongings (images, sound fragments, text, etc.) to create a virtual backstory to give insight into a decision to emigrate, and uploaded their suitcase to a baggage conveyor belt on the project website (see Figure 19). Student-participants in the country of arrival then claimed a suitcase from the conveyor belt and opened it, thereby making the contents available for public scrutiny.
Following this point of entry, emigrants were no longer in control of their destinies, as the recipient of the luggage was left to sort out its contents and plot an imagined future for the immigrant, based on knowledge of the current socio-political contingencies in the country of arrival. The ‘arrival’ story was devised by students in the other location, then uploaded into the same virtual suitcase, with both departure and arrival narratives then available for view on the project website.
The process attempted to replicate the crossing of international borders for immigration, emigration, or asylum seeking and suggested the tensions that occur when the fragments or ‘facts’ of one’s existence are publicly displayed and possibly misinterpreted. Through the process, students were asked to consider their own country’s migration and refugee policies (which I now understand as a consideration of the politics of mobility and the ‘frictions’ of movement). They were also encouraged to reflect upon their own response when confronted with ‘otherness’ and the problems associated with communicating the signifiers of one’s identity in a public forum in ways that may reveal sensitive information in contested cultural contexts.

Irwin and I worked collaboratively on a series of special teaching projects from 2007 – 2011. Each was conceived as a performative artwork. Our first project, *Blur Street*, was developed through four iterations connecting students from Regina with counterparts in Belgrade, Utrecht, Helsinki and Toronto. Irwin utilised our collaborative projects as the creative locus for her own theoretical writing which is sited within an area of engagement or practice that she calls ‘teledigital performance’\(^{110}\), which in turn is positioned within a disciplinary background in site-specific scenography. At that time, my own research interest was to consider such practices within the context of dialogue-based contemporary art and media art.\(^{111}\) Reflecting back on this project, I now see two shifts that have emerged in my thinking. Firstly, I see relocation as a condition that shapes identity through a process of translocality and simultaneous situatedness. Whereas *Crossing Over* visualised moves from \(A \Rightarrow B\), in this case either from Regina to Istanbul or from Istanbul to Regina, as a one-way journey with the new life forged in

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Note 110: The term 'teledigital performance' is a term Kathleen Irwin coined to describe performative works conducted through telecommunications.

Note 111: I proposed the *Crossing Over* project as the subject of investigation for an MA thesis in Media Art Histories at Donau University in Austria. My proposal to investigate my own creative project was rejected as incompatible with research methods in media art history. Encountering this methodological and disciplinary boundary precipitated the subsequent shift towards a PhD in artistic research.
the new location replacing the life in the previous location, I now understand this journey as A ⇔ B, a state of back and forth connectedness between each location.

Secondly, I understand the distinction between teaching and research that my undertaking of ‘special teaching projects’ are designed to blur, as no longer between teaching and research but rather as between teaching and dialogue-based art. The resulting transformational exchange which is integral to such projects is a constituent element of dialogue that I now apply to my understanding of teaching.

An educational turn

Much has been written about the educational or pedagogical turn in art and curating (e.g. Rogoff, 2008; O’Neill and Wilson, 2010; Bishop, 2012a). Art historian and curator Eszter Lázár provides a useful overview, stating that the “educational turn describes a tendency in contemporary art prevalent since the second half of the 1990s, in which different modes of educational forms and structures, alternative pedagogical methods and programs appeared in/as curatorial and artistic practices” (Lázár, no date).

In their introduction to Curating and the Educational Turn, O’Neill and Wilson (2010: 12-14) define three loose forms of engagement: practices within formal education, practices outside formal education “adopting a counter institutional ethos”, and positions critical of the educational turn, such as Marion von Osten’s assertion that the educational turn is “displacing the real questions of knowledge economies and

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113 An example of an educational project briefly mentioned in Chapter Three is the Rhyzom project network which continued from 2011 - 2015 in the form of an ‘eco nomadic school’ engaged in “mutual learning and teaching of “eco-civic practices” towards “the transfer of skills and knowledge on issues of resilience in different urban contexts” ([http://rhyzom.net/nomadicschool/](http://rhyzom.net/nomadicschool/)) accessed December 2015). Central to the Rhyzom project is the network structure of linked projects across Europe that places each local activity/event in dialogue with others via a “trans-local dissemination strategy”, most notably the extensive project website, a platform from which the network structure is clearly visible.
cognitive capitalism” (2010: 271). Interestingly, O’Neill and Wilson don’t structure their anthology using ordered categorisations or subcategories but represent the diverse range of written genres within writing about the ‘educational turn’, an approach they propose as resistant to “domestication”, evoking Busch’s (2009) notion of transgressive ‘wild knowledge’.

Bishop addresses the educational turn in art specifically in Chapter Nine of Artificial Hells, “Pedagogical Projects: ‘how can you bring a classroom to life as though it were a work of art?’”, providing evidence of the now well-established practice of creative works that utilise the form of art to perform the function of education, or vice versa. As she says, if dialogue can be accepted as a method of art, and the art produced by students is undertaken in a dialogue-based environment (the classroom), and the hierarchies and categories of ‘student’, ‘teacher’, ‘artist’ and ‘viewer’ are destabilised by the possibilities proposed by participatory practices, then “the history of participatory art… incites us to think of these categories more elastically” (Bishop 2012a: 241). Lázár (n.d.) also draws attention to the re-configurations of power dynamics between the roles of teacher and learner in this debate and the theoretical position from which this turn stems: “In relation to the educational turn, the theories of critical pedagogy are often cited, with regards to, for instance, providing the democratic conditions of education, or the emergence of anti-hegemonic teaching methods and roles.”

In Artificial Hells, Bishop provides four case studies of contemporary artists working within the educational turn. The four artists are Tania Bruguera and her Arte de

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Conducta project in Havana (2002 – 2009), Paul Chan’s project Waiting for Godot in New Orleans (2007), Pawel Althamer and his Einstein Class project in Warsaw (2005), and Thomas Hirschhorn’s project The Bijlmer-Spinoza Festival (2009) located in Amsterdam. As with Bishop’s previous writings however, her selected case studies are limited to face-to-face works, and do not engage with mediated communications beyond expressing a critical position in relation to art disseminated via commercial social media platforms such as when she refers to Facebook and Flickr in Chapter 7 (Bishop, 2012a: 190). I propose however that if artists working within the educational turn draw on methods of teaching and learning, and such methods in twenty-first century teaching draw increasingly on technology, then such a relative omission is notable.

The art historical point of reference for education-as-art that Bishop provides is the work Joseph Beuys undertook at the Dusseldorf Kunstakademie in the later 1960s and early 1970s, and later within his own project, the Free International University for Creativity and Interdisciplinary Research. As Beuys famously claimed in 1969, “to be a teacher is my greatest work of art” (Beuys quoted in Bishop, 2012a: 243) and thereby securing his position within a narrow art historical cannon as the de facto parent of the educational turn. In support of a translocal approach to dialogue-based art pedagogy without the limitations that Bishop imposes, and beyond the traditional cannon, I offer an alternative art historical point of reference for education-as-art, also from 1969.

Trans VSI connection NSCAD-NETCO (1969)

An early example of an artwork-cum-pedagogical project exploring the use of communications technologies to create dialogue-based art can be found in Trans VSI connection NSCAD-NETCO (1969), a live project enacted between students at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD) in Canada and conceptual artist Iain
Chapter Four: A translocal approach to dialogue-based art

Baxter’s N. E. Thing Co. Ltd. (NETCO). The dialogue, structured as a series of instructions and responses, was performed via telex, telecopy and telephone, resulting in ‘VSI’ – visually sensitive information – the term used within Baxter’s alternative conceptual lexicon for ‘art’. NETCO issued propositions, sent to the students electronically, and the students responded with some appropriate collaborative activity, which were documented as photographic images, texts and drawings, and transmitted back to NETCO. The transmissions from both sides of the dialogue were exhibited at NSCAD’s Anna Leonowens Gallery in Halifax and published in a book format the following year.115 It is interesting to note here that the projects were documented using a variety of methods, a point that will be returned to later in this chapter.

Viewed from the perspective of the educational turn in art, such activity might now appear familiar as an artwork that is initiated by an artist as an artwork-cum-education project, with a ready-made group of student-participants/co-artists. Within studio-based Fine Art teaching Trans VSI connection NSCAD-NETCO might still be regarded as experimental and peripheral, but the model that was developed with projects such as Trans VSI connection NSCAD-NETCO can be seen as a direct precursor to the online exchange activities and innovative learning methods that many universities now strongly encourage. This ‘turn’ in university pedagogy from the singular location of the classroom towards connected exchange-based learning, with students working across distance via technological interfaces with counterparts elsewhere, presents an opportunity for a reconsideration of early experimental projects such as Trans VSI connection NSCAD-NETCO in Fine Art. How might teaching in Fine Art therefore, relocate what once was marginal to a more central place in Fine Art education? How

115 The book is available in the UK at the National Art Library at the Victoria and Albert Museum. A further copy listed in the collection of the Tate Gallery Library could not be located when I requested it in August 2015.
might such an approach introduce Fine Art students to strategies that address twenty-first century social relations and tele/communications?

**Translocal dialogues and Online International Learning**

At Coventry University where I now work, online international learning (OIL) is encouraged within each course of study as a strategy towards an internationalisation of the curriculum. This strategy features as one of the institutions eleven ‘global university’ descriptors: “we exploit digital communication and collaborative technologies to bring students and staff together across different countries to participate in shared seminars, undertake joint research projects and learn together through taught modules” (Coventry University, n.d). In an online video presenting an overview of OIL at Coventry University, the goal of the approach is articulated as the production of ‘global graduates’ with ‘intercultural skills’, ready for employment in ‘an increasingly interconnected world’. Such skills are presented as ‘transferable’ and workplace oriented, and while the internationalisation of the curriculum is meaningful from the perspective of each discipline, the emphasis is nonetheless placed most strongly towards providing future employees with a competitive edge and the opportunity to “stand out as being ready for a global career” (Coventry University, 2021 Corporate Strategy). In her article “Teaching with Tech Across Borders” Elizabeth Redden (2014) outlines various terms used to describe this approach in higher education: “COIL (collaborative online

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116 https://www.dropbox.com/s/5x0at6dch5bvx1/Online%20International%20Learning%20at%20Coventry%20University-CEMS.wmv. “So what do these external intercultural skills look like? It is said by the top 750 UK employers, leading higher education scholars, and further research that in addition to the core competencies expected of any graduate, global graduates should be able to demonstrate the following intercultural and global competencies:

- the ability to adapt to different communication styles and behaviours;
- to be flexible;
- to select and then use appropriate communication styles and conduct;
- be able to consciously shift perspectives, use multi cultural frame;
- be able to learn in new environments;
- have the ability to engage and manage complex intercultural relationships;
- ultimately being able to behave, communicate and perform effectively and appropriately in diverse and novel multicultural contexts”.

135
international learning), online intercultural exchange, virtual exchange, globally networked learning, telecollaboration”. These terms clearly locate the forms of communication in learning where dialogue-based exchange and technology are integrated, and therefore it might be argued that the apparatus and infrastructure of communications are contributing factors in the communications.

Redden also highlights that “the use of technology to enable virtual exchanges and collaborative assignments between geographically distant classrooms is not brand-new – faculty, especially foreign language faculty, have been doing it in pockets for as long as there’s been email – but there seem to be an increasing number of efforts to scale up and institutionalize these kinds of activities” (Redden, 2014). The use of such an approach is equally not brand new within Fine Art teaching, where over the course of the last 50 years, responsive to the rapid development in technologies in the 1960s and 1970s, myriad examples can be found of projects that engage communications and telecommunications such as *Trans VSI connection NSCAD-NETCO* (1969). I offer an example from my own pedagogical practice, *Crossing Over* (2009-11) as the practice of a contemporary educator working from the position of this alternative art history of the educational turn in art teaching beyond the narrow art historical cannon.\(^{117}\)

Despite the importance of qualities such as adaptability and flexibility for job readiness highlighted by institutions such as my own, I propose that the greater potential of dialogue-based online international learning lies beyond the rhetoric and corporate language of educational recruitment and within the transformational possibilities of critical engagement with contexts of learning. In considering then how these

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117 Another example that has influenced my own work can be found in the *Call and Response* video art project devised by Daniel Peltz that linked students from the Rhode Island School of Design in the USA with students from the University of Yaoundé in the Cameroon: [http://www.risd.tv/callresponse/lepton.html](http://www.risd.tv/callresponse/lepton.html)
institutional agendas might be productively re-mapped into Fine Art education, and to move beyond the employability agenda, the counter-narrative I investigate is a repositioning of ‘internationalising’ to a ‘translocalising’ of the curriculum. I see this as a process that through dialogue, encounters with difference, and engagement with the conditions and situations on the ground presents alternatives to the singular narrative of globalisation. The implication is that such an approach can foster critically engaged practitioners more aware that the opportunities for mobility and access to formal higher education are restricted for much of the global population.

A translocal critical awareness was central to a project I was planning when I relocated to a new post at Coventry University in the UK in 2014. As part of my move, I brought a special teaching project intended to link students in Regina, Canada and Gyumri, Armenia. However, incorporating a third location (Coventry) created a more ambitious set of aims. #3CityLink was designed to be an artwork and to extend the methods of translocal dialogue-based art in my teaching practice. It was developed in collaboration with colleagues in Regina, Coventry and from ACOSS in Armenia. Collectively, we addressed the question of how a translocal approach to dialogue-based art might be utilised within our three distinct learning and institutional contexts. The project can be seen as a dialogue between art making and teaching (or between research-informed teaching, and teaching-informed research) that I understand as the work of the artist/academic. Mapping this back to the loose forms of engagement proposed by O’Neill and Wilson, the case study that follows is an example of an educational turn in art as enacted within the institution.
Practice-led case study 3: #3CityLink

This is the final practice-led case study undertaken as part of this doctoral research. This case study is approached with an inflection towards the role of teaching within the triangulated activities of academic leadership, research and teaching that I define as the characteristic activities of the ‘artist/academic’.

The collaborative, dialogue-based, translocal, pedagogical exchange project #3CityLink culminated in three simultaneous exhibitions/events in Regina, Canada; Coventry, UK; and Gyumri, Armenia. Transversal relations between the three physical locations occurred through a shared, fourth project-zone which included web-based documents and interaction through telecommunications and social media platforms. Three educational institutions participated in the project, with students from various creative disciplines within each institution participating as part of their curriculum. At the University of Regina in Canada, fifty students participated from a class in Expanded
Cinema, a class in Sound Art, and a class in Intermedia. The project was led by Christine Ramsay. At Coventry University, one hundred and three Fine Art and Fine Art & Illustration students participated and the project was led by myself with Craig Barber and Jane Ball. At the Gyumri Art Academy in Armenia, thirteen students participated from a class in Drawing. Tonoyan led the project, with Karen Barseghyan and Hratch Vardanyan in the role of project co-curators. At each of the three locations, a team of researchers and organisers worked with the students to facilitate, activate, document and manage the unfolding projects (see the Student Info Pack for Coventry University Year Two Fine Art students which contains a full listing of project staff).

Three cities, three galleries

At each location (see Figures 22 - 24), a gallery space acted as the locus for all activities. Each space was open to the public for the entire two-weeks of activity with all the activity undertaken understood as part of the translocal artwork. The Fifth Parallel Gallery at the University of Regina in Canada is an entirely student-run exhibition space located in the main student centre on the University campus. The Lanchester Gallery at Coventry University, UK, is a research-focussed exhibition space for the Coventry School of Art and Design. Gallery 25 at the Berlin Art Hotel in Gyumri is a unique cultural institution in Armenia. Now a social enterprise project, the Gallery is an artist-led semi commercial space, located in a former German Red Cross Hospital which generates revenue to support the work of an adjoined outpatient mother and baby polyclinic. The profound differences of contexts for each Gallery, as demonstrated within their institutional mandates, operations and locality, contributed to the specificity of approach in each city, and therefore the translocal diversity inherent in the overall project.

118 http://atatdba.net/pdf_docs/3CL_CU_Level2_infopack.pdf

119 Since the project was undertaken, the Lanchester Gallery has relocated from The Hub student centre into the Graham Sutherland Building, and the Coventry School of Art and Design has been restructured as the new Faculty of Arts and Humanities.
Practice-led case study 3: #3CityLink (2014)

Figure 22 #3CityLink, Regina, 5th Parallel Gallery

Figure 23 #3CityLink, Coventry, Lanchester Gallery

Figure 24 #3CityLink, Gyumri, Gallery 25
Three-City Link (1989)

Our project title #3CityLink makes direct reference to, and was developed in dialogue with, Kac’s work Three-City Link (1989), an example from the history of telecommunications artworks that used fax and slow-scan transmission to connect artists in Chicago, Pittsburgh and Boston (previously mentioned in Chapter Three).120 #3CityLink aimed to reframe that project 25 years later within a growing discourse of participatory social practice art in the sphere of inter-human relations, in an era where telematic communications and interactive screens are now ubiquitous, and a global context where new forms of translocal engagement are emerging. Unlike works produced under the umbrella of mediated communications art, the aims of #3CityLink were not located in technological innovation but as a way in which to encourage students to consider how twenty-first century communications occur as a multi-modal web of face-to-face and at distance interactions. We were interested in how this project could introduce students to the idea of art as a state of encounter, in a more integrated approach to dialogue as art practice rather than framed by the narrower technological innovation agenda of mediated communications art.

#3CityLink: Pre-project planning phase

#3CityLink received funding support through the Coventry University Disruptive Media Learning Lab (DMLL) – an initiative “to promote open dialogues, collaborative work and exploratory play” and support “radically new approaches to teaching and learning” (http://disruptivemedia.org.uk/disruptive-media-learning-lab-now-open/).121 #3CityLink was the first project to receive support from the DMLL and in that regard, became not

120 http://www.ekac.org/threecitylink.html
121 The Disruptive Media Learning Lab is a sister initiative to Coventry University’s Centre for Disruptive Media, a research centre led by Professor Gary Hall. With van Mourik Broekman, P et al, Hall identifies the position of the Centre and the DMLL in relation to the theory of disruption thus: “The approach we are adopting… involves drawing on theorists such as Marx, Derrida, Foucault, Badiou and Stiegler to develop a critical and creative approach to management, business and the market – and, with them, to the becoming business of the contemporary university”. See: van Mourik Broekman, P., Hall, G., Byfield, T., Hides, S. and Worthington, S. (2015) Open Education, A study in disruption. Rowman & Littlefield: London and New York. An excerpt can be found on the Centre for Disruption Media website, under the title “Our Take on Disruption”: http://disruptivemedia.org.uk/about-2/
only a testing ground for the ideas of dialogue and translocalisation that the project
itself sought to explore, but was also a pilot University teaching, learning and research
project exploring productive disruption of traditional teaching approaches.\textsuperscript{122} Jackie
Bleetman, Principal Project Lead at the DMLL and Dr Katherine Wimpenny, our
assigned Senior Researcher, worked closely with us in the development of the project
and led a linked research project evaluating its outcomes.\textsuperscript{123}

The #3CityLink project, as a component of this doctoral research, of the Coventry
University curriculum and as a DMLL research project, aimed to engage students in an
expanded approach to dialogue-based art that utilised social media platforms and
screen-based communications technologies in addition to located dialogues. The
project aimed to form a common groundwork for translocal artistic interactions between
cities with common concerns of ‘memory’, ‘peaceability’ and ‘truth’. Regina,
Saskatchewan, is a place deeply imbued with the legacies of Canada’s cultural genocide
of Aboriginal people; Coventry is officially designated an International City of Peace
and Reconciliation and Coventry University houses a research centre for Trust, Peace
and Social Relations; and Gyumri is a city that has suffered war and natural disaster and
is a centre for art and social activism. Understanding these histories and locating
common ground was a key aspect of the pre-project planning phase, including a
research trip to meet our collaborators in Gyumri undertaken by Ball and myself.

\textsuperscript{122} Our bid received 140 hours of staffing support and we were able to hire three recent Coventry University graduates - Sam Kelly, Lauren Heywood and Joseph Kesinoglou - into roles we called ‘activators’. The title of ‘activator’ has subsequently been adopted by the DMLL as the role they use for staff assigned to support projects.

\textsuperscript{123} The first project funded by the DMLL, #3CityLink was used as the pilot for the development of DMLL criteria for markers of success and methods of evaluating its projects. The research that Bleetman and Wimpenny undertook evaluating #3CityLink resulted in a co-authored paper delivered at the Arts In Society conference (Imperial College London, 2015).
#3CityLink: Student research phase (Sept 6 – Oct 31, 2014)

The student research phase used group city walks to ground and launch the project within the physical experiences of situatedness, mobility and shared dialogues in each location. Students investigated the current concerns of their locale and questioned the role of the artist in building narratives, revealing lost histories, contesting territories and imagining the future of where they live. Project leaders designed their own approach to the walks as appropriate and useful to the pedagogical context.

In Coventry, we called this ‘All Roads Lead to Coventry’ and devised a series of twelve walks based on a clock face, with groups of students making their way out of the city to a set location, then making their way back again, whilst live tweeting comments about their experience. As all our new first year students were involved in the project, most of whom were new to the city, we conceived of these walks as part of a broader induction and orientation to Coventry and the Fine Art course. On a day when the temperature was -25°Celsius, Regina students braved the weather and went on a ‘Regina Ramble’ through Wascana Park led by artist, walker and MFA student Ken Wilson. In the Live Phase, Wilson gave a presentation on the topic of ‘Art and Walking’ that along with presentations from Coventry on topics related to ‘the City’ and the Situationist ‘dérive’, contextualised the approach within art history and theoretical perspectives of psychogeography.124 In Gyumri, students went on a group walk to locations in the city unknown to them, discovering an abandoned restaurant unused since the 1989 earthquake, with a mosaic image that would later become a part of their exhibition project. Finding something previously unseen by any member of the group triggered the concept that became central to the Gyumri exhibition, namely the ‘City of Senses’, a set

124 An additional context can be found in art practices that integrate walking and dialogue, such as, for example, Jillian McDonald’s Mile Share (2003) http://www.cafka.org/caafka03/jillian-mcdonald-mile-share and Simon Pope’s Memory Marathon (2012) https://sites.google.com/site/ambulantscience/index/memory-marathon. For further points of reference, see Pope’s article for C Magazine: http://cmagazine.com/issues/121/walking-transformed-the-dialogics-of-art-and-walking
of five projects that responded to taste, hearing, sight, touch and smell. In each of the walks, students participated in the situated sensorial experience of their physical environments, interacting with the context of their cities’ histories, geographies and each other. The walks oriented the students’ attention towards an expanded consideration of dialogue, beyond the realm of language exchange only.

#3CityLink: Live phase (Nov 3 – Nov 14, 2014)

On Monday November 3rd, the groups moved into their respective gallery spaces. For the duration of the two-week live event, the students participated in a dialogue of images, sounds, videos, texts, physical structures, objects and stories in response to the question of how artists can shift the narratives of their cities beyond isolated histories of trauma toward linked narratives and creative futures. Each location set its own approach to fit with the very different schedules, disciplines, curriculum and context.

In Regina, Ramsay organised the participation of three different classes in the project, and a schedule of visitors, activities and events. Her own class in ‘Expanded Cinema’ introduced film students more accustomed to moving images in the form of single-channel film/video to moving images in the expanded form, and considered how formats such as Skype might be viewed as an experimental mode of ‘cinema’. Students were encouraged to respond to the project through the development of video installations, expanding time-based media into spatial practice, addressing the thematic that Ramsay describes in her co-artist text at the end of this case study, as the “transdisciplinary and transnational complexities of the digital era”. Ramsay makes reference to the Bakhtinian notion of “great time”, a concept drawn from his later essays that assert that meaning “can never be stable (finalized, ended once and for all)” and remains in dialogue and therefore in formation and subject to the revisions of context in
perpetuity: great time (Bakhtin 1986: 170). In addition to Ramsay’s class in Expanded Cinema, two other student groups participated in the project in Regina. Caines developed an assignment for students in ‘Introduction to Sound Art’ to create a three-minute city soundscapes accompanied by a single digital image and invited students in the other locations to participate. Megan Smith worked with a class of ‘Intermedia’ students on an assignment to create GPS drawings from walks across the University campus. Students from each of the three classes were scheduled into the gallery space during the time slots of their respective classes, which meant there was very little overlap between the student groups, and as a result, long periods of time when very few students were present.

In Coventry, all teaching of Fine Art and Fine Art & Illustration students was transferred into the gallery including all lectures and seminars. The large number of students required certain times to be designated to each year group, in addition to some open sessions when both Year One and Two students could use the space together. The Year One students were teamed into groups, with each group assigned a thematic to respond to. The Year Two students selected themes of their choice and either worked individually or within collaborations. The high number of students resulted in a diverse range of responses to the projects. While for some students the translocal exchange occurred through face-to-face encounters with their fellow students at Coventry and/or the mediated encounters with their counterparts in the other cities, for others translocality was experienced through other forms of dialogue.

One Year One Fine Art student of Pakistani decent living in Birmingham (20 miles away) with previously very little connection to Coventry, travelled to the Foleshill Road area of Coventry to experience an area of the city with a high South Asian population.
As part of his research, he approached a number of local residents to ask questions about their immigration story from Asia to Coventry and their experiences of racism. Two Year One students who have recently moved to Coventry from Eastern Europe focused their project around governance structures in the city, specifically the Coventry University Students’ Union, the City Council and the Police. After several conversations at the Police station they gained permission to shoot video footage of the different elements of a full riot kit. These highly provocative outcomes were undertaken without interaction with the ‘global’ context of the two other locations, nonetheless the dialogues were beyond the usual parameters of Year One Fine Art student work and demonstrated an engaged level of cross cultural ‘translocal’ encounters.

In Gyumri, students gathered for work sessions each afternoon and evening of the project. The looser and less formal curriculum at the Gyumri Art Academy, the small number of students involved and the high ratio of project staff to students enabled a deeper immersion in the project than students in the other two locations. Together, students and curators developed the approach to the project as Gyumri as Live Organism, creating five linked projects related to the senses of sound, sight, smell, touch, taste. This emphasis on the ‘aliveness’ of Gyumri as a changing, living entity was particularly apt for a city whose ‘great time’ or long cultural history extends through its varied transformations as Kumayri (from antiquity to 1837), Alexandropol (1837-1924), Leninakan (1924-1990) and Gyumri (1990 to date). Gyumri has continually transformed along with the shifting borders of empires, kingdoms and unions, performing an intricate dialogue between time and space, histories and geographies.

**Skype sessions and Social Media.** The three groups skyped for two hours each day, 9am – 11am Regina time; 3pm – 5pm Coventry time; 7pm – 9pm Gyumri time; with
performances, presentations, lectures and discussion sessions programmed each day into the live slots. In addition to the programmed events, the daily skype conversations brought forward a range of spontaneous encounters. To give one example, during a miscommunication with the Gyumri group a Coventry student from Lithuania was able to act as translator with the Armenians when it emerged she had the ability to speak fluent Russian. The knowledge that Russian is the lingua franca facilitating communication between post-Soviet subjects, contrasts with the monological impression that English is the language of globalised education. This is a pertinent example of multi-linguality which I identify as a characteristic of translocal dialogue-based art.

The groups were also connected around the clock via the 3CityLink Twitter account and hashtag (#), a Facebook page and closed groups. Some of the students made extensive use of the social media streams and utilised the connections to request information or images for their projects. The social media streams were approached in different ways in each location. In Regina and Coventry, the streams were used almost exclusively for project participants to connect with each other to greater or lesser degrees. In Gyumri the Facebook group took on an additional significance as many members of the broader arts community joined the group as a window to watch the project unfold. Perhaps this is indicative of the relative lack of prevalence of such projects in Armenia. Contrary to Redden’s first world view that online international learning is not new, such projects still appear novel to the Armenian contemporary art scene where traditional art pedagogy approaches still dominate.

125 Twitter account: https://twitter.com/3citylink
hashtag (#): https://twitter.com/hashtag/3citylink?src=hash
Facebook group: https://www.facebook.com/groups/hashtag3citylink/
It was within these social media spaces that the parallel/intersecting activities in the three different locations became most apparent. Returning once again to the Bakhtinian (1981) idea of the ‘chronotope’, if the entire project is conceived as the ‘time space’ within which encounters take place, then each location, and each project within each location may exist as a ‘minor chronotope’, with each time-space in dialogue with each other as constituent relational elements of the whole. “Chronotopes are mutually inclusive, they co-exist, they may be interwoven with, replace or oppose one another, contradict one another, or find themselves in ever more complex interrelations” (Bakhtin 1981: 252). This is a useful framework for understanding how complex translocal dialogue-based project structures, like literary narratives, build major/macro/global perspectives from minor/micro/local elements and therefore indicative of the local in dialogue with the global.

A WordPress blog126 written by project facilitators from each location attempted, somewhat unsuccessfully, to capture and summarise the key activities and insights that emerged each day. One of the key problems of summarising the activities as the daily final task was how tired the project facilitators were by the sheer workload of the project. The immersive structure of the project left little room for reflection as part of the daily routine. Similarly, a project wiki was devised by one of the activators, but not fully realised.

**Resource Area and Hospitality.** Each gallery hosted a research/resource area with information, objects, books, maps, stories, histories, travel guides, newspapers etc. from each location. The materials were gathered during the initial project planning phase and

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either transported or mailed across the locations. The research/resource area offered visitors the opportunity to sit, stay and explore the materials representing each location. In our original plan, each day a breakfast project was to be served at the Fifth Parallel Gallery in Regina and working across ten hours of time difference, 9am in Regina is 3pm in Coventry and 7pm in Gyumri, so parallel to breakfast in Regina, we proposed tea and cakes be served in Coventry and dinner shared at Gallery 25 in Gyumri. At the University of Regina, Ramsay investigated ordering a breakfast service through Chartwells, the contracted University catering service. Tea, coffee, juice and muffins for the duration of the two-week project was quoted at over a $1,000 Canadian, well beyond the limited project budget, but with a rethinking oriented towards a home-grown solution, the plan was revised to a kettle, mugs made by students in the ceramics area and tea-bags. In Coventry, two students developed a cakes project building architectures from each location as cakes, served on two afternoons and at the project reception. A Year Two student brought two fruitcakes made by her grandmother as a donation to the project. In Gyumri, the students shared four dinners in their space including one creative project, which involved cooking potatoes on a wood-burning stove outside, as an echo of the ‘dark years’ without electricity in the early 1990s as a result of the post Soviet crisis, the Karabakh war and the Spitak earthquake. Gyumri marked the end of their project with a fish banquet at their closing reception. This banquet was coordinated with our reception in Coventry and live-skyped into the Lanchester Gallery. Such details from #3CityLink chime with the characteristic of translocal multi-temporality in the quotidian rhythms of shared meals in projects such as Suzanne Lacy’s *International Dinner Party* (1979).
#3CityLink: Outcomes phase

As with the previous two practice-led projects undertaken during the course of this research, the approach to this case study has been first to undertake a dialogue-based project, and then to devise further outcomes from a dialogue-based mode of reflection. For #3CityLink, the student-centred ‘live’ phase was followed by a research outcomes phase, to collate documentation and assess the results. The project blog was more successful as a documentation site once the Live Phase was completed, but the question of ‘how’ (or if it’s necessary?) to create a final summative documentary account of a live encounter presented itself once again as a recurring question. In this project in particular, the diverse approaches of a large number of participants across three sites and the heteroglossia and polyphony of multiple voices and registers, rendered the possibility of any singular attempt to summarise the project impossible. The answer to the question of how to engage with strategies of documentation therefore is in understanding that the project could only be documented through multiple methods and voices, as to do anything other risks reducing complex and heterogeneous experiences to the limited and limiting perspective of one author or communicative register.

In keeping with this approach, another documentation mode was employed using the textual and discursive form of a colloquium session at the Arts in Society conference (July 2015) at Imperial College London. Five of the #3CityLink participating researchers reflected on the project in a suite of linked papers delivered in response to the special conference theme ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Networked Society’. Our papers presented perspectives on the outcomes and implications of the project, the disruption and challenge to Fine Art teaching strategies, translocalised teaching curricula and the promotion of global citizenry and intercultural engagement. My own paper gave an overview of the project, defined the key terms of ‘dialogue’ and
‘translocality’ and positioned #3CityLink in relation to ‘online international learning’ (OIL) education strategies. It also addressed the question of how a translocal approach to Fine Art education might present critical counter-narratives to institutional agendas of ‘internationalisation’ and the attendant singular narrative of globalisation.

Two other colleagues from Fine Art at Coventry University, who were instrumental in devising and organising the project at the Coventry location, joined me on the colloquium panel. Ball’s presentation reflected on her experience of undertaking a creative residency in Gyumri, Armenia, during the relationship-building phase of #3CityLink that preceded the student involvement. In particular, Jane focused on an artwork entitled Carousel, an ongoing project in multiple iteration that she continued while in Gyumri. Through a series of participatory interventions mirroring one another across geographically disparate communities Carousel references faulty and disrupted technological systems of communication to critique the interrupted and disrupted aspects of social relationships. Drawing on Latour’s (2005) ‘Actor Network Theory’, Ball’s paper challenged notions of the self-preserving system and examines the potential for translocal, dialogic art practices to create new forms of conversation and engender meaningful work. Barber’s presentation considered the frictions between the known and the not known within students’ studio practices and the way that these related to the gallery and live link phase of the project. Barber considered the way that the communication between different countries unearthed dialectic methods in the way that students responded and produced artwork.

As Ramsay (the Regina project lead) addresses in her co-artist text later in this chapter, her paper discussed the panel themes of social networks, technology and pedagogy, and social media as cinema, through the activities and processes that emerged at the 5th
Parallel Gallery. Ramsay joined us in London to discuss how she approached the project from the perspective of expanded cinema “as the explosion of the screen outward, toward immersive, interactive and interconnected forms of culture”, responding to the writing of Gene Youngblood, Jackie Hatfield and Janine Marchessault. She discussed the successes and challenges for her film students, trained primarily in the forms of single channel filmmaking, re-situating and reimagining their sense of the cinematic through #3CityLink, and the difficulties of engaging dialogically with their peers in the other two locations.

Bleetman and Wimpenny, the researchers from the Disruptive Media Learning Lab embedded into the project as part of the project funding support, delivered the final paper “#3CityLink: a translocal art/pedagogy exchange project: evaluating the disruption”. As part of their research, they conducted interviews with project organisers and students in each location face-to-face and via Skype, and organised feedback sessions with the student participants at the Coventry location three months after the completion of the project, asking them to reflect on their experience and respond to four set questions using post-it notes (see Figure 25). Bleetman and Wimpenny’s research aligned with the aims of the Disruptive Media Learning Lab and their work assessed the disruption and challenge that #3CityLink had to pre-conceived notions of teaching and learning in Fine Art.

As the final outcome of the project, Ramsay, Bleetman, Wimpenny and myself collated our perspectives in a co-authored article, ‘#3CityLink: a translocal art/pedagogy exchange project: evaluating the disruption’. It accompanies this thesis as Paper 4 in the Appendices section.

127 The full set of student feedback comments can be found at: http://www.atatdba.net/hashtag3CL_Cov_Stud_comms.html.
Co-artist text: Excerpts from Christine Ramsay’s presentation at the 2015 Arts In Society conference, #3CityLink colloquium:

The legacy of art and film in Regina are powerful forms for the continuing exploration of identity and belonging, particularly as Indigenous people increasingly migrate between rural and urban areas, and new immigration patterns further diversify the cultural dynamics of what was originally a colonialist white settler city. There are several arts organisations working collaboratively across art and film, the white cube and the black box, the analog and digital divide, the gallery and site specificity, to take their place in the contemporary global landscapes of expanded cinema.

As a Professor of Film Studies at the University of Regina, in a film program still largely embedded in and concerned with teaching single channel film production in narrative, documentary and experimental forms, it was a great opportunity to be invited by my friend and colleague Rachelle Vlader Knowles to participate in #3CityLink because it offered not only the chance to expand the curriculum in a Fine Arts faculty still relatively siloed in the traditions of film, music, theatre and visual art, but also an exciting international platform from which we could all try, as citizens of a small but vibrant city on the margins, to live up to the promise of our recent city branding campaign, and its logo, “Infinite Horizons.”...

Opening the pedagogical door onto the transdisciplinary and transnational complexities of the digital era, as people and cultures increasingly intersect and interact across multiple screens and multiple globalized sites, was an interesting challenge. My way in was through a new course, called ‘Creative Technologies 305: Expanded Screens’. The course aimed to situate cinema in new ways for a group of 15 film production majors, plus three brave souls from journalism. We began at the beginning, with Gene Youngblood’s visionary book from 1970, Expanded Cinema, in which he worked out a kind of “electronic age existentialism,” establishing the field of media arts as a platform for challenging the American entertainment complexes of Hollywood and network television by advocating deep play across the range of visual technologies, such as film, special effects, video art, computer art, multi-media environments and holography—play he characterized as the mind-expanding and consciousness-altering potential of embracing the emerging technosphere and the symbiotic relationships it was creating between man and machine. Youngblood of course was prescient, signalling obvious aspects of our 21st century technological immersion in a socially networked globe... And, as their participation in #3CityLink demonstrated to most of the students, such an expanded cinematic configuration could also be located site-specifically and/or translocally, as a strategy for duly enlarging Regina’s horizons and bringing the city into close contact with Coventry and Gyumri and their equally “complex histories.” One of the key issues in Regina and Saskatchewan’s collective histories, despite the obvious cultural achievements elaborated above, has been their struggles with the legacy of colonisation and Canada’s cultural genocide of Indigenous people. Regina is located on Treaty 4 Territory.... However, local institutions, such as the University of Regina, are increasingly working with First Nations citizens to redress these historical wrongs, and in the case of our university, plans to indigenize the campus are coming to fruition under the motto of the new five-year strategic plan “Peyak aski kikawinaw,” which means “Together we are stronger” in Cree. In this context, it became important to the pedagogical intentions of #3CityLink that our activities at the 5th Parallel Gallery, the student-run gallery on the university campus which became our ground zero throughout the live-link to Coventry and Gyumri phase, were inclusive and reflected the rich Indigenous arts and culture activities of our locale and Treaty 4, which are also home to the campus of the First Nations University of Canada.

Thus, the First Nations University of Canada Beading Group joined us several times, and filmmaker Berny Hi, of Miq Maq heritage, live-linked in turn from his studio, The Vault, in
downtown Regina to the Fifth Parallel, the Lanchester Gallery, and Gallery 25 in Gyumri... The project playfully traced what Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin might call Saskatchewan’s “great time,” from the province’s earliest geological past, through the ebb and flow of the glaciers, the arrival of mammals and the migration of the first humans, and subsequent cultural events, leading to the present day....

In conclusion, and on the whole, regarding the single-channel film production students and how they fared in meeting the challenges of expanding their consciousness through expanding their sense of cinema, the result, as one might imagine, was mixed. I’d like to point out one student, whose piece Expanded Screen was simply brilliant. He conceived and constructed a corrugated “expanded screen,” like the bellows of an accordion, on which he projected the three cities together, creating a truly ingenious metaphor for realising the dialogic impetus of the #3CityLink project. It was the favourite piece of gallery visitors, and I would say truly paid homage to Youngblood’s notion of expanded cinema as “electronic age existentialism”. Inspired by this way of working, the student reconceived his 4th year graduating project from a single channel film to a site-specific “selfie booth,” which he will situate somewhere in Regina’s downtown and project it out to the global technosphere, some time in 2016. Thus, in this example, translocality, has proven to be a rich theoretical terrain for our collaborative pedagogical activities and explorations in expanded cinema between art, film, new screen media and global urban identities.

Figure 25 #3CityLink, Coventry University student feedback
In summary: testing the approach

A translocal dialogue-based art ‘OIL’ approach to learning addresses the complexity of art’s current simultaneous situatedness and networked reality. The #3CityLink project was devised to test out the characteristics of a translocal approach to dialogue-based art revealed thus far, and to explore how they might be productively deployed within Fine Art pedagogy. Within the context of the educational turn (Rogoff, 2008; O’Neill and Wilson, 2010; Bishop, 2012a), the project was conceived as one collaborative art work, with the physical shift from studio to gallery in each of the three cities undertaken as a critical re-location from the known and the usual to something less familiar. This project as a whole was designed to generate a productive and critical space for innovative Fine Art teaching within the opportunities, constraints and politics of the institutional agendas at Coventry University in particular, albeit in collaboration with colleagues and students at two other institutions. The linked agendas of internationalisation and employability now so prominent in the higher education sector in the UK have resulted in an emphasis on ‘global’ perspectives and the training of ‘global graduates’. While the online international learning approach can be regarded as a ‘cheap substitute’ for actual student mobility in the development of intercultural competencies, I argue that the dialogue-based OIL approach, framed with translocal thinking, presents a productive space of possibilities for creative and critical learning experiences in Fine Art.

In reflecting on how the characteristics of translocal dialogue-based art identified in the last chapter were tested in this project, the following points emerge. #3CityLink maintained a focus on the local within the context of the global and therefore engendered a condition of simultaneous situatedness, by enabling each local project to concentrate on its own conditions on the ground, then linking the three locations
through dialogue-based practices, **navigating cultural difference** towards shared spaces of understanding. At Coventry University, this fulfilled the mandate for courses to enhance their international connectivity and the institutional agenda of engaging students in intercultural learning experiences **through dialogue**.

In each location, each group demonstrated the characteristic of **context-driven approaches** reflective of each particular educational curriculum and its thematics. In Regina, where three different undergraduate classes participated, each with its own learning agenda, this required a flexible project design in order to encompass projects in sound, intermedia, performance and expanded cinema. All the artworks produced during the project were **made in situ with contributions and connections to local economies and communities**. The fish banquet held at the end of the Gyumri project for example was provided by the local Cherkezi Dzor fish farm and restaurant, a thriving local enterprise representative of the regeneration of contemporary Gyumri and the move towards tourism. **#3CityLink**, with the contributions of all the participants, expanded my thinking around this characteristic of in-situ practice by also revealing a **locally-sourced or home-made approach**. This can be seen for example in the solutions devised by Ramsay for offering hospitality to visitors in Regina, the cakes-as-architecture artworks produced by two students in Coventry and the evocative potatoes project in Gyumri, devised by Barseghyan and Vardanyan.

**#3CityLink** was produced through a **participatory and collaborative approach**. Viewed as one artwork, it was made through the involvement of one hundred and fifty two students and supporting staff, lead artists and tutors, across three locations, through a process of ‘distributed authorship’ (Shanken 2003: 64). **The brochure that accompanied the exhibition** listed all the people involved, with the intention of
emphasising co-production and multiple-shared-authorship in order to represent the live, dialogue-based heteroglossia that was the central feature of the project. In addition to the face-to-face dialogues in each location, the students within their groups and across the groups communicated, provoked, collaborated, witnessed and responded to each other’s undertakings and the activities programmed each day, through social media and the daily Skype connection. This established mediated communications as a normalised aspect of current artistic collaborations.

The concert by Armenian folk-revival rock band *The Bambir* organised by the students in Gyumri was particularly illustrative of how the project demonstrated the characteristic of **circulations, movements, transfers, networks and flows**. It drew attention to the passing of cultural knowledge from one generation to the next and outward into the world, and exchange between the professional networks across the arts established by Gyumri artists Vardanyan and Barseghyan. The **multilingual** approach was embedded across the project. #3CityLink aimed to work across the languages of English and Armenian, but other languages emerged such as Russian, which was used to communicate with the Armenians by a Lithuanian student studying in Coventry. My thinking around ‘language’ was extended by #3CityLink beyond the linguistic form however, through a consideration of how visual and cultural languages were also multiple. As articulated by Ramsay in her co-artist text, the presence of the members of the First Nations traditional beading group in the white cube gallery in Regina put the language of ‘living indigenous culture’ in contemporaneous dialogue with the modernist white-cube space and the language of ‘contemporary art’. Within Canada, the “relationship between objects of Aboriginal creative expression and Western
conceptions of "art" has a long and troubled history that is wholly intertwined with Western systems of categorization and value” (Whitelaw, 2006).

This led to an understanding that a singular homogeneous reading of ‘the gallery’ as a space of neutral display can also be disrupted by translocal dialogue-based approaches. This was best demonstrated by the three gallery spaces in #3CityLink, as each represented their own particularity in the form of their different mandates, reasons for being, rules of engagement, networks of connection, responsibilities and contrasting cultural grammars.

The translocal approach of #3CityLink included multi-scalar and multi-temporal characteristics. The multi-scalar approach operated across interpersonal, local and global contexts with interactions between three cities spanning a distance of approximately 5,841 miles. This multi-scalarity was represented with maps, guidebooks and other literature relating to each location which were available to visitors and participants in the three gallery resource areas. The multi-temporal approach was evident in various ways. Aside from the obvious dimension of temporal difference, i.e. working across three time zones as emphasised by the project logo, and the synchronous and asynchronous exchange, the most poignant examples of the characteristic of multi-temporality within a translocal approach to dialogue-based art were evoked by the artists whose works used food as a medium. In Regina, one of the participating MFA students Cathy McComb devised and presented a cooking performance based on a recipe from her Scottish grandmother, using the medium of food to link back two generations to a family lineage before its fracture due to migration. The action of

cooking potatoes on a campfire in Gyumri evoked the trauma of the ‘dark years’ without electricity in Armenian after the fall of the Soviet Union and the period following the devastating Spitak earthquake that occurred when the two artists leading the project, Hratch Vardanyan and Karen Barseghyan, were both children and before the students in the project were born. These projects contributed to my understanding of trans-temporal translocality. Food emerges as a recurring medium in dialogue-based art and this research, not only within the conviviality model of shared food and time, of which Bishop has been a vocal critic (2004, 2006, 2010), but also in relation to processes of identity formation and the recuperation of cultural heritage that connects past to present. In Gyumri, the students cooked the potatoes as a collaborative artistic gesture devised by Vardanyan and Barseghyan and a dialogue-based learning experience towards a shared space of meaning.

Bleetman and Wimpenny described #3CityLink as ‘messy’, as a positive descriptor of the generative disruption the project manifested on the usual routine of Fine Art teaching at Coventry University. However, if I consider how this disruption to the norms of studio-based Fine Art pedagogy can be interpreted in the context of artistic research, I equate Bleetman and Wimpenny’s term ‘messy’ and my own description of ‘unruly’, and question whether these descriptors invoke Busch’s (2009) idea of ‘wild knowledge’. #3CityLink was indeed unpredictable, its knowledge evasive and seen only...

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130 In Bishop’s article “Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics”, OCTOBER 110, Fall 2004: 51–79, she presents a critical appraisal of Nicholas Bourriaud’s Relational Aesthetics and sets out a position that she expands upon in further texts. She questions the means by which the artists he champions approach the conditions of democracy. An example is Rirkrit Tiravanija and his projects that centre on the social space around the sharing of food. In contrast to these conditions of ameliorative conviviality, Bishop favours an ‘antagonistic’ approach to participatory practices, after Mouffe and Laclau. Paraphrasing from Mouffe and Laclau’s Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics (1985), Bishop tells us that: “a democratic society is one in which relations of conflict are sustained, not erased”.
131 The Smart Museum at the University of Chicago presented the first comprehensive survey of artistic practice using food: Feast: radical hospitality on contemporary art (2012). The exhibition included a re-mounting of International Dinner Party by Suzanne Lacy. See http://smartmuseum.uchicago.edu/exhibitions/feast/
in fleeting glimpses from the heteroglossia and polyphony of many voices, points of view, rationales for participation and range of experience. Its outcomes were as multiple as the authors, geographies and agendas involved and its outputs unseen in their entirety by any one individual. The Bakhtinian (1990: 22) idea of the “excess of seeing” is useful to consider here, as the multitude of perspectives and points of view, and an excess of documentation materials too plentiful to manage, represents the possibility of learning about the contexts and perspectives of others but also others views of our own perspectives and educational backgrounds.

The presentations at the ‘Arts in Society’ conference in 2015 were an attempt to capture five contrasting perspectives on the outcomes of #3CityLink and were partially successful in that aim, assessing the project and its results through a suite of methods and reflective analysis. However, to return once again to analogies of wildness, the methods used to document, capture and contain the project outside of its natural habitat, taming its outcomes into disciplined 20-minute PowerPoint presentations, predictably failed to capture the messy and unruly energy, and experiential quality of the live dialogue-based encounter. The knowledge of #3CityLink resides in practice, in the act of participating in the making, in the time-based experience of the performative and improvised risk of the live-phase, the creative responses of one hundred and fifty two students, and the three linked exhibitions they collaboratively produced. This research practice is messy and unruly, and if not wild, then at least feral in its appearance and behaviours. As performance studies scholar Peggy Phelan (2005:146) has stated, “performance’s only life is in the present” with attempts to represent the live experience into the future through documentation producing “something other” than the live work. Once again the question of how to convey the experience, event, or situation of translocal dialogue-based art that emerged in the Archive/Portal work (see Chapter 3) is
pertinent to #3CityLink. Indeed, the resulting documents and residues produce ‘something other’ or in this case multiple others, not least of which is this chapter within this PhD thesis. However, outcomes from #3CityLink also include hundreds of photographs, animated gifs, video documentation, screen grabs from Skype sessions, streams on social media, collaborative academic papers and conference presentations. In addition, the undertaking of interviews with participants and the gathering of feedback from students, was assisted by the embedded researchers Bleetman and Wimpenny who employed these qualitative methods to ‘capture’ the outcomes of the project. I have come to realise that when documenting dialogue-based projects, no singular method will suffice as a singular method fails to sufficiently reflect the diverse points of view and subjective experience of such activities, rendering dialogue monologic. A similar conclusion is reached by Pope (2013) in his article Through thick and thin: developing a dialogic documentation strategy for participatory artworks. Pope (2013. 4). advocates for what he calls a ‘montage approach’ incorporating qualitative ethnographic techniques like ‘thick descriptions’ and ‘field notes’. While such materials are indeed “something other” to Phelan’s description of the live experience, I propose that diverse approaches offer the possibility of enabling something other to art. It is this something other to art, which I understand as artistic research.

In reviewing how the characteristics of translocal dialogue-based art that have emerged through the research thus far mapped onto this final practice-led case-study, risk emerged as a significant characteristic in a number of ways in #3CityLink. This risk is more than an anxiety of how each of the three artworks undertaken as part of this doctoral research will be experienced as documentation and the effectiveness of the ‘case study’ method. #3CityLink revealed a characteristic of the risk implicit in improvisation and liveness that has been present in each of the projects (and brought
forward by Caines as a method of practice in the co-artist text Chapter Two) but thus far not explicitly addressed. As the feedback from the Coventry University Fine Art students revealed, many of the participants found the interdisciplinary themes, the lack of imposed ‘expectations’ and the improvisational structure in #3CityLink highly challenging and disruptive of their understanding of ‘art’ and their expectations of ‘being taught’. Though encouraged, such destabilisation is undeniably risky within an educational institution such as Coventry University where ‘student satisfaction’ is a key metric used towards staff performance evaluation and ultimately pay and career progression.

Conversations between myself and colleagues during the making of the project revealed that the improvised and dialogue-based structure of #3CityLink was equally challenging and destabilising for the project organisers who committed many more hours in the working weeks than might normally be expected. I suffered through my own anxiety that the project was too burdensome on my colleagues and the risk that collegial relationships would become strained. While the vulnerability and disorientation experienced equally by all in the project challenged the usual power differential between ‘teachers’ and ‘students’, and between colleagues (and thereby evoked the discourse of critical pedagogies common to the educational turn), the extra investment of time and effort to shift outside of regular routines and purposely designed spaces, rendered the project highly challenging to a circumstance of finite resources. However, I argue that without the risk of transformation implicit in dialogue, education (art and otherwise) merely offers a complex yet comforting exchange of the familiar and already known.
Chapter Five: Findings

In this final chapter I return to the central concern of this thesis. This study’s translocal approach to dialogue-based art responds to Frieling’s (2008) articulation of the perceived gap in participatory artistic practice between works undertaken face-to-face and via mediated communications. The key questions I have addressed in this thesis are firstly, what are the characteristics of this zone of art practice that utilises dialogue to “reflect and act upon our networked and globalized society” (Frieling 2008: 32), and secondly, why work this way? What is to be gained from this approach? The starting point of this research investigated the location of dialogue-based practice between the two ‘worlds’ of contemporary art and media art, which led to a consideration of how such paragone debates could be bypassed entirely, or rendered redundant, through an expanded understanding of dialogue-based art that moves beyond only literal dialogue. This understanding emerged from an approach to dialogue-based practice that reflects the multimodality and fluidity of networked, twenty-first century communications, that respond to the translocal conditions of ‘simultaneous situatedness’ across and between local and global contexts.

The three practice-based projects that led this research developed and tested the subject position of the ‘translocal artist’. Through the development of these projects, ten interlinked, inter-related and inter-informative characteristics were observed, characteristics that I now see as integral to a translocal approach to dialogue-based art. Such an approach to dialogue-based art enables artists to ‘reflect and act’ on the conditions of globalised society that restrict human movement whilst challenging and resisting the singular dominant narrative of globalisation and its inherent inequities.
Characteristics of a translocal approach to dialogue-based art

1 Dialogues across difference

This characteristic, as observed across the three practice-based works that have led this research, reflects and confirms the expanded definition of dialogue-based art as discussed in Chapter Two. The definition includes literal dialogues, and an expanded understanding of dialogue that encompasses notions of dialogue as a creative process of authoring identity, interaction with meta-dialogues, dialogues that reflect their own limits, and the incorporation of non-human participants or influences. The ideas within each of the three works emerged through networks of knowledge, people and their points of connection. Following Bohm, dialogue may be understood as a process with the potential to enable people to speak across-and-to the assumptions they hold about one another. This characteristic works towards the production of spaces for a shared exchange of meaning across cultural and spatial difference and geopolitical/economic disparity, or a process that may lead to this. Drawing on Bakhtin’s notion of the dialogic, local and global can be understood in relation to self and other (and self and self), a back and forth process of understanding the place of oneself in relation to broader or other contexts.

In QR Code Project the dialogues undertaken while beading enabled Anderson and myself to establish a shared space for negotiating difference and for understanding our contrasting cultural contexts. In particular, this method of approaching collaboration built a sense of trust, enabling us to navigate our different cultural backgrounds through dialogue towards a space of enhanced understanding. Over time, our dialogues addressed sensitive issues such as our family dynamics, the spiritual traditions we were raised within, our current belief systems and the positions we occupied within Indigenous/white settler tensions. As the starting point for a project designed to bridge two culturally diverse institutions, our method of approach was to draw on Anderson’s
knowledge of Indigenous beading practice as means to undertake our own dialogue, embedded into the process of the work. By doing so, we were able to address the assumptions and lack of understanding we held about each other and our cultural contexts. These dialogues transformed our relationship as collaborators, raising my awareness and appreciation of how sharing traditional community practices such as beading can act as a means of facilitating dialogue.

In Let Me Tell You The Story of My Neighbour a number of situations emerged for dialogues across difference. We learnt from collecting neighbours’ stories from different geographic contexts that neighbourly relationships are conducted using nuanced strategies for navigating borders and boundaries. For some people, these dialogue-based strategies were motivated by the pragmatic necessity to find workable solutions to problems while for others the solution to neighbourly tensions was simply to move, a strategy only available to a few, unconstrained by economic and geopolitical limits. The work evolved into an installation format focussed on visualising the ‘tactics’ the participants had used to navigate, avoid, negotiate their own on-going relationships with neighbours.

In #3CityLink, dialogue across cultural and spatial difference was tested within diverse higher educational contexts in Canada, the UK and Armenia. Assumptions and norms of such varied educational spaces were challenged on a number of levels. For example, the shift of the teaching spaces from studios and classrooms, to galleries challenged the idea of the traditional separation of the sites of production and the site of reception. The use of networked technologies to connect students in three countries

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132 Generally, the structure of higher education curriculum in Canada, the UK and Armenia differ greatly. For example, Canadian degrees are fully modularised with a greater level of module choice than would typically be found in UK degrees. In Fine Art, Canadian and British curriculum are similar in their emphasis on contemporary art practice. In Armenia, Fine Art education retains a narrower scope, influenced by the former Soviet system with emphasis placed on traditional skills in painting, drawing and sculpture. In #3CL, specific local higher educational contexts strongly influenced and shaped the project, such as for example the importance of Indigeneity at the University of Regina or the commitment from Barseghyan and Vardanyan to introduce more experimental approaches to students at the Art Academy in Gyumri. My experiences of different educational contexts continue to impact my own teaching approach.
challenged Redden’s first world view that dialogue-based online international learning is not new, whereas such undertakings were novel to the Armenian context where traditional atelier art pedagogy approaches still dominate.

Negotiating geopolitical disparity, economic imbalance, issues of mobility and cultural difference continues as the basis of dialogues that informs my collaborative approach, particularly with Tonoyan. My working relationships, often undertaken across geographic distance, rely on an ability to transition smoothly across multiple communicative modes. The projects undertaken as part of this research and developed collaboratively, reflect a multimodal approach to dialogue, shaping a model of practice that is responsive to the networked conditions of twenty-first century communications. It follows then that in light of this, the segregation of face to face and mediated dialogues between contemporary art and media art represent an artificial separation, out of alignment with the way we communicate in everyday life today.

2  A focus on the local within the context of the global

This characteristic positions local in dialogue with local as an approach to practice that considers the conditions on the ground in the specific place/s, in dialogue with translocal and global contexts, networks and systems. This characteristic develops thematics and modes of production responsive to the particular and specific issues of local contexts. Ideas of tranlocality encourage a consideration of individual locations not as separate places, but rather as nodes within social and technical networks that operate across a spectrum from personal, familial and social links, to the forces of globalisation that interconnect systems. Most pertinent to the development of this characteristic is the proposition of translocality as a condition of ‘simultaneous situatedness’ and threads of connection between places near and far.
In *QR Code Project*, a series of video duologues on the topic of communication technologies between individuals who identify as Indigenous or white, positioned a local dialogue in Regina Canada within the context of colonial legacies in Canada and globally. The work exposed the simultaneous situatedness of Indigenous participants between traditional and Western cultures, and white participants between local residents and their inescapable continued role as white settler colonisers.

In *Let Me Tell You The Story of My Neighbour*, the stories of relationships with neighbours were collected from individuals located across the world, but all of whom had at some point visited Armenia. In the exhibition version of this work, relations between domestic neighbours were presented alongside relations between national neighbours, as represented by images of ‘diplomatic handshakes’ between neighbouring world leaders. The diverse relational scales in my practice reflects the focus of the local within global characteristic of translocality, this means that the global may be understood as the sum of all person-person and local-local connections. The work questioned how each individual participant negotiated their ‘simultaneous situatedness’ of where they live, between their own home and the broader structures of their local/global communities.

In *#3CityLink*, the characteristic was tested in the most ambitious way, with groups of students in three cities hosting the project, with each group developing thematics and projects relating to the specificity of their locale and placed in interrelation to one another. The context explored in each city responded to concerns specific to that location but nonetheless connected to narratives elsewhere. At its most literal, translocal ‘simultaneous situatedness’ occurred each day of the project through social media and the shared two hour Skype sessions which enabled the groups to ‘come together’ into the shared space established by the project.

Focussing on the local within the context of the global has at its root an
understanding of ‘the global’ as a condition that emerges from the density of translocal, local-to-local interactions across social and technical networks and systems. Online spaces therefore also can be understood as inherently translocal with users ‘simultaneously situated’ between physical locale and spaces of interaction and encounter on the internet.

3 Circulations, movements, transfers, networks and flows

This characteristic reflects a critical awareness of the politics of mobility and fixity that control and constrain the flow of human movement. The notions of ‘kinetic elite’ and ‘kinetic underclass’ are key points of consideration regarding the conditions that mark of the political dimension of mobility, namely the reasons for movement, the routes taken, the velocity and rhythm of journeys, the level of friction that movements produce, the bureaucracy of gaining entry, the overall experience of travel, and most poignantly, the question of the right to stay put. The definition of translocality as the sum of phenomena which result from a multitude of circulations and transfers moves beyond the physical body and suggests an expanded understanding of movement to also include the flow of information through networks, the movement of goods and services and the transfer of capital. Addressing communications, each of the three projects illustrate the erosion of the distinction between communicative modes, proposing creative practices that reflect contemporary multi-modal communications. Just as the politics of mobility fosters awareness of the constrains of movement, so the attendant politics of technology acknowledges disparity of access to devices and connectivity globally.

In QR Code Project, movement and flow occurred between two institutions with two distinct communities and conflicted histories. Anderson and I invited participants from each institution and facilitated pairings to share stories with each other as intimate
face-to-face duologues. Cultural exchange as movement was emphasised within the resulting videos accessible online through the use of two web-enabled mobile devices and responding to their increasing ubiquity. More importantly however, the work required face-to-face cooperation between two people with devices to see the work in its entirety, emphasising both the interconnective potential of dialogue in person and via technologies.

In *Let Me Tell You The Story Of My Neighbour*, we mounted the initial exhibition at the Gyumri Art Academy in order to circulate ideas between Biennale artists and students from the Academy who have limited access to international mobility and art world centres. Since the educational turn in art, discussions with students can be understood as part of the artwork, and though not anticipated prior to the exhibition installation this became a component of the work that developed in-situ. We subsequently published the stories and images collected in the *Let Me Tell You the Story Of My Neighbour* project in the distributable form of a *Newspaper*, enabling the mobility of the work instead of the fixity of an exhibition.

In #3CityLink, I invited the project leaders in each city to design and lead group walks as the starting point for each of the three exhibition projects placing movement and circulation as a central concern of the project. The extreme winter weather conditions experienced by the walkers in Regina was a poignant metaphor for forces that impede freedom of movement, particularly for many of the students in Coventry for whom such conditions could hardly be imagined, and Regina MFA student Ken Wilson presented a lecture on ‘walking as art practice’ live streamed to the two other locations. In Gyumri, emphasis was also placed on the circulation and transfer of cultural knowledge from one generation to the next and outward into the world. Organised by the student participants as part of their project *Music Born From Darkness*, the concert by Armenian folk-revival band *The Bambir* shared examples of Armenia’s long musical
heritage, with the audience in Gallery 25 in Gyumri and live streamed to the other project locations. Similarly, the potatoes project evoked a past era of struggle, with the project organisers sharing their experiences of a traumatic period in Gyumri’s history and by doing so, inviting the students into a shared space of meaning.

Although global mobility and connective technologies remain markers of art world success, the characteristic of circulations, movements, transfers, networks and flows enables the translocal artist to reflect and act upon the knowledge that for most of the world’s population mobility remains restricted, and within the cultural context, most of the world remains within the contemporary artworld margins. Each of these projects begins to engage the politics of mobility, but my own critical awareness has emerged through my collaboration with Tonoyan and witnessing his near constant struggle with the bureaucracy and anxiety of attempting to achieve mobility. The tensions and frustrations of these experiences are not yet evident in the creative projects we have worked on, but emerge most clearly within the co-artist text we co-created for Chapter Three of this thesis.

4 Context-driven approach

The context-driven approach provides flexibility towards enabling responses to professional and institutional requirements, including my doctoral research. Undertaking this inquiry parallel to full-time academic employment necessitated a research topic and a framework of study that integrated well with the context of my academic life. The pressing issues of my inquiry were shaped in response to critical debates between contemporary and media art-worlds as identified through my prior practice. The methodological approach of artistic research addresses artists’ concerns about how their frameworks and histories of practice should more directly connect with and contribute to philosophical, critical and historical debates relevant to their own
practice. In my case, this also includes the role of an artist-academic working within the contexts of academic leadership, research and teaching. This research intersects with and contributes to the contexts of dialogue-based art and translocal research perspectives. This contextual relationship played out in different ways within the diverse geographic, social and institutional contexts where each of the art works undertaken.

In the QR Code Project, the translocal dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people echoed the local context of two institutions on the same campus, whose ‘sites’ are discursive and resonant of the cultural divide between their historical and societal contexts of formation. Through initiating an exhibition to forge connections between staff and students at the two institution and the collaborative process of making and reflection, we attempted to bridge different contexts of Western and Indigenous ways of knowing. In addition, I brought to the project my own concerns regarding an expanded definition of ‘dialogue-based art’ and the context of QR Code Project as the first practice-based component of my doctoral research.

Let Me Tell You The Story of My Neighbour was developed in response to an invitation to participate in the Gyumri Biennale, an international event of considerable impact for development of contemporary art Armenia. Our project theme addressed the Armenian geopolitical reality and the impact of national/global contexts on local situations. Similarly, Our Beds In Mallorca responded to the context of the Mallorca Translocal Meeting and its provision of free accommodation which assisted artists with diverse financial situations to come together on more equal terms in the context of European austerity, the economic crisis within Spain and the subsequent collapse of arts funding.

#3CityLink explored the thematic of traumatic pasts of three specific locations within the context of the educational turn in art, and online international learning in
education. Within each institution, participating professors/tutors were able to adapt the project to the context of their own courses/modules and the specificity of their curriculum, learning outcomes and assignments. The profound differences of contexts and mandates for each educational institution and gallery, contributed to the specificity of approach in each city, and therefore the translocal diversity inherent in the overall project.

While the context-driven approach was evident across all three projects, one criticism may be that there is a risk of confusion when too many agendas compete. This was most evident in #3CL where competing staff, student, institution and researcher agendas led to over-stretched relations, and the risk of the project insufficiently addressing the needs of undergraduate learners within a teaching context due to seemingly more pressing agendas taking priority. Working across contexts runs the risk of failing to address the requirements of each agenda appropriately, but also the possibility to resist and reframe agendas through a critical and reflexive engagement with the contexts of practice. Risk was observed in each of the projects undertaken and will be addressed specifically in Characteristic 10.

5  **Made in situ with connections to communities**

The in-situ characteristic emerges from a dialogue between artists and specific locales. In each of the works, consideration was given to how creative processes connect and contribute to communities and economies addressing problems through locally sourced resources and ‘home-made’ solutions. This in-situ characteristic reflects particular conditions on the ground, shifting away from pre-made works to an exploration of themes and modes of production that emerge through dialogue and local encounters. This approach places the ‘prefabrication’ of the international artist in tension with the situated production of the ‘translocal artist’. Situatedness is approached through its
double meaning as both locale and point of view, which are themselves unfixed and changeable. Following Massey’s notion of place as ‘spatio-temporal events’, a conceptualisation which echoes Bakhtin’s notion of the ‘chronotope’ (configurations of time and place constructed through dialogue), place can also be taken as unfixed and unfinalisable. Thus, such situated dialogue, viewed from the perspective of translocality, place (or situ) is understood as always located within ongoing and dynamic interrelations with other locales, as constituent nodes within an interconnected global world.

In the *QR Code Project*, the participants in the video component of the work were invited to my studio on the University of Regina campus to shoot the videos which were then viewed as part of the exhibition at the First Nations University of Canada Gallery (directed by Anderson) as part of the translocal relationship and temporary bridge between the artist’s local situations of work. Through the production of the videos on one campus and the exhibition of the work at the other, the project also enacted a symbolic dialogue between the institutions, their structures of operation, the histories that caused their foundation and the ongoing dialogue between two different world views that the institutions represent. Home-made solutions to the lack of appropriate skills needed to complete the work were embedded into the project. Anderson taught me to bead, and I taught her basic video editing, as part of the exchange-based production process we mutually agreed as integral to the work.

In *Let Me Tell You The Story Of My Neighbour*, the challenge of locating print production facilities in Gyumri led to unanticipated conversations and encounters that became a part of the understanding of the work. Our receptivity to these everyday exchanges, facilitated by our local hosts, deepened connectivity with the local community re-configuring priorities from ‘professional’ outcomes to a creative and dialogue-based process of engagement with situated knowledge and local solutions. In
Binissalem, Mallorca, the challenge of divergent economic circumstances between the different artists from Western and Eastern parts of Europe was addressed by undertaking a communal approach to shared meals, with the artists who felt able contributing more to household finances. The problem that needed to be solved was caused in part by geopolitical inequities translocated into our shared temporary home in Binissalem. Viewed through the lens of translocality, my understanding of ‘in-situ’ was expanded beyond the limits of a specific geographic locale, towards Massey’s description of space as ‘the product of interrelations’.

In #3CityLink, each gallery performed the role of both production and exhibition space, with the activities undertaken in the spaces and the associated research undertaken in the city all understood as the exhibition. Home-made solutions were particularly evident in the way each project team approached hospitality, with drinks and food in each space provided through creative and locally-sourced means, as part of the work. Each of the three gallery spaces maintains a high profile position within its local community, embedding the project within community contexts and opportunities to support local economies. Gallery 25 in Gyumri for example is located in a complex with a hotel and mother-baby polyclinic with the fee paid to rent the space therefore contributing to this community venture.

Works featuring in-situ production engaging a local focus and home-made solutions may seem inward looking, and suggest criticisms that such works might simply reflect back local meanings to local people. However, when the characteristic of in-situ production is approached through Characteristic 2 of a focus on the local within the context of the global, in-situ is instead understood as intricately interconnected to the network of locales that form the global.
6 Collaborative, participatory and distributed approaches to authorship

A characteristic present in each of the projects that led this research is a dialogue-based process driven by collaborative, participatory and distributed approaches to creative authorship and meaning making. Bakhtin’s terms of heteroglossia and polyphony orient an understanding of multivoicedness towards identity formation and authorship, and the intertextuality of social and cultural dialogues. In responding to the networks and global scope of contemporary human society, this characteristic proposes consideration of collaborative dialogue-based practice between co-artists that negotiate multiple and broadened perspectives, suggestive of Bakhtin’s idea of an ‘excess of seeing’ with the potential to detect and ameliorate the blind spots of singular or monologic perspectives.

A further point raised by the expanded definition of dialogue-based art in relation to participation is the manner by which nonhuman things assert influence in the authorship of meaning, for example in the way location might be understood as a factor within in-situ works.

*QR Code Project* was developed out of an on-going collaboration between Anderson and myself, a dialogue that is both individual and attendant to/conscious of our Indigenous/Western perspectives. Participants in the *QR Code Project* participated through the contribution of their own stories and approved the scripts that Anderson and I then devised. All participants involved in the development of the work were named and listed in project publicity materials, acknowledging their role in the co-creation of the artwork. In the exhibition of the final work, viewers also participated in the realisation and completion of the work in the exhibition space. Reflective of the process of collaborative, dialogue-based making and authoring, the research paper written after the fact incorporates the varied research perspectives, ideas and references brought forward by its three authors (Anderson, Caines and Knowles), performing the ‘heteroglossic’ and ‘polyphonic’ framework of the approach.
In *Let Me Tell You The Story of My Neighbour*, the collaboratively produced, community *Newspaper 1* and *2* included the involvement of many individuals in all stages of planning, production and dissemination, towards a work of many voices. In each *Newspaper*, all participants are acknowledged, including the contributors of each story and the designer responsible for the layout. In *Archive/Portal*, a work that explored the imbrication of interactive documentation and invitation, possibilities for multiple levels of participation were extended to viewers. QR codes were used to link viewers to information about how they could apply for residencies and other opportunities within a network of artist-led organisations.

*#3CityLink* incorporated works by one hundred and fifty two students all named as co-participants in the project brochure and who therefore share authorship of the project with the organisers in the three counties. In the context of the educational turn in art, the project was both a collaboratively produced artwork, and embedded into the curriculum for the students at the three institutions involved. The exhibitions in each location were devised collaboratively, with themes, approaches and working methods all negotiated in the exhibition spaces as part of the exhibition itself.

The research design of each project was approached with consideration of the ethical implications of working in collaboration with others, both in terms of the governance of research ethics and the substantive issue of research integrity. The voices of four collaborative interlocutors (Mkrtich Tonoyan, Judy Anderson, Rebecca Caines and Christine Ramsay) enter directly into this thesis as co-artist texts, but the entire text is acknowledged as a dialogue formed through collaborative engagement with others and the intellectual and creative labour of many. While efforts may be made to acknowledge participation and co-authorship, it nevertheless remains the case that collaboration is rarely equal, both in terms of contributions to the work, or the cultural, economic or educational capital extracted from it. Despite the collaborative involvement
of others, this thesis remains a single-authored text, and the politics, authorship and intellectual property remain contested territories in academia. The collaborative relationship at the heart of this research is with Tonoyan, whose ideas and activities have greatly influenced and assisted this thesis, yet his economic situation, personal circumstances and geographic location place limits on his own opportunities for further academic achievement.

7 Multilinguality

Multilinguality, a constant aspect of the global context, emerged as a characteristic in each of the three projects, with the process of identifying solutions within the complexities and challenges of communications in multi-lingual situations understood as integral to the work of the translocal artist. What emerged through the projects was an observation and understanding that multi-linguality as ‘heteroglossia’ facilitates and represents not just communicative exchange across languages but also exchange across registers, methods, modes, contexts and places.

In QR Code Project, one of the participants Lionel Peyachew told his story in the Indigenous language of Cree. Peyachew presents as invitation to the audience to consider not the private and the personal details of his story, but rather the cultural genocide enacted upon Indigenous peoples in Canada through the policy of language suppression. By doing so, he positions his story as an act of resistance and reclamation. Peyachew’s text is not translated but is placed in dialogue with participant John Campbell who speaks English with a strong Northern Irish accent. The meanings that emerge are not within the content of the story, but rather within what Bakhtin calls a ‘social and historical heteroglossia’ of shared meaning across a space of difference, something other than comprehending the words. Peyachew’s approach shifts the dialogue beyond the literal towards an intertextual dialogue between voices and
positions that moves beyond the individual and the momentary towards a broader expression of the political and cultural contexts of a nation and an era.

In *Let Me Tell You The Story Of My Neighbour*, language played a major role in situating contributors. *Neighbours Newspaper 1* tested out an English-only publication format towards a shared-language platform for translocal dialogue. Developing the thinking further in *Neighbours Newspaper 2: Veïns*, space was given to enable a multilingual publication as an alternate, more complex solution to the politics of language hierarchies. The text from the *Mallorca Translocal Meeting* organiser Vidal Font is printed three times, in Catalan, English and Spanish, with the Catalan version on the cover, as per his request. This multilinguality, and the politics of the decisions regarding which languages and where they sit in the hierarchy of the pages, it a feature of *Veïns* as prominent as the stories and images it contains.

In *#3CityLink*, language barriers between the Armenian students and the other two groups of students prompted creative improvisation during the Skype sessions through other forms of ‘language’ with images, diagramming, gestures, performance and singing each complementing speech. Through the social media channels, students were encouraged to use online translation tools to communicate and for the students used to an English-centric world, this process opened up a mode of engagement with translation technologies now ubiquitous in other language contexts. During a Skype session, a UK-based student from Lithuania broke into Russian to speak to the Armenians. This exchange brought forward the concept of a ‘lingua franca’ and the idea of a third language as a meeting place – or a space of understanding - between two different language speakers. In this case, the student shared a knowingness that the Russian language remains the bridge between post-Soviet counties that challenges the notion of English as global ‘lingua franca’. My thinking around language was extended beyond linguistic forms however, through a consideration of how visual and cultural
languages were also multiple. As noted by Ramsay, the First Nations’ traditional beading group in the white cube gallery in Regina put the language of ‘living indigenous culture’ in contemporaneous dialogue with the modernist white-cube space and the language of ‘contemporary art’.

Multilinguality in practices resists the singular narrative of homogenous globalisation. Such a dynamic in practices does so by aiming towards a position that embraces heterogeneity and works to disrupt situations of cultural hegemony, the dominance of one cultural world view over another. The risk inherent in adopting a multilingual approach is that spaces of multiplicity may extend beyond the intercultural competencies of participants and instead create frustrating (or boring) spaces of misunderstanding and exclusion. Literally, participants may be left out of the conversation. Therefore, in the work of the translocal artist, the multilingual characteristic operates most successfully in tandem with approaches that navigates the challenges of cultural difference through dialogue (Characteristic 1). Multilinguality, however, conveys a sense that such dialogue is more than a mere communicative exchange of linguistic information, representing instead meaningful interpersonal interaction and encounter.

8 – 9 Multi-scalar and multi-temporal approaches to dialogue

Though each of these characteristics can be identified separately, the connected nature of the spatial and the temporal as exemplified by the notion of place as a ‘spatio-temporal event’ has led to my understanding that multi-scalar and multi-temporal approaches to dialogue are most productively discussed through their interrelation. Each of the projects undertaken revealed an approach that remained open to expansion and contraction. In considering dialogue as a process of spanning the space between self and other (I and Thou), the multi-scalar approach encompasses multi-modal
communications irrespective of distance. Depending on scale, dialogues may occur across the street or across time-zones with simultaneous situatedness in both day and night, or across seasons, or they may take place across multiple temporalities between a community that once was and the community that is now. This example demonstrates two places that are one and the same and yet different ‘spatio-temporal events’. Multi-temporality featured as a key characteristic in each of the works that led this research, in synchronous and asynchronous dialogues that slipped in and out of alignment, and the interplay between contemporaneity, permanence and the temporary. This characteristic reveals a critical understanding of time as a concept that shifts through culture and collides with space. Massey’s argument ‘for space’ proposes an approach to globalisation accepting of multiplicity and contemporaneous difference. Her proposition provides a provocative counterpoint to positions that argue for the dominance of time over space, or the collapse of space (or the end of geography), as a condition of the contemporary technological era. 

QR Code Project connected two institutions physically close but culturally distant. As a work incorporating the laborious process of beading and the medium of video the project was inherently time-based, but it was the beading in particular where duration was an integral factor in enabling transformational dialogues between the collaborators to unfold and deepen over the course of many evenings and weekends for three months. In the context of the exhibition, the video image-size, the location of the screens and the duration of playback were all in the hands of the viewer. With cooperation, viewers were able coordinate playback and to attempt a synchronisation between the two sides of the video conversation that was possible but nonetheless challenging to achieve. This ‘out of alignment’ quality in the work gestured towards the profound difference between Western and Indigenous concepts of time and space.
In *Let Me Tell You The Story of My Neighbour*, interesting temporal aspect of the spatial relations of neighbours emerged in the stories published in *Neighbours Newspaper 1*. While the relationship of the neighbour is regarded as temporary in some locations, in former Soviet countries where housing was issued by the State and passed down through generations, neighbours are understood as enduring relationships that may last beyond individual lifetimes. Tonoyan’s story tells us that four generations of his family have lived next to the same neighbouring family since his grandfather was issued the flat in Yerevan in 1964. Vardanyan’s more poetic approach presents an even longer temporal scope. Suggestive of ‘great time’, he describes Aragats as his neighbour, a mountain his family in Gyumri have looked at for hundreds of years. Within the work, the scale of ‘neighbourly relations’ expands from close proximity across the hall, to the historical geopolitics of relationships between neighbouring countries. The questions the work poses, namely what is it to be ‘neighbourly’ and ‘how are such relations performed’, demonstrate an elastic approach to scale and temporality.

#3CityLink encompassed small-scale works produced by individual students within one large umbrella project. The work spanned across 6,000 miles between Regina, Coventry and Gyumri, collapsed daily by Skype connection and other social media exchange. Time-difference was approached as a central element of the work as represented in the project logo, which was designed to capture both the multi-temporal and multi-scalar dimensions of the work. Communications unfolded through synchronous and asynchronous dialogues across time and space most poignantly evidenced by the project undertaken by students in Gyumri, exploring spaces across their city to connect back in time though a long cultural history and transformation as Kumayri, Alexandropol, Leninakan and now Gyumri.

These two interrelated characteristics of multi-scalar and multi-temporal approaches to dialogue are characteristics that contribute to a translocal practice
position resistant to a singular and homogeneous narrative of globalisation that places geographic locations along unified timeline of progress. Within each of the projects, scale was approached flexibly as a dialogue between local and global, with the micro understood through macro perspectives and vice versa. The initial walks in each of the three cities in #3CL are a good example of this, with each walk undertaken separately in the context of local histories, but then shared with the other participants engaged in connected experiences in the other cities. Thus, the multi-scalar dimension enables dialogues, inherently time-based, to span across the intimate interpersonal to the complexity of the global, with time and space understood as culturally determined concepts.

10 Risk, improvisation and liveness

This final characteristic reveals an approach that reflects the risk of uncertain outcomes intrinsic to liveness and improvisation, and risk of working within multiple contexts. I see risk, improvisation and liveness as integral elements in the work of the translocal artist and in particular in the interaction and negotiation between artists and other stakeholders in the artwork.

In QR Code Project, the videos were presented online without instructions, leaving audience members the task of discovering how the beaded QR code pieces led to the second component of the work. This set-up involved considerable debate between the co-artists about how best to balance the risk of alienating audience participants who might not have the necessary technology, with the benefits of live interactions and improvisation that we hoped would occur from audience members participating and improvising with their own technology. Within the stories themselves, risk was also apparent, as the video duologues explored themes of overexposure and loss of privacy through social media and communication technology use.
In *Let Me Tell You The Story of My Neighbour*, risk was best exemplified in the experience of sharing the farmhouse in Binissalem as part of the *Mallorca Translocal Meeting*. Each day the group improvised solutions to quotidian problems. How to share two sets of keys between many people? How to accommodate dietary differences? How to navigate household finances in a group with considerable financial disparities? While at first these issues were a cause of tension and frustration, negotiating creative solutions to the problems eventually contributed to the transformation of ‘shared housing’ into a situation that the participants came to regard as a live socially-engaged artwork, with ourselves and the citizens of the small town of Binissalem and others involved in the *MTM* project becoming the ‘audience’ of the work.

In #3CityLink risk, improvisation and liveness were integral components in the overall project structure, with each of the three locations starting their projects with empty exhibition spaces, and no clear plan of what would happen. While this approach stressed the nerves of the organisers and the students, afterwards, they felt this uncertainty to be the most important factor in facilitating dynamic improvised solutions. The greatest risk however emerged from the challenge, particularly for the Coventry students, to people’s prior understanding of art and more importantly perhaps to their assumptions of what it is ‘to be taught’ when the usual frameworks and hierarchies are disrupted. The process was no less disruptive to the teaching staff who were also challenged to question what it is ‘to teach’ when business as usual is temporarily suspended, provoking critical dialogues between colleagues. Such destabilisation is undeniably risky within the UK educational landscape where ‘student satisfaction’ is a key metric.

This characteristic reflects that dialogue is a risky business if we understand it as a practice that opens people up to the possibility of transformational change. For the translocal artist however, it is the meta-perspective on risk that is most pertinent, the
understanding that a risky situation in one context is simply an unproblematic everyday reality in another. I re-interpret a point made at the conclusion of Chapter Four, that without the risk of transformation implicit in dialogue, art (education and otherwise) merely offers a comforting picture of the familiar and already known.

Reflecting on these ten characteristics has highlighted the particular importance of a context driven approach, which emerged as the space of critical reflexivity in relation to the situation of the artist/researcher and the underlying contexts of practice. I now characterise this approach as the meta-space for critical evaluation of the constraints and conditions that shape a given project, and the development of critical-creative responses through the other nine characteristics. In methodological terms therefore, characteristic 4, a context driven approach, may be used by research peers to devise an approach that integrates reflexive, critical questioning into the planning of new works, using a context driven approach as a lens through which to view the other characteristics.

Dialogues in dialogue with dialogue

The contribution to knowledge that this thesis proposes is to the related disciplines of art and artistic research, and to the interdisciplinary translocal research perspective. I establish an open, expanded definition of dialogue-based art that attends to literal communicative modes, but that also encompasses dialogue in conceptual, symbolic or meta-discursive ways, an approach I define as dialogues in dialogue with dialogue. This thesis utilises dialogue as both a method of finding out, and as the subject to be explored, informed by a Bakhtinian understanding of dialogue as an on-going, unending, unfinalisable and collaborative process of meaning making.
The findings of the research propose ten inter-related and inter-informative characteristics that articulate a framework for a translocal approach to dialogue-based art. This framework is offered to artists and artist/academics in the hope that it may be useful for the continued investigation of translocal ‘simultaneous situatedness’ across and between local and global contexts, and contribute to the important role I believe the translocal artist can play in actively countering homogenising and reductive narratives of globalisation.

This period of research reaches its conclusion at a time of turmoil, with the UK referendum vote to ‘Brexit’ from the European Union revealing the complex questions of identity, affiliation and the politics of mobility as the defining dialogues of our era. I propose this thesis therefore as a timely - and urgent - contribution to methodologies of art practice that operate critically within contemporary society.

Figure 26  #3CityLink, detail - the final skype session
Afterword

Mkrtich Tonoyan and I continue our collaboration as translocal artists, an approach we have developed and evolved together. I have undertaken five research trips to Armenia during the timescale of this PhD, resulting in a wealth of experiences and connections that this thesis can only begin to express, experiences unimaginable at commencement. My understanding of translocality and the ideas that inform my work as an artist/academic continue to emerge through collaboration and dialogue with artists and research peers such as Tonoyan (amongst others) and my role on the International Advisory Board of ACOSS as a platform for translocal practice. Now celebrating its tenth anniversary as a residency centre, ACOSS is poised to undertake its next phase of development with a new building in the planning stages and a move towards an increasingly educational and research-focussed mission in the field of translocal dialogue-based art. It is our intention to develop ACOSS as a research centre to support a network of fellow artist researchers interested in contributing to further developments within this field of practice at the intersection of art and social studies.

Tonoyan and I are currently participating as part of an international interdisciplinary team of artists, researchers, scientists, health policy makers and journalists in a project addressing global vaccines and the question of how and if artistic research can impact health policy. The broader project *Uniting Evidence, Art, and Advocacy project on the theme of global vaccination* is funded by the Research Council of Norway, led by researchers at the University of Alberta and the University of Ottawa in Canada, with the group exhibition *ImmuneNations* shown at Galleri KiT in Trondheim, Norway, and
at the UNAIDS headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. Our international distributed art/health/journalism project *VacZineNations!* presented an opportunity to once again test the adaptability of the translocal dialogue-based approach, this time addressing a global imperative and with a highly diverse group of interdisciplinary collaborators. In line with the role of the artist/academic, our *VacZineNations!* project involves students, aligned with my leadership role supporting internationalisation at Coventry University.

Undertaking doctoral research completes my transition from artist to ‘artist/academic’, working within the zone of practiced knowledge known as ‘artistic research’ in Europe and ‘research-creation’ in Canada. I have undertaken this research envisioned as a “theorising of a practice exploring methodologies” (Macleod, 2000: 1-2), and it is this methodological emphasis that has enabled the adaptable translocal approach that I present here for research peers. The findings of this research, undertaken from the position of the translocal artist, are offered as a resource to fellow artists and researchers to be localised, contextualised, improvised, translated, circulated, adapted and tested through dialogue, collaboration and critical reflexive practice.

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133 [http://www.thevaccineproject.com/](http://www.thevaccineproject.com/)
References


References


Note:
Additional web links can be found on the atatdba.net archive site.
See: http://atatdba.net/links.html
Appendices

Papers published or preprint, written during the registration period.

Paper 1
*QR Codes and Traditional Beadwork: Augmented Communities Improvising Together*


Paper 2
*A response to “Provoking Failure: Unsettling a Research-Creation Framework” by Glenn Lowry.*


Paper 3
*The Dialogic: art work as method.*


Paper 4
*#3CityLink: a translocal art/pedagogy exchange project: disrupting the learning.*

Paper 1.

*QR Codes and Traditional Beadwork: Augmented Communities Improvising Together*

Caines, R., Anderson, J., Knowles, R.V.
Caines, R. and Stewart, M. (eds.)

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QR Codes and Traditional Beadwork: Augmented Communities Improvising Together

Rebecca Caines, Judy Anderson, Rachelle Viader Knowles

This article discusses the cross-cultural, augmented artwork Parallel Worlds, Intersecting Moments (2012) by Rachelle Viader Knowles and Judy Anderson, that premiered at the First Nations University of Canada Gallery in Regina, on 2 March 2012, as part of a group exhibition entitled Critical Faculties. The work consists of two elements: wall pieces with black and white QR codes created using traditional beading and framed within red Stroud cloth; and a series of videos, accessible via scanning the beaded QR codes. The videos feature Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people from Saskatchewan, Canada telling stories about their own personal experiences with new technologies. A Quick Response (QR) code is a matrix barcode made up of black square modules on a white square in a grid pattern that is optically machine-readable. Performance artist and scholar Rebecca Caines was invited by the artists to participate in the work as a subject in one of the videos. She attended the opening and observed how audiences improvised and interacted with the work. Caines then went on to initiate this collaborative writing project.

Like the artwork it analyzes, this writing documents a series of curated experiences and conversations. This article includes excerpts of artist statements, descriptions of artist process and audience observation, and new sections of collaborative critical writing, woven together to explore the different augmented elements of the artwork and the results of this augmentation. These conversations and responses explore the cross-cultural processes that led to the work’s creation, and describe the results of the technological and social disruptions and slippages that occurred in the development phase and in the gallery as observers and artists improvised with the augmentation technology, and with each other. The article includes detail on the augmented art practices of storytelling, augmented reality (AR), and traditional beading, that collided and mutated during this project, exploring the tension and opportunity inherent in the human impulse to augment.

Storytelling through Augmented Art Practices: The Creation of the Work

JUDY ANDERSON: I am a Plains Cree artist from the Gordon’s First Nation, which is located in Saskatchewan, Canada. As a Professor of Indian Fine Arts at the First Nations University of Canada, I research and continue to learn about traditional art making using traditional materials creating primarily beaded pieces such as medicine bags and drum sticks. Of particular interest to me, however, is how such traditional practices manifest in contemporary Aboriginal art. In this regard I have been greatly influenced by my colleague and friend, artist Ruth Cuthand, and specifically her “Trading” series, which reframed my thinking about beadwork (Art Placement), and later by the work of artists like Nadia Myer, and KC Adams (Myer; KC Adams). Cuthand’s incredibly successful series taught me that beadwork does not only beautify and “augment” our world, but it has the power to bring to the forefront important issues regarding Aboriginal people. As a result, I began to work on my own ideas on how to create beadworks that spoke to both traditional and contemporary thoughts.

RACHELLE VIADER KNOWLES: At the time we started developing this project, we were both working in leadership roles in our respective Departments; Judy as Head of Indian Fine Arts at First Nations University, and myself as Head of Visual Arts at the
University of Regina. We began discussing ways that we could create more interconnection between our faculty members and students. At the centre of both our practices was a dialogic method of back and forth negotiation and compromise.

JA: Rachelle had the idea that we should bead QR codes and make videos for the upcoming First Nations and University of Regina joint faculty exhibition. Over the 2011 Christmas holiday we visited each others homes, beaded together, and found out about each other’s lives by telling stories of the things we’ve experienced. I felt it was very important that our QR codes were not beaded in the exact same manner; Rachelle built up hers through a series of straight lines, whereas mine was beaded with a circle around the square QR code, which reflected the importance of the circle in my Cree belief system. It was important for me to show that even though we, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, have similar experiences, we often have a different approach or way of thinking about similar things. I also suggested we frame the black and white beaded QR codes with bright red Stroud cloth, a heavy wool cloth originating in the UK that has been used in North America as trade cloth since the 1680s, and has become a significant part of First Nations fabric traditions.

Since we were approaching this piece as a cross-cultural one, I chose the number seven for the amount of stories we would create because it is a sacred number in my own Plains Cree spiritual teachings. As such, we brought together 7 pairs of people, including ourselves. The participants were drawn from family and friends from reserves and communities around Saskatchewan, including the city of Regina, as well as colleagues and students from the two university campuses. There were a number of different age ranges and socioeconomic backgrounds represented. We came together to tell stories about our experiences with technology, a common cross-cultural experience that seemed appropriate to the work.

RVK: As the process of making the beadworks unfolded however, what became apparent to me was the sheer amount of hours it takes to create a piece of “augmentation” through beading, and the deeply social nature of the activity. We also worked together on the videos for the AR part of the artwork. Each participant in the videos was asked to write a short text about some aspect of their relationship to technology and communications. We took the short stories, arranged them into pairs, and used them to write short scripts. We then invited each pair to perform the scripts together on camera in my studio. The stories were really broad ranging. My own was a reflection of the profound discomfort of finding a blog where a man I was dating was publishing the story of our relationship as it unfolded. Other stories covered the loss of no longer being able to play the computer games from teenage years, first encounters with new technologies and social networks, secret admirers, and crank calls to emergency services. The storytelling and dialogue between us as we shared our practices became an important, but unseen layer of this “dialogical” work (Kester).

REBECCA CAINES: I came along to Rachelle’s studio at the University to be a participant in a video for the piece. My co-performer was a young woman called Nova Lee. We laughed and chatted and talked and sat knee-to-knee together to film our stories about technology, both of us focusing on different types of internet relationships. We were asked to read one line of our story at a time, interweaving together our poem of experience. Afterwards I asked her where her name was from. She told me it was from a song. She found the song on YouTube on Rachelle’s computer in the studio and played it for us. Here is a sample of the lyrics:

I told my daddy I'd found a girl
Who meant the world to me
And tomorrow I'd ask the Indian chief
For the hand of Nova Lee
Dad's trembling lips spoke softly
As he told me of my life twangs then he said I could never take
This maiden for my wife
Son, the white man and Indians were fighting when you were born
And a brave called Yellow Sun scalped my little boy
So I stole you to get even for what he'd done
Though you're a full-blooded Indian, son I love you as much as my own little fellow that's dead
And, son, Nova Lee is your sister
And that's why I've always said
Son, don't go near the Indians
Please stay away
Son, don't go near the Indians
Please do what I say


Judy explained to Rachelle and I that this was a common history of displacement in Canada, people taken away, falling in love with their relatives without knowing, perhaps sensing a connection, always longing for a home (Campbell). I thought, “What a weight for this young woman to bear, this name, this history.” Other participants also learnt about each other this way through the sharing of stories. Many had had come to Canada from other places, each with different cultural and colonial resonances. Through these moments of working together, new understandings formed that deeply affected the participants. In this way, layers of storytelling form the heart of this work.

JA: Storytelling holds an incredibly special place in Aboriginal people’s lives; through them we learned the laws, rules, and regulations that governed our behaviour as individuals, within our family, our communities, and our nations. These stories included histories (personal and communal), sacred teachings, the way the world used to be, creation stories, medicine stories, stories regarding the seasons and animals, and stories that defined our relationship with the environment etc. The stories we asked for not only showed that we as Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people have the same experiences, but also work in the way that a traditional story would. For example, Rachelle’s story taught a good lesson about how it is important to learn about the individual you are dating—had she not, her whole life could have been laid out to any who may have come across that man’s blog. My story spoke to the need to look up and observe what is around you instead of being engrossed in your own little world, because you don’t know who could be lifting your information. They all showed a common interest in gossip, and laughing at mistakes and life lessons.

Augmented Storytelling and Augmented Reality

RC: This work relies on the augmented reality (AR) qualities of the QR code. Pavlik and Bridges suggest AR, even through relatively limited tools like a QR code, can have a significant impact on storytelling practices: “AR enriches an individual’s experience with the real world. … Stories are put in a local context and act as a supplement to a citizen’s direct experience with the world” (Pavlik and Bridges 21). Their research shows that AR technologies like QR codes brings the story to life in a three dimensional and interactive form that allows the user a level of participation impossible in traditional, analogue media. They emphasize the different viewing possible in AR storytelling, as:
The new media storytelling model is nonlinear. The storyteller conceptualizes the audience member not as a consumer of the story engaged in a third-person narrative, but rather as a participant engaged in a first-person narrative. The storyteller invites the participant to explore the story in a variety of ways, perhaps beginning in the middle, moving across time, or space, or by topic (Pavlik and Bridges 22).

In their case studies, Pavlik and Bridges show AR has the “potential to become a viable storytelling format with a diverse range of options that engage citizens through sight, sound, or haptic experiences… to produce participatory, immersive, and community-based stories” (Pavlik and Bridges 39).

The personal stories in this artwork were remediated a number of different ways. They were written down, then separated into one-line fragments, interwoven with our partners, and re-read again and again for the camera, before being edited and processed. Marked by the artists clearly as ‘Aboriginal’ and ‘non Aboriginal’, and placed alongside works featuring traditional beading, these stories were marked and re-inscribed by complex and fragmented histories of indigenous and non-indigenous relations in Canada. This history was emphasized as the QR codes were also physically located in the First Nations University of Canada, a unique indigenous space.

To view this artwork in its entirety, therefore, two camera-enabled and internet-capable mobile devices were required to be used simultaneously. Due to the way they were accessed and played back through augmented reality technologies, stories in the gallery were experienced in nonlinear fashions, started part way through, left before completion, or not in sync with the partner they were designed to work with. Audience experimented with the video content, stopping and starting it to produce new combinations of words and images. This experience was also affected by chance as the video files online are on a cycle, after a set period of time, the scan will suddenly produce a new story. These augmented stories were recreated and reshaped by participants in dialogue with the space, and with each other.

Augmented Stories and Improvised Communities

RC: In her 1997 study of the reception of new media art in galleries, Beryl Graham surveys the types of audience interaction common to new media art practices like AR art. She “reveals patterns of use of interactive artworks including the relation of use-time to gender, aspects of intimidation, and social interaction”. In particular, she observes “a high frequency of collective use of artworks, even when the artworks are designed to be used by one person (Graham 2). What Graham describes as “collective” and “social,” I see as a type of improvisation engaging with difference, differences between audience members, and differences between human participants and the alien nature of sophisticated, interactive technologies. Improvisation “embodies real-time creative decision-making, risk-taking, and collaboration” (Heble). In the improvisatory act, participants participate in active listening in order to work with different voices, experiences, and practices, but share a common focus in the creative endeavour. Notions such as “the unexpected” or “the mistake” are constantly reconfigured into productive material. However, as leading improvisation studies scholar Ajay Heble suggests, “improvisation must be considered not simply as a musical or creative form, but as a complex social phenomenon that mediates transcultural inter-artistic exchanges that produce new conceptions of identity, community, history, and the body” (Heble).

I watched at the opening as audience members in Parallel Worlds, Intersecting Moments paired up, successfully or unsuccessfully attempted to scan the code and download the
Appendices: Paper 1

video, and physically wrapped themselves around their partner (often a stranger) in order to hear the quiet audio in the loud gallery. Audience began to help each other through the process, to improvise together. The QR code was not always a familiar or comfortable object. Audience often had to install a QR code reader application onto their own device first, and then proceed to try to get the reader to work. Underfunded university Wi-Fi connections dropped, Apple ID logins failed, devices stalled. There were sudden loud cries when somebody successfully scanned their half of the work, and then rushes and scrambles as small groups of people attempted to sync their videos to start at the same time. The louder the gallery got, the closer the pairs had to stand to each other to hear the video through the device’s tiny speakers. Many people looked over someone else’s shoulder without their knowledge. Sometimes people were too close for comfort and behavior was negotiated and adapted. Sometimes, the pairs gave up trying; sometimes they borrowed each other’s devices, sometimes their phone or tablet was incompatible. Difference created new improvisations, or introduced sudden stops or diversions in the activities taking place. The theme of the work was strengthened every time an improvised negotiation took place, every time the technology faltered or succeeded, every time a digital or physical interaction was attempted. Through the combination of augmented bead practices used in an innovative way, and augmented technology with new audiences, new types of improvisatory responses could take place.

Initially I found it difficult to not simplify and stereotype the processes taking place, to read it as a metaphor of the differing access to resources and training in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, a clear example of the ways technology-use marks wealth and status. As I moved through the space, caught up in dialogic, improvisatory encounters, cross-cultural experiences broke down, but did not completely erase, these initial markers of difference. Instead, layers of interaction and information began to be placed over the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal identities in the gallery. My own assumptions were placed under pressure as I interacted with the artists and the other participants in the space. My identity as a relative newcomer to Saskatchewan was slowly augmented by the stories and experiences I shared and heard, and the audience members shifted back and forth between being experts in the aspects of the stories and technologies that were familiar to us, and asking for help to translate and activate the stories and processes that were alien.

**Augmented Art Practices**

JA: There is an old saying, “If it doesn’t move, bead it.” I think that this desire to augment with the decorative is handed down through traditional thoughts and beliefs regarding clothing. Once nomadic we did not accumulate many goods, as a result, the goods we did keep were beautified though artistic practices including quilling and eventually beadwork (painting too). And our clothing was thought of as spiritual because it did the important act of protecting us from the elements, therefore it was thought of as sacred. To beautify the clothing was to honour your spirit while at the same time it honoured the animal that had given its life to protect you. I think that this belief naturally grew to include any item, after all, there is nothing like an object or piece of clothing that is beaded well—no one can resist it. There is, however, a belief that humans should not try to mimic perfection, which is reserved for the Creator and in many cases a beader will deliberately put a bead out of place.

RC: When new media produces unexpected results, or as Rachelle says, when pixels “go out of place”, it can be seen as a sign that humans are (deliberately or accidently) failing to use the digital technology in the way it was intended. In *Parallel Worlds, Intersecting Moments* the theme of cross cultural encounters and technological communication was
only enhanced by these moments of displacement and slippage and the improvisatory responses that took place. The artists could not predict the degree of slippage that would occur, but from their catalogue texts and the conversations above, it is clear that collective negotiation was a desired outcome.

By creating a QR code based artwork that utilized augmented art practices to create new types of storytelling, the artists allowed augmented identities to develop, slip, falter, and be reconfigured. Through the dialogic art practices of traditional beading and participatory video work, Anderson and Knowles began to build new modes of communication and knowledge sharing. I believe there could be productive relationships to be further explored between what Judy calls the First Nations “desire to bead” whilst acknowledging human fallibility; and the ways Rachelle aims to technologically augment conversation and storytelling through contemporary AR and video practices despite, or perhaps because of the possibility of risk and disruptions when bodies and code interact. What kind of trust and reciprocity becomes possible across cultural divides when this can be acknowledged as a common human quality? How could beads and/or pixels being “out of place” expose faultlines and opportunities in these kinds of cross-cultural knowledge transfer? As Judy suggested in our conversations, such work requires active engagement from the audience in the process that does not always occur. “In those instances, does the piece fail or people fail the piece? I'm not sure.” In crossing back and forth between these different types of augmentation impulses, and by creating improvisatory, dialogic encounters in the gallery, these artists began the tentative, complex, and vital process of cultural exchange, and invited participants and audience to take this step with them and to work “across traditional and contemporary modes of production” to “use the language and process of art to speak, listen, teach and learn” (Knowles and Anderson).

Works Cited


Paper 2.

A response to ‘Provoking Failure: Unsettling a Research-Creation Framework’ by Glenn Lowry.

January 2016

Knowles, R.V.

This paper is a resultant output from participation in the *Knowings and Knots: Methodologies and Ecologies in Research-Creation ‘Think Tank’* event, March 23-25, 2014, at the University of Alberta, Canada (keynote speaker: Dr Donna Haraway). I was an invited respondent, participating in the ‘Think Tank’ with a 10-minute provocation paper responding to a text by fellow ‘Think Tank’ participant Glenn Lowry (Emily Carr University of Art and Design). This article, developed from the provocation, was commissioned towards a publication of collected outputs from the ‘Think Tank’. The collection, edited by Dr Natalie Loveless who convened the event, is currently under review with the University of Alberta Press.

*Knowings and Knots: Methodologies and Ecologies in Research-Creation ‘Think Tank’* event was organised by the University of Alberta ‘Research-Creation Working Group’, funded by the Kule Institute for Advanced Study towards addressing the following research question: what modes of knowing are facilitated by the complex intersections of art and research?
A response to ‘Provoking Failure: Unsettling a Research-Creation Framework’ by Glenn Lowry.


Glen Lowry’s text provokes us to consider the approach to knowledge production that is currently known in Canada as ‘research-creation’ and the funding streams that encourage it, as both methodological and institutional shifts that forge new hybrid forms. The text encourages a consideration of research-creation as a space of translation and negotiation between and across the expressive, the emotional, the poetic, the social, the historical, the political and the critical; an interdisciplinary language across multiple registers that research-creation is so methodologically well-placed to speak. Lowry notes that the verbs of research-creation provide a mode of communication that imbricates critical and creative thought and action; knowledge is always practiced. Through learning these verbs, Lowry provokes us to consider the emergent possibilities of approaching the complex issues of the world we find around us through what he calls “critical creative collaborations”, a description that indeed captures the dialogic methodology of the research-creation approach, and its sister term ‘artistic research’ more commonly used in Europe.

As I will fold back to later further in, this response to Lowry’s provocation comes at a time when questions of artistic research and the practice of knowledge are much on my mind as I work through the final stages of my own transition from artist to artistic researcher – or the term I prefer to use to self identify: artist/academic. My own academic life moves back and forth between the academic cultures of my two home countries, Canada and the UK. Having previously taught Visual Art at the University of Regina in central Canada and experienced all the shockwaves of the SSHRC-shifts, I now teach Fine Art at Coventry University in the UK where the tensions pull more towards the metrics obsession that currently stifle British academia. Dialogue and collaboration are central to the methodological framework my current research aims to build, approaching the ethics and aesthetics of dialogue-based art from the perspective of translocality, a position that places the concerns of local to local connectivity in the context of global networks, transfers and flows. Lowry’s concept of “creative critical collaboration” is therefore one that resonates with my own experience of the interdisciplinary (or extra-disciplinary) work of the artist/academic.

One of the examples of a creative critical collaboration that Lowry shares with us from his own knowledge-practice is the work that continues between artists, academics and communities to address the colonial legacy of Canada’s Residential School system and the gaping wounds that injustice has left scared across the Canadian landscape. Glen’s reference to Algoma University in Sault Ste. Marie Ontario as the site of the 2012 Reconciliation: works in progress event and as a former Indian Residential School, provides a thoughtful provocation towards architectures and how knowledge builds from lived experience and lessons long over due. This reconstitution of the Shingwauk Residential School, closed in 1970 and re-opened in 1971 as the then Algoma College, transformed a site of trauma and injustice into a institution that now houses both a University (Fig. 1) and the Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre, one of the largest

134 https://www.algomau.ca. Fig1 copyright Fungus Guy. CC BY-SA 3.0.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=22763107
archives of residential school life in Canada (Fig.2). No longer suppressed, the building holds a history that current students and researchers at Algoma University work within.

Artist and writer Hito Steyerl draws our attention to a similar transformation in her project *In Our Midst* undertaken in 2009 as part of European Capitol of Culture activities in Linz, Austria, which investigates the former Nazi Bridgehead Buildings in the main square, now part of the Linz Art Academy. In her article *Aesthetics of Resistance? Artistic Research as Discipline and Conflict* Steyerl describes her project as one that investigates the building as architecture, social history, power structure and physical matter, through a process of removing, then exposing, the veneer of concealment (Fig 3 and 4).

As her excavation-as-investigation of the facade reveals, the building is constructed from stone likely to have been quarried at the Mauthausen concentration camp, which operated twelve miles east of Linz from 1938 – 1945, and heated by radiators transported from Mauthausen to the building in Linz towards the end of the war. From its past association with the terror and crimes of National Socialism, the building now house the Linz Academy of Art’s ‘Department for Artistic Research’ and it is with this point that Steyerl brings us to the question of how should we *know* this building? The disciplines of architecture and art might describe and categorize the building by its aesthetic style or

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135 http://shingwauk.org/srsc/
137 http://eipcp.net/transversal/0311/steyerl/en
building techniques, in this case the neoclassical tradition, yet Steyerl asserts that the methodology of artistic research enables an investigation beneath the surface of the material construction of the building and the social history of its use that reveals “the trace of suppressed conflict” (p.1). Steyerl’s article uses this example to explore the practice of ‘artistic research’, a term in the growing lexicon of hybrid practices at the interface of art and academia. As we are reminded in Steyerl’s article, disciplines ‘discipline’, they police their own knowledge-boundaries, regulate their methods and by doing so presuppose the forms of knowledge outcomes that emerge. I interpret Lowry’s concept of “critical creative collaboration” in relation to Steyerl’s “aesthetics of resistance”, as a methodological position that works towards a liberation of knowing.

Lowry shares with us the professional pathway that places him in this meeting point of creative and research practices and by doing so encourages each of us to reflect on our own travels. I, too, was not “born” a research-creationist and found myself drawn to the methodological approach of artistic research by forces other than the research-creation stream of SSHRC funding. I started full-time University teaching in Canada with the identity and professional training as an ‘artist’. Somewhere over the years, between the regulating force of University citizenship, the pleasure of collaboration and working in teams, and the irresistible interdisciplinary entanglements that University life can forge, that identity shifted to University teacher/researcher and finally to artist/academic. In practical terms, the shift from artist to artistic researcher can be best exemplified by the questions I now ask myself when designing a new project: How might this research forge interesting new dynamics with colleagues, hopefully ones good at grant writing? How might this research enable me to travel to and experience and learn new things? How might this research fit strategically into University agendas to enable funding streams and satisfy promotion criteria? Or, in the context of the art-practice led PhD I am also undertaking alongside teaching, how does this creative work advance the argumentation towards answering my research question?

This journey from independent artist to employed academic has led to a questioning of the forces that guide research directions. Should we be led by our own personal curiosities and research interests as many of my University colleagues would argue? Or should we instead support our University and national research directives and be focused and strategic with our intellect and our creative energies, working with our peers towards solving the ‘grand challenges’\textsuperscript{138} of our times and agenda’s put forward by others? What are our responsibilities to serve the institutions we work for, the communities we work within, the colleagues and students we work beside and the strategic directions that funders urge us to take - to imagine the future, and to mobilize our knowledge within defined priority areas? How should we address the “disciplines and conflicts” that frame our concerns? I pose these questions not to attempt to answer them but to suggest that engaging with such questions and entering this arena of debate marks the shift from the position of artist to artistic researcher.

Lowry’s text reflects on his journey towards research-creation as an unsetting of his settler status in Canada, his class privilege and significant gender. Reflecting on my own shift from artist to artistic researcher reveals a similar learning journey towards an unsetting position. In 2010 I took on the role of Head of Visual Arts at the University of

\textsuperscript{138} In 2014 I joined Coventry University in the UK who at that time framed its research agenda around seven ‘Grand Challenge Initiatives’: Low Carbon Vehicles; Low Impact Buildings; Integrated Transport and Logistics; Digital Media; Ageing Society; Human Security; and Sustainable Agriculture and Food.
Regina, a university in the Canadian prairies that shares its campus with First Nations University of Canada (FNUniv), an indigenous-focused institution. Though once strong, relations between the Department of Visual Arts at the University of Regina and its sister area of Indian Fine Arts at FNUniv had suffered from staff turnover and the resulting loosening of friendship connections and common threads. My counterpart, Cree artist and Associate Professor Judy Anderson assumed leadership around the same time and together we agreed to prioritize developing a project with the aim of relationship building. We proposed to our respective colleagues a group exhibition of artworks created by teaching staff, and further, suggested the possibility of works created between staff through a process of collaboration. What resulted was an exhibition project called **Critical Faculties** between staff from the two institutions, held at the First Nations University Art Gallery.

While our colleagues each decided to pursue production of individual works, Judy and I developed a work collaboratively, and subsequently collaborated further with Dr Rebecca Caines to reflect on the work via a co-author a peer reviewed journal publication. The project was a turning point in my own development, the move from the making of artworks to an expanded practice of artistic research, but more specifically as a learning experience in indigenous ways of knowing, developed through friendship. The work Judy and I produced, **QR Code Project**, consists of two elements, each undertaken through a process of skills exchange. The first element is two wall pieces with black and white QR codes created using traditional Canadian Aboriginal beading techniques and framed within red Stroud cloth, one beaded by Judy Anderson and the other by myself following her instruction. I had never beaded before; the process is extremely time-consuming, particularly for a novice like myself, and the production of the works took hundreds of hours, many of which we spent together, talking and sharing our family histories. What I learnt from Judy is that the act of beading is undertaken by the hands, the spirit and the heart as part of a community; or put another way, Judy taught me the fundamentals of an indigenous methodology. The second element in the work is a series of online video files of dialogues, accessible via scanning the beaded QR codes with a web-enabled device and QR code-reading software. The videos feature seven people who self-identify as Aboriginal and seven non-Aboriginal people, all from Saskatchewan, Canada, paired with each other, telling stories about their own personal experiences with new technologies. Judy and myself edited the videos, with her learning an integral part of this aspect of the process. Alongside July and myself, the participants in the work are all colleagues, friends and family of the artists: Rebecca Caines and Novalee Fox; Lionel Peyachew and John Campbell; Riel Gauthier and Willow Goddard; Katherine Boyer and Eileen Anderson; Deb Murray and Jesse Goddard; Cruz Anderson and Elijha Goddard. The participants were asked to write their story down and send them to us in advance.

We paired the stories, simplified them, and interwove the texts to create simple back and forth scripts. When the beaded QR code wall pieces are scanned, each one of the two wall pieces connects the viewer to one half of a video conversation, hosted on the web and programmed to change to the next dialogue every ten minutes. To view the work in its entirety therefore, two viewers must cooperate together, each with a camera-enabled and internet-capable mobile device (Fig 5 and 6).

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139 A Quick Response (QR) code is a matrix barcode made up of black square modules on a white square in a grid pattern that is optically machine-readable.
The *QR Code Project* used an approach to “critical creative collaboration” central to my own research - dialogue-based art - to build a bridge between two communities, physically close but culturally distant where dialogue remains problematic. The politics that restrain mobility between the two buildings are the result of the residual colonial legacies still deeply embedded in Western Canadian society; without the provision of a context, students and faculty from the University of Regina rarely enter the First Nations University of Canada building and vice versa. While the face-to-face aspects of the work, and the *Critical Faculties* exhibition in general provided a dialogue-based interaction between the two institutions and two sets of individuals that was welcomed on both sides, I came to the understanding that it was the possibility of risk and disruptions in the work that spoke to the broader dialogues that remain difficult to hear. At times, the dialogue in the work breaks down completely with the glitch of technological error, but the most emotionally and politically powerful disruption in the piece is the decision that Judy’s colleague in Indian Fine Arts at FNUniv Professor Lionel Peyachew makes to tell his story in his first language of Cree. By locking out non-Cree speakers, both settlers and the majority of indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan, Peyachew draws attention to the painful issue of indigenous language suppression, a legacy of the Residential School system and the broader project of cultural genocide that was enacted against indigenous people in Canada. His decision challenges the very notion of giving voice to indigenous positions: give voice in whose language? Peyachew positions English as the immigrant non-indigenous language, unsettling the status quo and challenging the dominance of the “settlers” language and by extension, he provokes us to consider multiple ways of knowing.

This provocation from Peyachew brings us back to the question of ‘knowledge’ and the hierarchies of methodological positions that both indigenous ways of knowing and artistic research inherently challenge. As Lowry identifies in his essay, there is growing interest in exploring the formative status of art and design research as a practice-led methodology. How then can we begin to understand this meeting point between art and research? Christopher Frayling’s early writing on the subject in 1993 is often cited as a foundational text in the debates that followed. He defined three approaches to the relationship between art and research. Firstly, research into art and design, we can understand simply as the discipline of Art History or related investigations of what artists...

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140 On May 31st 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released their findings. The Executive Summary document begins with the following statement: “For over a century, the central goals of Canada’s Aboriginal policy were to eliminate Aboriginal governments; ignore Aboriginal rights; terminate the Treaties; and, through a process of assimilation, cause Aboriginal peoples to cease to exist as distinct legal, social, cultural, religious, and racial entities in Canada. The establishment and operation of residential schools were a central element of this policy, which can best be described as “cultural genocide”.” The Executive Summary document can be found at: [http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Exec_Summary_2015_05_31_web_o.pdf](http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Exec_Summary_2015_05_31_web_o.pdf). It is published in English and French.
did or do, where research outputs follow the traditions of a standard written text. Secondly, research through art and design is the approach we would now identify with the terms “research-creation” and “artistic research”, where creative practice is the laboratory, the testing ground for new ideas, with the action research of practice accompanied by contextualization and analysis in some form. The third approach that Fraying sets out is research for art and design which he articulates as “research with a small r”, i.e. the gathering of materials to inform an artistic outcome (Frayling, 1993, p.5). The implication of this final category is that an artistic outcome holds the knowledge of the research, without recourse for a supplementary written text. At the time of writing in 1993 Fraying remained skeptical of the viability of this final category to produce ‘Research’ (with a big R) given the implication that all artists in the history of art would then become eligible for posthumous research degrees.

In more recent scholarship, Kathrin Busch unpacks Fraying’s category two, the questions of how artistic knowledge might be understood, by proposing nine variants of approach that incrementally shift the practice of art from what she defines as “the classical philosophical notion that art is a sensual form of truth” towards what we would now understand as “artistic research” (Busch 2009, p.1). In her first category, Busch articulates art with research, or otherwise described as an approach to the production of art that operates in parallel with “a conscious reception of contemporary theory”. An example that Busch gives to illustrate this variant is a surrealist painter who undertakes an investigation of theories of psychoanalysis parallel to work in the studio. In this example, theoretical research is understood as a constituent part of the artist process. In category two, Busch addresses art about research, as an approach where an artist might depict the process or outcomes of scientific knowledge as the subject of a work of art. An example given is the painting An Experiment on a Bird in the Airpump by Joseph Wright of Derby, an artist recognized for his representations of the Industrial Revolution. Busch makes the point that in this approach, the ‘art’ and the ‘knowledge’ remain separate, as object and subject, with art operating as a means of communicating through visualising the knowledge (or the research) produced within another separate disciplinary field. In the next category however, Art that understands itself as research, Busch gives the example of institutional critique where the investigative or data-gathering research activity of an artist constitutes both research and the artistic practice. Busch refers to Andrea Fraser as an artist who operates in this manner, performing research undertaken as institutional critique as works of art. Art as science defines category four, that is, art practices that are understood as knowledge production alongside and in the same manner as other forms of scientific knowledge production. It is within this category that I would argue the PhD by art practice finds itself located: art practices that make claims to new knowledge through the standard mechanisms of a research question addressed through ‘systematic’ and ‘repeatable’ named methods, precisely the position that Busch’s article sets out to critique. Busch poses the question “why should the assumption that art is a form of knowledge already include turning it into science? On the contrary, has not artistic research as research practice earned its right to be taken seriously enough without subjecting itself to the norms of scientific research?” (p.4). While we do indeed now have numerous examples of PhD’s via art practice, particularly in the UK and Australia, that disrupt and challenge the “norms”, Busch’s point is well made in the fact that while disruptions to the norms have proved themselves viable and permissible within regulatory frameworks, they are still deviations from what is considered the norm. Busch’s critique then leads to the 5th category, art above science, an approach that undertakes a critique through art of scientific knowledge, citing the work of artists Mark Dion and Fiona Tan who investigate scientific classification and display strategies. By understanding art as a different form of knowledge, category six explores the role artistic
research might perform in subverting what has traditionally been understood as “knowledge”. Busch suggests that art can “reveal the concealed, the flipside of knowledge”. The role of artistic research therefore could be to articulate a way of knowing “which cannot be articulated within the respective fields of knowledge” and in particular that which is excluded from the scientific methodology (p.4). While Busch posits an epistemological critique of the “scientification” of artistic knowledge which can be applied to how individual artistic researchers position their approach to knowledge production, a question that Busch’s position implies is how institutions construct the architecture of third cycle (research degree) awards in the field of artistic research, which, in the main, is the PhD.141 Evoking Foucault, Busch reminds us that the truth-claims of “objective, absolute, consistent, scientific knowledge” powerfully suppress alternative claims to knowledge. In response to the previous category, Busch asks us to consider the practice of “knowledge criticism” in her seventh category, a position that casts a sceptical gaze on building artistic research on a foundation of scientific standards. Instead, she proposes art as a poetics of knowledge as a means to question and challenge the “construct” and primacy of scientific knowledge. In her eighth category, Busch proposes a hybridization of art and research that sits at an interdisciplinary border between art knowledge and science research traditions. It is from this position that the “open and discursive” qualities of art can impact on the sciences and “theoretical discourse”, towards the development of what Busch called “hybridized forms of knowledge”. In structure, a research-creation PhD submission could be understood in this way, with a text following the norms and conventions of a standard doctoral submission (an identified research problem, methodologies chapter and literature review etc.), led by the production of creative works, and proposing outcomes of relevance to multiple fields. Busch concludes in her ninth and final category with the proposal that the development of artistic research has led (or could lead?) to an intermediary “zone of knowledge” with the possibility of interconnection between artistic and scientific knowledge and a place for the “unknown”. Busch’s provocative naming of this liminal sphere indeed captures the uncharted terrain and the spirit of exploration of undertaking artistic research: wild knowledge (p.6). In imagining this feral, un languaged, untamed, undisciplined and unsettling approach, we can perhaps see its unpredictable and evasive knowledge in fleeting glimpses from multiple points of view, but never understand its outcomes in their entirety.

In conclusion, I would like to address Lowry’s provocations around failure and the tensions the research/creation paradigm brings to University Art Departments. As Lowry rightly states, straightforward practitioners – artists who make and show work – find themselves at odds with current University agendas and increasingly swimming against the academic tide. Colleagues hired for their artistic excellence, musical virtuosity, or prowess on the stage, highly acclaimed in their professional contexts and at their time of hiring within the University context, now find themselves diminished in the face of a perceived moving goalposts and derided for not getting with the SSHRC program, for having the wrong kind of terminal degree, for not engaging with the Office for Research Innovations, and for not adhering to a strategic research plan that tells them they should be “working together towards common goals”.142 But indeed those of us whose indigenous or creative ways of knowing sit outside the traditional gates of knowledge,

141 The PhD, with its embedded traditions of scientific knowledge production, remains the most prevalent degree classification for artistic research in the countries that have developed a third cycle level. However, other doctoral degree classifications have been explored such as for example, the Professional Doctorate in Fine Art (University of East London, University of Hertfordshire etc.), and Doctor of Arts (University of Sydney etc.).

should be working together towards the common goal of dismantling the barriers and re-framing the discourse. If not us, who else? As Busch reminds us, the aim of research-creation / artistic research is not to bend towards a scientification of the artists’ knowledge, but rather, a provocation towards re-visioning what and how we know.

It remains to be seen how the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission will re-shape architectures of knowledge in Canada, but already renovations are underway. In a recent announcement by the University of Winnipeg committing to the integration of indigenous ways of knowing into curricula\textsuperscript{143}, Wab Kinew, Associate Vice-President, Indigenous Affairs acknowledges the role of education in advancing the process of reconciliation in Canada. To return finally to the two architectural examples, the rehabilitation of the Shingwauk Residential School and the excavation of the Bridgehead Building at the Linz Academy of Art, what both projects achieve is a liberation of concealed knowledge already \textit{in our midst}. I suggest that it is by employing the methodological positions of research-creation, exemplified by Lowry’s “creative-critical collaborations”, Steyerl’s “aesthetics of resistance”, and Busch’s provocative “wild knowledge” that we can begin to build a creative and academic home for all our ways of knowing.

**Works cited**


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\textsuperscript{143} See University of Winnipeg Press Release and statements by President and Vice Chancellor Dr. Annette Trimbee and Wab Kinew, Associate Vice-President, Indigenous Affairs \textit{Indigenous Course Requirement Approved For 2016-17 School Year}: \url{http://news-centre.uwinnipeg.ca/all-posts/indigenous-course-requirement-approved-for-2016-17-school-year} and CBC article \textit{University of Winnipeg makes indigenous course a requirement} \url{http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/university-of-winnipeg-makes-indigenous-course-a-requirement-1.3328372}
Paper 3.

*The Dialogic: art work as method.*
Dr John Hammersley and Rachelle Viader Knowles  June 2016

NAFAE – National Association of Fine Art Education
FINE ART RESEARCH NETWORK SYMPOSIUM
Research Practice, Practice Research, University of Cumbria at Lancaster,
15 July 2016

A paper written by Dr John Hammersley, in conversation with Rachelle Viader Knowles, in response to the work of Dr Simon Pope. Delivered in abridged format as a dialogue between Hammersley and Knowles.

**Keywords:**
dialogue, practice-led research, generative method, collaboration, community of support.

**Abstract:**
This paper discusses how the multisite artwork *The Dialogic* demonstrates an innovative, supportive and generative artwork-as-method which resists overly reductive, and prescriptive tendencies within practice-led research.

It continues a dialogue between participants that has been ongoing since 2012. *The Dialogic* has been adapted through the work of multiple artists, and this iteration is offered as a dialogue between the artists John Hammersley and Rachelle Viader Knowles in response to reflections in the work of Simon Pope. *The Dialogic* emerged as a method-work which imbricates the artist in socially situated exchange across multiple contexts, enacts co-authored and co-produced meaning-making, and challenges assumptions about the separation of art and research and notions of the detached artist-researcher. Its innovative contribution to practice-led research is how it demonstrates dialogical art as the on-going re-construction of a community of support, sustained through a commitment to knowledge mobilization, continued exchange and engagement in which the artist and their work are ‘answerable’ for the choices and actions in their art-as-research.

The work functions as a generative research tool. It demonstrates how semi-structured everyday conversational-exchange-as-art can simultaneously lead to the emergence of subconsciously held insights, construct a community of practice that helps shape thinking outside of institutional frameworks, and act as a situated literature review that may disrupt traditional frameworks of knowledge production normalized in much fine art research.

The authors argue that this method is appropriate to dialogical art-as-research as it makes a necessary contribution to the practice-led research tool box. It offers a method of distributive authorship grounded in an emergent, situated and more provisional mode of meaning-making that facilitates generous, democratized, peer-to-peer co-mentorship and skill-sharing contributing to understandings of dialogical art as research. This they argue is an increasingly necessary counterpoint to the reduction of practice-led fine art research to a training in mechanistic methods, reductive evaluation, and singular concrete outcomes aimed at satisfying the artist-researcher as customer and consumer.
The Dialogic: art work as method.
June 2016

Introduction

‘Annemari, you introduced the idea of dialogue as more than “conversation” when a group of us met for a session of The Dialogic’ (Pope, 2015: 8).

The Dialogic is a multi-participant, multi-site, artwork which functions as a multi-method research tool and support mechanism for practice-based artist researchers. Participants have included artists Glenn Davison, Ruben Henry, and Karin Kihlberg; artist-researchers undertaking practice-led inquiry such as, Simon Pope, Annemari Ferreira, Rachelle Viader Knowles, John Hammersley and Rebecca Birch, and various other artists, curators and academics (appendix 1). Each manifestation of The Dialogic invites in further participants from the context in which it is staged.

Connected to the notion of microresidency (temporary, artist-led, small-scale), The Dialogic is a peripatetic, itinerant, and mobile method-as-work-of-art, which demonstrates socially grounded situated practice in the sense of embodied interpersonal interaction (Kwon, 2004) in contrast to more fixed Modernist interpretations of situated practice. The first manifestation took place at the Danielle Arnaud Gallery London in 2012, with subsequent gatherings at Loughborough University, The Ruskin & Modern Art Oxford, Birkbeck London, the Lanchester Gallery at Coventry University, the Welsh School of Architecture Cardiff, and most recently at RES Art Space London in 2015. As a multi-method work The Dialogic reflects the ethos and disposition of the convenor of each iteration, and as such they are not always documented, and are not always framed as a response to an initial theme or question, but what unites them are the central threads of extended conversation between frequent and occasional participants, and the sharing of food.

Inspired by Bakhtinian (1986) and Bohmian (1996) notions of dialogue, the semi-structured conversations blur free-ranging social and convivial exchange with a conversation-as-work of-art (Bhabha, 1998) which seeks emergent understanding and new insights for research and practice. The Dialogic builds on a basic conception of Bohmian dialogue as event and collaborative conversational method, and also implies an attitude and disposition towards others (Pope, 2015). On the one hand this dialogical disposition is akin to Bakhtinian polyphony, a quest for words and ideas which emerge through dialogical exchange but a quest which goes beyond a person’s familiar genre or style and authorial habits (Bakhtin, 1986). Polyphony is characterized by a plurality of voices and points of view that posits The Dialogic as a method-work-as-art that resists singular definitions through a reiterative layering of different interpretations of dialogue-based art: as Performance, Social Practice, Event, Encounter and as Social-constructionist research. On the other hand, The Dialogic’s plurality is proposed as a Buberian (2002) disposition towards others and being open to learning through transformational encounters with others (Pope, 2015).

The emphasis on openness to learning from plural perspectives without reducing insights that emerge from plural exchange to a singular agreed outcomes or definitions is central to the work’s importance for many of its participants. Conceived of as an operative method in practice-led research The Dialogic functions to offset impacts deriving from the tendency towards isolated, individualized approaches common to
many research projects in art, and overly prescriptive disciplinary or programmatic modes of inquiry. This offsetting is achieved through the on-going dialogical labour of constructing a community of diverse but overlapping and shared interests. For Pope, Knowles and Hammersley, *The Dialogic* functions to ameliorate the psychological impacts of mechanistic instruction in research methods, reductive systems of evaluation, and art’s traditional emphasis on singular concrete outcomes which they feel are aimed primarily at satisfying the artist-researcher as customer orientated towards consumerism within the art market.

*The Dialogic* emerged out of research-dialogue between Pope and Hammersley and grew through Pope’s further conversations with Knowles and Ferreira, and as such it has been a constant artwork method and element of his doctoral research. Central to his thesis and the understanding of Knowles and Hammersley is that dialogical art as practice-led research is open ended. This paper continues the labour of dialogue-as-art demonstrated by *The Dialogic* and attempts to re-perform some of the meanings which have emerged through a reflection on elements of Pope’s DPhil thesis *Who else takes part?: Admitting the more-than-human into participatory art* and our participation. The following sections are presented as a conversational transcript of a discussion that covers how *The Dialogic* has contributed to our understanding of practice-led research and how it has transformed our disposition towards practice.

In the dialogue, participants address how *The Dialogic* functions as a generative research tool. This introduces the idea that a key benefit of its generative potential has been the formation of a community of interest that functions as a supportive method for some members and which demonstrates an open commitment to knowledge mobilization. These interconnecting ideas lead onto a reflection on how mobilizing knowledge through a generative socially grounded art-conversation can empower artist-researchers to take creative risks, explore alternative conceptualisations of themes, and adopt a stance of situated answerability in their practice (Bakhtin, 1990) in contrast to more traditional disposition of distanciated artistic authorship.

The mode of presentation as a dialogue follows on from and contrasts this more conventional introduction as a means to emphasise the constructed nature of presentations of dialogical research. What follows is not a transcript but a weaving of excerpts from Pope’s thesis, and email exchanges between authors, substantially post-produced by one author and edited by others.

The aim is to reiterate the stance of the authors that transcriptions of conversations can never be objective representations of complex multi-perspectival situated interactions, but they can strive to present and re-perform something of the kind of reflective and polyphonic conversation that *The Dialogic* strives to be. We hope this presents *The Dialogic* as a method-artwork as encounter that invites imaginative active participation and serves as a reminder of the hoped for transformational potential of practice-led research in art education.

**The Dialogic as generative research tool.**

**John Hammersley:** One of the most important aspects of *The Dialogic* for me is that it is generative in a number of ways. Simon, I know you have been very specific in expressing how the generative dimension of *The Dialogic* functions as a sort of situated literature review, generating new insights and connections from each specific and located encounter.
Simon Pope: Yes. I would say that *The Dialogic* has played an important role in the development of my thesis, more specifically it has shaped the process by which I review secondary sources such as journal articles. *The Dialogic* ethos steered me away somewhat from conventional literature reviews, and instead I realized that the process could be focused and refined through a peer-group of other researchers and artists with similar concerns. *The Dialogic* functions for me as a dialogue-on-dialogue in relation to my art and research. The process negotiates and brings to the fore the context of all of our research practices, especially art historical and theoretical discourse, but what I find interesting is that it also admits local discourse that emerges through encounters. *The Dialogic* highlights that for me, my thesis has emerged through social processes rather than simply detached scholarship. As I wrote in my thesis, ‘Its situatedness in a lively and ongoing co-construction of a social world also provides me with one measure of where my doctoral research makes its “contribution’ (Pope 2015: 36).

John: So *The Dialogic* is generative of a socially situated thesis that reflects your concerns and those of your peers who contribute to the social construction of your understanding?

Simon: You might say so.

John: How new meaning and insights can emerge out of situated conversations-as-work-of-art became apparent in your work *Forward Back Together* (date). For me it connects both our earlier conversational works with *The Dialogic*. That work for me linked the idea of emergent understanding as a fusion of perspectives or horizons (Gadamer, 2004) in which elements of multiple overlapping contexts can be woven into what is said in everyday conversation, with the Bakhtinian (1990) notion of dialogical encounter as ‘interlocation’. Both ideas emphasise a living context as a background against which meaning can emerge and that allowed me to connect these works with the constructionist idea that free flowing conversation can be a generative and reflective mixture of thought (Locke, 2007) and I think that reflects how conversation in *The Dialogic*’s, at least for me, it’s a creative and imaginative open-ended exchange through which I discover and learn.

Simon: I think Bhabha (1998) makes that point about conversation as art, that it’s a free associative mode of communication.

John: Yes, but he also says something like it simultaneously produces generative new relationships of meaning and interpretative communities of those new meanings.

Rachelle Viader Knowles: I think it’s interesting how such collaborative exchange serves to disrupt the traditional framework of knowledge production normalized in much fine art research.

John: You mean Kester’s (2013) point that socially grounded or connected forms of knowledge generated through art can mitigate against the constraints imposed on art’s thematic concerns by dominant critical perspectives.

Rachelle: Well, kind of. I wonder what this might say about the contribution of artistic research to a broader world of knowledge. I mean how does artistic research provoke, challenge, disrupt traditional frameworks for knowledge production. I think you are
suggesting Simon that *The Dialogic* proposes how frameworks can be performed differently – a rethinking of what a literature review is for example.

**John:** I found it quite difficult to understand how *The Dialogic* opened up these possibilities even as they seemed to be closed down in my conversations with some philosophers and critics. I think the framing of conversation as in someway everyday seemed to read as vague, banal, or a risky deviation from the preoccupations that the literature seemed to prescribe as valid themes or questions to address through art research. This sense of recognising the value in the thematic concerns of the peer-group has taken me some time, it has definitely been part of the labour and work. For began to happen after a number of encounters and is something I’m still working at.

**Rachelle:** But that is another important generative aspect of *The Dialogic*, how it functions to enact and construct a community of practice. The types of exchange we have help me think outside of my institutional frameworks, and what I sometimes feel are the overly programmatic thematic concerns of art research. And I’m…

**John:** Yes, it took me a long time to grasp that I was in danger of unwittingly importing what I see as an administrative bias into my research and it wasn’t until very late in the day that I saw a possible connection between what Liam Gillick, Lawrence Weiner (2005/2006) and Dave Beech (2012) say about the constraints on or narrow interpretations of dialogical art discourse and the caveats to social constructionist researchers that highlight administrative bias as a common risk in research (McCoy, 2008). But sorry Rachelle, I interrupted.

**Rachelle:** I was just going to say that I’m using my participation in *The Dialogic* to find a community of like-minded folk who share a similar set of concerns that help shape my thinking.

**John:** Yes, I assumed I might find them in the institution where I did my research. Well, that’s where I started to work with Simon. But don’t we also do that at conferences?

**Rachelle:** It’s more than that. Conferences like ‘Open Engagement’ or ‘InDialogue’ can still function along very institutional lines, with participation guided by motivations to fulfil requirements for ‘outputs’. But what I’m interested in is something outside of what I’m paying for in university or conference fees, its more like peer-to-peer mentorship, a skill share or exchange.

**John:** I would just be concerned how it appears to outsiders though, because even as an aesthetic community of interest it can appear exclusive and perhaps open dialogue up to the familiar criticisms of being overly convivial or conceived of as an agreeable process of understanding in an idealized context.

**Rachelle:** The iteration of *The Dialogic* I convened at Coventry University, in the Lanchester Galley with two walls of windows, is an interesting one in regards to your concern about ‘how is appears to outsiders’ as passers by were located rather literally in that position of looking in. How would a passer-by characterize what they saw… a group of people having a meeting?
The Dialogic as supportive method.

John: Meeting rather conjures the picture of consensus or a group of insiders.

Simon: Claire Bishop (2006) is the obvious critic that springs to mind. She is sceptical of intersubjective exchange that appears to build consensus or represent a misplaced attempt at strengthening the social bond (Pope, 2015). But interpretations of dialogue often conflate being together and empathy with consensus building or negotiation.

John: I don’t see what we do in The Dialogic as negotiation or consensus building.

Simon: Well I mention in my thesis that in Bohmian (2004) dialogue negotiation takes place prior to dialogue, prior to entering into intersubjective relations, which presupposes that before hand others have merely been objects among other objects in the world.

Rachelle: I think Simon you point out, and I think you also recognize John, that there is some prior negotiation in the group, in the sense that similar questions about dialogue have emerged independently through our practices. And various members of The Dialogic know each other from previous contexts, so there are also prior negotiations of the social relations.

Simon: We share the question of how to reach a new understanding of our different practices in relation to dialogue. Yes. But I just want to reiterate that I don’t see The Dialogic as agreeable and opposed to the ethos of disruptive difference underpinning Bishop’s criticisms. I think she feels that artists have to be allowed to provoke, and be disagreeable. The Dialogic, at least for me is closer to Laclau & Mouffe’s (1985) point of view that antagonisms can reveal the limits of objective relations and all objectivity. So for me at least ‘the concept of dialogue can contain with it room for antagonism and difference’ (Pope, 2015: 3).

John: I’m not sure I get the point about Laclau and Mouffe but I would agree that dialogue is not all agreeable. Certainly I’ve found moments of The Dialogic very uncomfortable.

Rachelle: I have also… I found the encounters extremely intimidating at first, I really didn’t know quite how to participate, or what this was exactly…

Simon: But certainly early on in my research our exchanges in The Dialogic really did transform my understanding of the relationship between my practice and the processes of research. It’s what Annemari points out, that dialogue is more than a conversational technique, its also an ethos and manner of relating to others in general, that’s really sustained my research throughout.

John: I felt a responsibility to keep coming back, even when the institutional processes left me feeling a bit battered and made me feel like retreating, so I think I can connect with that. It’s more than just the verbalism of dialogue, its been about the support that The Dialogic has had in sustaining a belief in the importance of doing dialogue, and being changed by it, not just researching it.
Rachelle: I wonder if there is an important contrast, or perhaps if *The Dialogic* has something to say about the continuing separation between much art and research?

John: Do you mean how isolated art research can leave you feeling?

Rachelle: I was thinking that *The Dialogic* demonstrates a mode of co-authorship, or a model of co-produced meaning-making through practice-led research which certainly challenges the notion of artist-researcher as detached individual. Creative practices often happen through collaboration but the institutional framework maintains solo authorship of a PhD thesis as the norm….

John: But are we making the point that dialogical practice is a collective enterprise that needs sustaining internally through renewed commitment to the mobilization of thought, or are we simply reflecting the point that artists often use collective conversation as a support or adjunct to practice. I’m thinking of one of the case studies in *Artistic Bedfellows* where Varian Fry sets up a villa to where artists met to collaborate and share meals. What strikes me is how collaboration was almost essential to maintain a relationship between the more stable past and a period of uncertainty and psychological pressure (Brockington, 2008). I’m not saying practice-led research is like surviving an occupation or war but simply I recognised that non-artists, artists of different career stages and reputations and even temporary visitors can all gain some resources for supporting their sense of self through creative exchange with each other. I think they were visited by Peggy Guggenheim and it was Danielle Arnaud’s hosting of the first *Dialogic* that made me think of that. But we might need to be clear whether this support is perhaps felt most keenly by those doing practice-led research and I am curious about how that might separate us from others in the group. I haven’t asked if they feel similarly that *The Dialogic* has formed a community of support for them. We’re saying it makes a contribution to us, as a method in our practice-led research but we can’t speak for the other participants?

*The Dialogic* as contribution to the practice-led research tool box.

Simon: I’ve stated, I think quite clearly, that as I see the contribution *The Dialogic* makes as a method has been to convey a sense of ethos and disposition towards others that has both led to new insights but also a community that share similar questions about practice and research that may not be reflected in institutional frameworks. As I put it in my thesis, I understand dialogue as ‘openness to transformation on encounter with others, in contrast to their detailed description, or conforming them to a framework or category’, (Pope, 2015: 10).

John: I’m not sure I get your point.

Simon: What is innovative about *The Dialogic* as research method is that it prioritises the transformational nature of learning possible through dialogical practice-led research as opposed to being forced to conform to a prescribed model of learning as practice-led research.

Rachelle: But you acknowledge that evaluating art work on the basis of an artist’s attitude towards others rather than what an artist actually does has been criticized by Claire Bishop (2012).
Simon: But Bishop’s (2012) criticism is levelled from the observing point of view of the external critic, not one considering how their understanding might be transformed through an encounter with such a work. Mary Anne Francis (2014: 32-33) who was one of my examiners pointed out that such methods of critical engagement do not quite get to grips with the ‘poetics’ implied by participatory dialogical research. I still feel that as artists we might expect that critics remain open to being transformed by dialogical works, as I feel artists strive to engage criticism on its own terms (Pope, 2015).

John: Yes, but I think that you point out that to engage with the work of critics on their own terms we might still have to work at remaining open to its potential contribution to transformational learning.

Rachelle: Rather than rejecting it outright.

John: Or accepting it outright. I think The Dialogic keeps some of those perspectives more provisional for me.

Simon: The Dialogic as a work or method recognizes that the work of critics such as Bishop reflects a different construction and world of meaning. I think dialogue reveals criticism to be one of the important ways of ‘becoming aware’ of other ways of understanding relationships within the world.

John: So you’re (Pope, 2015) saying one contribution The Dialogic makes is that the situated conversation has exposed, the seemingly obvious idea now, that the idea of how research should be conducted is produced by quite different cultures of practice and their ontologies.

Simon: Yes, I draw on Richard Hickman’s (2008) mapping of the art research terrain to locate The Dialogic as a naturalistic and social constructivist method or approach to research (2015).

John: That’s certainly been my take on it. But it’s interesting that you describe that as qualitative, in the sense of qualitative research. That’s a term that has elicited a lot of hostility when I have used it in some philosophical contexts of fine art research.

Simon: I’m just saying that The Dialogic demonstrates an alternative mode of thinking to partitive or dialectical thinking which is frequently assumed to be a natural mode of thinking. It’s a means of ‘engaging the world in all its richness and diversity through the open-ended relationships that constantly form the world or art world. It’s a seeking to be transformed through research through a movement towards others (Pope, 2015).

John: But I found so many encounters early on rather disorientating, The Dialogic made sense after some time, once I had had the chance to reflect on many of the encounters.

Rachelle: Simon, you point out in your thesis that its how The Dialogic can open up practice-led research to other perspectives that is important.

Simon: I (2015: 16) argued that The Dialogic ‘suggests alliances with other researchers, artists, and practitioners which breach disciplinary boundaries, enabling us to recognize and [sic] affinity with social scientists, humanities scholars, and with artists who are ordinarily divided from us by technical specialism. It also suggests that our doctoral
research is a process of learning, rather than training in how to adopt a position or defend an assertion through argument’

**John:** Yes, I’ve been thinking of the learning potential of *The Dialogic* as akin to a transformational education of Dirkx and Mezirow (2006), a learning that permits or maybe necessitates a reconstruction of frameworks. But this feels very far from my early experiences of practice-led research. It wasn’t until I gained a sociologist on my supervisory team that this became somehow acceptable, and truly transformational.

**Rachelle:** I think this is why it’s important for me, *The Dialogic* provides a means of gaining insight into a situated field of practice which demonstrates art as allegiance, and as a mode of distributive authorship.

**John:** Distributive authorship?

**Rachelle:** It admits that we gain insights into the field of practice from many other sources but it’s a work of distributed authorship as art. I’m just saying it makes a contribution as it facilitates a model of generous, democratized peer-to-peer, co-mentorship, and skill sharing through exchange. That really is a counterpoint to all the mechanistic, benchmarked, formal outcomes aimed at the doctoral researcher as consumer, the PhD as customer.

**John:** Well, apart from my sensitivity to the word democratic, which I think risks dragging things back to the kind of narrow themes deemed important by critics (Beech, 2012), I think you’re suggesting that *The Dialogic* has value as a method which can disrupt the knowledge economy of capitalist education, or at least disrupt our relationship as researchers to it. I’d say it has done that for me, but what about those participants who are less invested in research and perhaps more invested in the market?

**Conclusion – The Dialogic: some reflections**

**Rachelle:** You mean like the consumers of this text? I wonder if we shouldn’t perhaps be slightly more playful with this and hint at some contradictions in the script…

**John:** Yes – absolutely, can you suggest some of the paradoxes there are? In your words please.

**Rachelle:** Well perhaps Rachelle could acknowledge that for the most part her text has not been written by herself and how pleasurable and liberating that somehow feels…

**John:** Great.

**Simon:** Simon could acknowledge that his voice is being co-opted from emails and his thesis for this fictional triangulation.

**John:** Yes but I’d also wondered about running a draft past Simon.

**Rachelle:** That would seem to convey the notion of this text as both meta-text that performs rather than documents, and as a polyphony that snips voices and points of view from the tethers of connections to specific speakers.
Appendices: Paper 3

John: Yes, that’s a good line for the introduction. Yet, I’m not sure we’ve admitted to the limitation of the method. I think taking methodological risks, even adopting adaptive emergent methods which are not necessarily linear or straightforward can be easier for people who are more experienced researchers. Or maybe it’s even simpler than that. Maybe a method which risks contradicting traditional expectations, of literature reviews and thematic concerns is easier for researchers who have already achieved some recognition within hierarchies of art education and practice (Gillick and Weiner, 2005/2006).

Simon: I would also add that the work could be construed as that kind of subaltern move to achieve greater institutional recognition by presenting itself as admitting ignored or local perspectives.

John: Your suggesting recuperation? Can it really be that subaltern in all the academic contexts that it’s been manifested in? Surely the problem of the method is offsetting the need to capitalize on the labour and time involved and seeing it only as a means of access to institutional contexts?

Simon: But as a method it is freely available and out there, its mobile, able to be re-performed and re-understood. I think it can have a life beyond institutional frames but it will be interesting to see how that plays out.

Rachelle: Well aren’t you going to add something somewhere about yours and the first move into a domestic space?

John: You keep prompting me to mention that the next manifestation will be at my house or possibly move into the Yorkshire Dales landscape.

Rachelle: This text aside then, I’m still wondering what and how we actually present in Lancaster! Current thoughts on that?

References.


**Participants of The Dialogic.**
Dr Simon Pope, Annemari Ferreira, Dr John Hammersley, Rachelle Viader Knowles, Glenn Davidson, Karin Kihlberg, Ruben Henry, Rebecca Birch, Neville Gabie, Anne Hayes, Sergio Pineda, Henry Proctor, Giles Lane, Jane Ball, Danielle Arnaud.
Abstract

#CityLink involved Fine Arts researchers, artists and students in three cities: Regina, Canada; Coventry, UK; and Gyumri, Armenia. The project presented a platform for translocal (local-to-local) creative interactions using online screen-based media and on the ground dialogues. Artists and students investigated the concerns of their locale, questioning the role of the artist in building narratives, revealing lost histories and imagining the future of where they live. Using descriptive case study design, the findings present the opportunities for enriching the student learning experience through challenging habitual approaches to art production, though alternate approaches to digital pedagogy in art education. Students’ artwork took on new dimensions beyond what they could have produced working in relative isolation in a university-only studio setting. Students were encouraged to pursue and persist in online learning spaces whilst also taking responsibility for organising their own learning and that of others. Nonetheless, using visual technology and social media for connected, artistic, co-investigation needs further refinement to engage learners, and enhance the quality of visual presence and its potential in open education.

173 words

Keywords: digital pedagogy, social media, collaboration, learning spaces, uncertainty

Words 5858

1. Introduction

Scholarship on teaching and learning in higher education (HE) asserts that, whereas a lecture hall represents a style of teaching that is didactic and teacher / institution driven, learning spaces are different from teaching spaces and institutions need to reconfigure these spaces to incorporate new technology, facilitate formal and informal learning and enable interactions. Oblinger (2006, 11) identifies the power of ‘built pedagogy’ – the impact of the environment on teaching – to meet the learning styles of today’s students and its focus on the experiential, interactive and social. #CityLink offered two main opportunities to facilitate built pedagogy: 1) Disrupting Fine Art, Fine Art & Illustration and Film Production students from their natural (separate) studio habitats by extending the classroom into an open, public gallery space; and 2) Enabling students to collaborate with learners in two other locations, thus creating a translocated/international co-learning space through shared teaching and use of social media around a common theme. Concerned with issues of peaceability and citizenship, the project linked three cities with complex histories: Regina, Canada is a place struggling with the legacy of colonisation and Canada's cultural genocide of Indigenous people; Coventry, UK is officially designated an International City of Peace and Reconciliation related to its devastation in WWII; and Gyumri, Armenia is a city recovering from the legacies of war, genocide and natural disaster. As Station 2 of the larger Regina-based durational series of exhibitions and events, Meet in the Middle: Stations of Migration and Memory Between Art and Film (2014-2017), the aim of #CityLink was to create a context where new forms of translocal dialogues could emerge between art and film across galleries,
screens, social technologies and learners. As educators and researchers from the UK, Canada and Armenia, we were interested to explore how students and staff responded to the shifting of the creative space in the context of cross-cultural encounters. The research questions were: How can online screen-based media and on-the-ground dialogue encourage a translocated co-learning and co-teaching experience for students to investigate the role of the artist in re-building narratives of where they live? How would digital media interact with learning environments and educational culture? And, what impact would the learning experience have on students’ developing art practice and disciplinary understandings?

2. Theoretical contexts
2.1 Learning spaces
Dugdale (2009) describes the learning landscape as a diverse setting of approaches from specialised to multi-purpose, formal to informal, and physical to virtual, arguing that future learning spaces will be designed around patterns of human interaction, not disciplines and technologies. This may in time lead to more generic use of spaces for teaching, with, for example, the evolution of the fine art studio into a more general space for teaching and learning. Jamieson et al. (2000), discuss the design of learning spaces and the hierarchies created by the separation of staff and student spaces, arguing that this structure creates power relations and undermines the development of ‘collaborative learning communities’ (3). They suggest a more user-centred approach that is focussed on the purpose of the learning activity and student ownership of learning spaces.

Educators have to engage more with the world in which students live, and strive to integrate technologies and tasks that are meaningful. McLoughlin & Lee (2008) describe the use of social software to engage students with a wider community and enable collaboration outside the physical walls of the institution.

2.3 Art and pedagogy
Approaches to fine art pedagogy continue to challenge the primacy of the studio-teaching model, or blur the distinction between ‘art’ and ‘pedagogy’, the so-called educational turn in art. Bishop (2012, 241) addresses the educational turn in art in asking ‘how can you bring a classroom to life as though it were a work of art?’. If dialogue can be accepted as a method of art, and the art produced by students is undertaken in a dialogue-based environment (the classroom), and if the categories of ‘student’, ‘teacher’, ‘artist’ and ‘viewer’ are disrupted and destabilized by the possibilities proposed by participatory practices, then as Bishop contends ‘the history of participatory art… incites us to think of these categories more elastically’ (241).

2.4 Translocalisation of the curriculum
Trans VSI Connection NSCAD-NETCO (1969) (hereafter Trans VSI) is an early example of an artwork-cum-pedagogical project exploring the use of communications technologies to create dialogue-based art, which unfolded between students at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD) in Canada and conceptual artist Iain Baxter’s N. E. Thing Co. Ltd. (NETCO). The dialogue, structured as a series of instructions and responses, was performed via telex, telecopy and telephone, resulting in ‘VSI’ (Visually Sensitive Information), the term used within Baxter’s alternative conceptual lexicon for ‘art’. NETCO issued electronic propositions and the students responded with collaborative activity - photographic images, texts and drawings - transmitted back to NETCO, then exhibited at NSCAD’s Gallery in Halifax, and
published in book format the following year. *Trans VSI* can be seen as a direct precursor to the online exchange activities that many universities now encourage. Yet, how might we relocate what once was marginal to a more central place in Fine Art pedagogy?

Internationalising the curriculum is a feature of the portfolios of most HE Institutions, promoting student and staff mobility, and the use of digital technologies for globally networked learning (Redden 2014). Whilst the use of technology to enable virtual exchanges and collaborative assignments between geographically distant classrooms is not new, efforts are increasing to scale up these kinds of activities. In productively re-mapping corporate agendas into Fine Art education, #3CityLink proposed translocalisation of the curriculum as a counter-narrative to globalization, where connectivity, dialogue, the struggle with difference, engagement with the conditions and situations on the ground, and the acknowledgement that mobility is restricted for much of the population, are essential ingredients. Approaching ‘the global’ through the concept of the translocal, asserts a critical perspective on the globalised and networked society that our ‘global graduates’ will enter, a society increasingly polarised between the grounded many and the mobile few (Bauman, 1998,72).

3. Project design

#3CityLink was a three-phase translocal collaborative project linking Fine Arts researchers, artists and students in three cities: Regina, Coventry, and Gyumri, to create a context where new forms of translocal dialogues could emerge. The project presented a platform for translocal (local to local) creative interactions using online media and on-the-ground dialogues. In the initial two-week ‘research phase’, artists and students in each city investigated the current concerns of their locale as a place of large-scale historical trauma and questioned the role of the artist in building narratives, revealing lost histories and imagining the future of where they live. Suggested themes included cityscapes, archaeologies, architecture, city planning, transit, communications. During the ‘live phase’, the three groups used Skype to connect in their respective gallery spaces over two weeks (November 6-14, 2014) for two hours each day, working together to find (or not) these common links, build intercultural connections and create a collaborative installation artwork in three gallery spaces. Outside this shared time, social media was used to connect the students and staff. Facebook and Twitter were identified as the most popular and accessible platforms for dialogue.

The gallery spaces in each city (Lanchester in the UK, 5th Parallel in Canada, and Berlin Art Hotel in Armenia) hosted students’ work as they created an unfolding dialogue of images, sounds, videos, physical structures, objects and stories in response to the question of how artists can shift the narratives of their cities beyond histories of unhealed trauma, towards linked, creative futures. Together, students worked to transform each local space into an imagined translocal place drawing from elements of each of the three cities (see Figure 1). A library area in each gallery featured research materials from each location, such as maps, newspapers and catalogues, giving contextual insight.
In the final ‘outcomes’ phase, the project shifted from student-facing to research-focused. Five of the participating researchers reflected on the project for a suite of linked papers delivered at the Arts in Society Conference (Imperial College London, July 2016), in response to the special conference theme ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Networked Society’. The outcomes of the project are consolidated in this article as the concluding international dissemination element of #3CityLink.

4. Methodology and Methods

Descriptive case study methodology was used to develop a detailed account of the subject of study and greater understanding of “the case” (Simons 2009) as a “specific, complex, functioning thing” (Stake 1995, 2). In #3CityLink, the focus was in understanding students’ perspectives about their learning experience and how online screen-based media and on-the-ground dialogue could encourage a translocated co-learning experience.

The methodology was social constructionist: whilst individuals are seen as engaging in their world and making sense of it, individuals’ perspectives and experiences are viewed in the context of history, social perspective and the political sphere (Gergen, 2003). Students’ development of their art practice in the context of space, place and others, was viewed as the case, with differences in institutional, student and societal demographics between the British, Armenian, and Canadian contexts taken into account.
4.1 Project participants
The project was housed as part of the course delivery of the respective programmes of study across the three institutions. Table 1 identifies the staff and students involved at each institution. The project received ethical approval from Coventry University (P28805/6.11.15).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Level of study</th>
<th>Numbers of students</th>
<th>Numbers of staff involved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coventry University</td>
<td>Fine Art, Fine Art &amp; Illustration</td>
<td>Level 1 and 2</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Regina</td>
<td>Film Production, Visual Arts, Creative Technologies</td>
<td>Level 2, 3 and 4</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gyumri Branch of the Yerevan Art Academy</td>
<td>Fine Art</td>
<td>Level 3 and 4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Study Participants

4.2 Data Collection
All students and staff members were invited to share their perspectives about the experience of taking part in the project. These perspectives were accessed using online and face-to-face methods (see Table 2). For example, student data were captured from the discussion threads on Twitter and Facebook, email contact by the research team, Skype interviews, and three module evaluation and feedback sessions at Coventry (one directly following the module, another one month after the project end date, and a final session six months after the module ended) (see Figure 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collected</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institution</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coventry University</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Regina</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gyumri Branch of the Yerevan Art Academy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Table 2: Data collected from study participants
Figure 2: Billboards reflecting student feedback, Coventry University

Questions included:

- How did this creative exchange enrich your art practice?
- What was most challenging about communicating and collaborating with students across the three sites (language barriers aside)?
- If you were doing this all over again, what would you do differently?
- What tips and advice would you give to other students participating in a similar project in the future?

4.3 Analysis

The data were transcribed verbatim and analysed collaboratively by the first and second authors using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006). Analysis focused on how the data sets revealed student and staff perspectives about the translocal/international learning experience as well as their consideration of developing artistic practices. The analytic process progressed from description (where the data from students across the three institutions were organised to show patterns in content, and summarised) to interpretation (where themes were developed, illustrating the significance of the patterns and their broader meanings and implications). This required an iterative process of reading, re-reading, preliminary coding and generation of themes and their subthemes. The researchers kept reflective notes, highlighting connections and differences between the themes and their subthemes. Themes were defined and contextualised with data evidence.

4.4 Trustworthiness

Researcher reflexivity, peer evaluation, maintaining data integrity and being explicit about researcher stance and the research methods employed were key strategies used to maintain trustworthiness.

5. Findings

The findings from the students’ and staff perspectives are presented in four overarching themes:

1. Evolving art practice; cultural richness, time and perspective
2. Gallery versus studio: process versus product
3. Opening up the classroom; creativity and collaboration through Social Media
4. Changing mind-sets about fine art education and practice

5.1 Evolving art practice; cultural richness, time and perspective

There was a range of perspectives about the impact of the international learning opportunity. Some students felt that they had learnt new skills through:
“Being stretched to think about how different peoples’ cultural approaches to art could be so different,” and “how ideas around one subject area could be explored through so many different ideas and forms of media”. (Regina)

Some students commented on the project pushing them out of their comfort zone, inspiring them to work with the ideas and techniques of others, exposing them to new practices and new artists:

“I came to realise how easily, quickly and inexpensively I can communicate with artists from completely different cultures to my own. This will leave options much more open and varied for my future practice whatever that may be.” (Coventry)

“I really enjoyed working on the #3CityLink, as this project helped me to open up myself in totally new surroundings, as it was just the beginning of the first year of my art degree. I was able to work not only with local students, but also with international students. (Coventry)

“The exchange enriched my art practice because I was able to see my own city through different eyes and cultures.” (Regina)

Students from across the three sites stretched one another’s ideas by looking with renewed interest at their own locale. Students appreciated the benefits of shared learning with the artists involved, and the ideas generated through opening up communication channels.

However, challenge and discomfort was evident as it made students across the three institutions focus on other aspects of the art process not directly related to what they wanted to explore in their own artwork. However, whilst not of immediate benefit, it was evident from a significant number of students, through their post project reflections, that shifts in their art practice had occurred:

“It didn’t [enrich my art practice] really, but when I moved into my own personal work I had extra ideas from it.” (Coventry)

“This creative exchange enhanced my ideas for my new project, however the project itself made me struggle with idea.” (Gyumri)

The collaborative nature of the project challenged students’ conceptions of their art making. The co-creative aspects, where students were not merely researching ideas for their own insular work, created disruption. This included how students were able to see the outcomes of their work as a collaborative piece of art, as the following theme illustrates.

5.2 Gallery versus studio: process versus product
Students were encouraged to consider their art making as a collaborative process or journey with a story, rather than an individual exercise in artistic production toward finished pieces. Students were less familiar with the concept of pieces being dynamic in the sense of moving through one creative phase to the next and being, in essence, unfinished individually, but complete as a work of art as a whole. Because of this initial focus on the product rather than the process, a number of students commented that they were “forced to present incomplete work and were not clear why this was acceptable” and “felt really restricted with what I could and could not do.” (Coventry)
A lack of understanding that the process can be as important as the work resulted in students feeling that the process of creation was forced and rushed, with insufficient time to “complete the work before the gallery exhibition went live”. Students’ perceptions of what should and should not go into an exhibition was influenced by their own past experiences. It was evident some students were influenced by how the media depicts art as a finished product rather than seeing their creativity as a work in progress: “work should be complete before being displayed.” (Regina)

This aspect of incompleteness relates not only to the opportunity of changing mind-sets about process versus finished product as an individual focus, but also to collaboration with peers, as students helped one another in the process of working together towards a common goal without feeling competitive.

Some students created work in the studio, then dismantled it and transported it to the gallery; some worked in the gallery spaces full time; and others moved between workspaces. There was a sense of community in the galleries but relative to the size of the student body and the different schedules at each institution. In Coventry 103 and in Regina 50 students participated in both group and individual projects. In Gyumri 13 students worked closely together with two lead artists on five collaborative projects.

5.3 Opening up the classroom; creativity and collaboration through Social Media

#3CityLink required students to not only work with other students across the three cities, located in three different countries, but to engage with professional artists and the wider general public, made possible through the concept of the ‘open class’, and made accessible through use of live feeds and Twitter hashtags. The selection of technology chosen impacted the means by which creativity and dialogue was facilitated, posing a spectrum of opportunities and unique challenges.

Facebook, Twitter and Skype were used as conduits for communication amongst the students and staff. Whilst the Coventry staff had previous experience of using Twitter and Facebook in their teaching, Skype had not been used before, and the University of Regina and Gyumri staff were new to using telecommunications technology in teaching.

The three locations were live-linked together for two hours each day using webcams in the gallery spaces. However, feedback from students suggested that although the key intention was an international art project, the reality of the day-to-day running of discussions, researching their art practice and bringing students together to work, was not as effective as it could have been. The creative opportunity to share international perspectives and practices was impeded by time differences, technology and students’ (lack of) responses to creatively engage:

“processing the differences in social opinions within the three locations as each city was different, creating different ideas amongst the students” (Regina)

“collaboration was hampered as the many people did not respond to our requests, which really slowed down the process of work being made... ” (Coventry)

Staff also indicated that whilst some students responded well, others did not. Some of the students, who were expected to engage with the process and the project the most, did so the least. There was however, evidence of strong students, who came into the course with a reputation for being highly motivated and more mature in their artistic vision, predictably engaging the most. In Regina, two students who had previously worked in single-channel video production gained a passion for video installation as a
result of this project. In Coventry, the facilitation of discussion between 1st and 2nd year students led to several instances of collaborative project work.

Technology hampered interactions at times. Students commented that whilst they were linked across the sites via a video feed, there were issues regarding camera set up, which impacted students’ experience of the installations at the other two sites:

“The technology didn’t work well as it was both hard to hear and see them [the other students].” (Coventry)
“It was hard sharing visions of work without being able to show it.” (Coventry)

Staff also indicated that poor sound and fixed-point webcam locations impacted upon communication, and that the whole room needed to be viewable, not just the speaker. Further, some students felt inhibited by language issues, which limited the level of discussion to only simple ideas. Yet, for other students the experience of social media was very useful and experienced as stress-free:

“The web camera conference via Skype was fun; Twitter made it even easier.” (Regina)
I really enjoyed sharing ideas through social media and creating a digital exhibition. Two weeks in the gallery was also an awesome experience.” (Coventry)

Although some students commented that interest generation using social media (e.g. Twitter) was not fully utilised, the actual activity and traffic on social media was striking. Twitter was significantly less popular than Facebook: The Twitter hashtag was used in 71 tweets and the project (#3citylink) had 49 followers; the Facebook group had 518 members and was demonstrably more active with both text posts and images. The Twitter feed shows tweets from students and staff on the project although with little external engagement – a reflection that the project did not succeed in reaching as wide an audience as anticipated. The Facebook group was primarily populated with staff and students (see Figure 3), with a high number of posts during the actual contact period, but with few ongoing posts after the project finished. Whilst there was little evidence on the group chat of social interaction or contact, this could have been happening in private spaces.

Figure 3: Enacting the translocal dialogue: 9:00am Regina is 3:00pm Coventry is 7:00pm Gyumri. Clockwise from top left: Excerpts from student Facebook discussion threads; the clocks in the Lanchester Gallery, Coventry.
Skype was used as the primary mode of communication between the three sites for the shared activities, however, the technology was not equally supported across the sites and there were intermittent issues with sound, image and bandwidth. The project required staff to apply and use the technology they already had within the department. In Gyumri, the students were located off-campus without any dedicated technical support and basic audio visual tools, but the students and staff found ways to communicate and work around obstacles. In Regina, a dedicated graduate Research Assistant, with a strong background in Film and Social Media, helped make the technology virtually flawless.

5.4 Changing mind-sets about fine art education and practice

It was evident #3CityLink had striking impact upon students’ art practice, including what they wanted to go on to do, as well as confirming things about themselves they wanted to change:

“I wouldn’t do painting; I’d do a big different other project; maybe a video or sculpture and do more experimentation.” (Coventry)

“I would be more inclined to use the social media aspect to collect broader or more precise ideas and then better quality of work would be guaranteed!” (Regina)

“I’d improve my communication; talk to other students from the other countries; post more photos of my work; be better organised.” (Coventry)

“Next time I would involve myself more. I spent a lot of time avoiding meeting new people, and that was a loss.” (Regina)

Being a student is to be in a state of anxiety, not only over assessment, feedback and workload pressures, but also self-doubts about personal ability, being able to contribute, and coping with uncertainty (Barnett 2007). In sharing their ideas about the ways in which the project could be improved, suggestions ranged from the coursework being optional or not marked, to the project being even more experimental. It was also evident that students could see the benefits of using this type of open, connected learning with students from other countries as space and time to be more playful, to investigate, be open-minded, and not panic! Advice to future students included:

“Don’t be afraid to make contact with the overseas students; throw yourself into it. Experiment and think outside the box; let yourself get inspired. Get involved; push more.” (Coventry)

“Don’t gloss over the idea of translocal communication – it is the unexpressed point of the project; Embrace the cultural differences offered freely by collaborators abroad – anything strange is an opportunity to learn and broaden one’s horizons.” (Regina)

“Engage with the project, start with your own strengths and interests and then relate them to the city and culture. Make requests! Put yourself in a position to be inspired by the unexpected! Fulfil requests. Make a list from the Skype call about your ideas and tackle all of them as it may inform your work.” (Coventry)

In relation to the quality of the art produced, staff commented that there were high levels of praise for the work of students at all sites, and that the quality of work being produced was higher than would have been produced in a traditional Fine Art studio. It
was suggested this was in response to the change in the learning context, the perceived value of students producing work for an exhibition, and the outward face of the gallery raising students’ ambition.

6. Discussion

#3CityLink relocated Fine Art pedagogy and introduced students to strategies that address social relations and communications in the context of transnational issues and concerns. Nussbaum (1997) argues that education should be valued for its intrinsic tenets, which not only expand an individual’s freedoms but also the opportunities they have to achieve. Students need to be confronted with learning that seeks to challenge, provoke, evoke, so that they can (re) position themselves in relation to a theme or question, and honour the complexity of what is to be learnt. In #3CityLink the level one students in Coventry were not given the opportunity to become comfortable in a studio space but were (almost) immediately thrown into an unfamiliar, open space with second year students. The second-year students were moved out of their familiar studio spaces and into a shared public space, with level one students. In Gyumri students had opportunity to work with local artists on live project work and in Regina, the group of third year Film Production students, mostly used to working on film crews towards traditional single-channel outputs, were required to rethink their (limited) sense of the gallery as a space for the production of media work. Further, the interactivity of Skype, as a form of moving image, informed by current thinking in the field of ‘expanded cinema’, offered students opportunity to explore the explosion of the screen outward, “toward immersive, interactive, and interconnected forms of culture (Marchessault and Lord 2007, 7; Youngblood 1970; Hatfield 2003). As Hatfield writes, cinema is no longer ‘yoked to the material conditions of a medium, and the cinematic experience can cross media boundaries… involve intermedia, performance, spectacle, video, art and technology in addition to film, and be located within the ‘black box’ of the theatre or the ‘white cube’ of the gallery’ (262).

From a social/cultural perspective knowledge, skills and attitudes are constructed through the social dynamics of learning rather than the internal cognitive processes. Vygotsky’s (1962/1978) work in this domain considers how learning is embedded within a social context and develops through social interaction with others, through learning relationships or communities of learning, with the learning context, and the relationship and interaction between the learner and the facilitator being of key importance (Kozulin et al. 2011). With the Regina Film Production students, the usual fixed production roles of ‘director’, ‘actor’ and editor’ were no longer applicable in a context that required them to improvise and devise new roles, ways of working, and collaborative attitudes. #3CityLink impacted the students’ developing learning about their art practice through the promotion of different peoples’ cultural approaches to art, and the experience of students realising how one subject area could be ‘explored through so many different ideas and forms of media’. (Regina)

There is need for programmes to keep up with practice that is constantly evolving and for course teams to consider approaches to digital pedagogy which adequately equip students to embrace uncertainty if graduates are to have a chance of being able to respond to the requirements of their future role. #3CityLink prompted students to pursue and persist in new online learning spaces whilst also requiring them to take responsibility for organising their own learning and that of others through effective time management, and working to overcome obstacles, which arguably provided them with space to become more aware of their own learning process and needs (Dugdale, 2009).
What the project offered was not merely artistic learning, but a broader and deeper capability for students to comprehend learning from their online surroundings, and importantly from making sense of things with others.

Further, students were prompted to examine what a ‘finished’ artwork can mean, and how partially completed pieces can also be illuminating, and that an installation could be a way to think about the process of doing art, rather than creating a piece of art as something static. In getting students to investigate alternative art forms and processes, the online events in the gallery became ‘the work’.

Social media tools were seen to offer an effective space in which to develop asynchronous dialogue and discussion in support of the translocal project, but students appeared reluctant to use these channels for engaging in learning, as confirmed by Dabbagh and Kitsantas, boyd, Valjataga et al. (2011 cited in Dabbagh and Kitsantas), Kennedy et al. (2008). Students may be expert at using social media in their social networks, but they do not always translate this use to their formal or informal learning spaces without support. The importance of digital pedagogy then, is to enable students to engage in intellectual exchange, find one’s voice, engender reflection, and be confronted in ways of working in the open. The idea of “participatory culture” in Art Pedagogy is part of understanding some of the practices and social dynamics distinctive of a networked age (Jenkins, Ito and boyd 2015). While learning through participation in distributed communities of interest and practice have multiplied, the opportunities for staff to develop valuable skills and attitudes by bringing these practices into formal education may also help students to rethink their learner role as active agents rather than passive recipients of information.

During the project, staff were asked to teach groups locally and translocally, using technology that they were not always comfortable with and in a space that was not a defined teaching space. In Coventry, all Fine Art teaching shifted into the gallery space for the 2-week live phase including contextual studies lectures that would normally take place in a lighting controlled lecture theatre for an in-house audience only. The disruption therefore can be seen as both the move from the ‘normal’ teaching area to a gallery space, and the move towards a spatial integration of ‘practice’ (studio) and ‘contextual studies’ (lecture theatre). Staff feedback indicated that it was necessary to balance the risk associated with opening up the classroom through social media channels; this includes thinking about how exposing the work to others outside of the project may result in valuable contributions to the work in progress. Also, the benefits of increased exposure to the public relate to raising awareness and profiling the work and project by students and staff at the respective project sites.

Limitations of the study and areas for development
More preparation prior to the start of the live phase could have helped to create enhanced dialogue between the students and across the geographic borders. Online icebreaking sessions and small group collaborations could also have helped to break down the barriers and create more group interaction. From a review of the Facebook space, staff were directing and leading the discussions to a large extent, while students were often slow to respond and engage with each other. While we have no evidence of conversations that may have happened in personal spaces beyond what is reported by the students in the evaluation, there does not appear to have been effective communication outside the established spaces.
The audio-visual technology used to connect the three spaces suffered from poor sound and camera locations that impacted upon communication and effective exchange between the groups. The project also required staff to consider how they could apply and use the technology they already had within the department. The implementation of a translocal project of this type requires adequate technology and familiarity with that technology on the part of the staff or their support team. During the project the visual medium was felt to be useful, though not used to its fullest potential. For future consideration, a roving camera or multiple cameras as well as additional microphones, would be more effective to gain a fuller picture of each site’s installation. Further, improving the quality of the visual ‘presence’ at other sites may improve the experience and engagement of students at those sites.

7. Conclusion

#3CityLink was about experimentation in learning which is willing to take risks. Working with and managing students’ expectations, including how staff facilitate this type of learning, was informing in many ways, including how this approach to learning sits within the broader context of a course and educational culture. It was valuable to step outside of disciplinary comfort zones to understand how student, academic and researcher creativity can be harnessed, where artist practice was explored through alternative, imaginative ways, to challenge, evoke, provoke and capture learners’ attention whilst creating uncertainty.

The quality of student work in Coventry and Gyumri was higher than would have otherwise been produced, and in Regina, the expansion of student horizons into new territories and new ways of working through paradigms of expanded cinema was enabled. Nonetheless, the lessons learnt from using visual technology and social media for connected, artistic, co-investigation, including the staff hours involved, needs further refinement to engage learners, and enhance the quality of visual ‘presence’ and its benefits in open education.

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References


