

FALK HÜBNER

**METHOD,
METHODOLOGY
AND RESEARCH DESIGN
IN ARTISTIC RESEARCH**

Between Solid Routes and Emergent Pathways



METHOD, METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN IN ARTISTIC RESEARCH

Method, Methodology and Research Design in Artistic Research: Between Solid Routes and Emergent Pathways offers a rich and innovative approach to method, research design and methodology of research in and through the arts. It spans the process from initial research design, ongoing and continuous decisions that need to be made while designing and carrying out research up to the analysis and reflection on this process when finished.

Drawing on a huge body of experience, examples of renowned artist-researchers in the international field, as well as on contemporary posthumanist philosophy and methodological literature in the humanities and social sciences in particular, the conceptual core of the book is the author's Common Ground model for research design: Hübner suggests a flexible approach both for the overall research design as well as for the from-scratch design of distinct methods. This means in particular to provide space for the unknown, and for the occasional messiness of research in and through the arts; the book provides a thorough exploration of the emergent aspects and unforeseen paths that come up during a research trajectory.

Transdisciplinary in scope, this is not just a book "about", but "to work with" methodology, supporting both seasoned and early career researchers, as well as supervisors in graduate, post graduate and doctoral education contexts.

Falk Hübner is professor of Artistic Connective Practices at Fontys University of Applied Sciences, Academy of the Arts in Tilburg, The Netherlands. He has a background as a composer, theatre maker, researcher and educator. He conducted a post doctoral research on artistic research methodology and ethics.



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METHOD, METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN IN ARTISTIC RESEARCH

Between Solid Routes and Emergent
Pathways

Falk Hübner

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In this sense, I invite you to read these first paragraphs not only as an account of appreciation but to also imagine those whom I mention standing next to and with me – together. It is not just me who has done the work. Countless ideas have come to me through and with others: colleagues and friends; my students and the time we have shared together, the time spent listening to what and how they think and do and what they need; the various places I have encountered during running, not least importantly the wonderful city of Rotterdam. Just like my dissertation, finished in 2013 and published a year later in a revised version, this book has been created in this city, for which I am deeply grateful. *Sterker door strijd*. Stronger through (staying with) struggle. And, of course, my family, my lovely partner Marieke and my children.

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1

INTRODUCTION*

Communities of practice around artistic research have been developing considerably in the last twenty or thirty years. The notion that artists do and can do research is commonplace nowadays, which is reflected through the large and continuously growing number of publications, conferences on artistic research, and programmes in higher arts education as well as the work of artists and artistic researchers. As art theorist and historian Elke Bippus puts it, quoting Herbert Molderings, who himself goes back to Marcel Duchamp to develop his ideas: “The artist is no longer understood to be a ‘creator of paintings,’ but rather to be an inventor ‘of experimental setups in which ‘images’ are both the instruments and the results of an experiment’” (Bippus 2013, 124, quoting Molderings 2010).

Next to the term artistic research, other terms have been and are used more or less interchangeably, such as “research in and through artistic practice”. A term arising in the Canadian context that is used to describe something similar to what is called artistic research in the European context is “research-creation”. The term has been used to describe a funding category for artists since 2003 (Manning 2015) and gradually developed into an “approach that takes the art process as generative of thought, and that transversally connects that thought-in-the act to a writing practice” (Vanmaele 2022).

Obviously, not *all* art is research (see, for example, Nelson 2013), another discussion that has been held for a long time and not entirely resolved, and

* This Introduction includes parts of my previously published book chapter “The *Common Ground* Model for Practice-based Research Design”, in Craig Vear (ed.), *Routledge Handbook for Practice-Based Research*, Routledge, in either edited or extended form. The section on Paolo de Assis’ model has previously been published in Hübner and Vanmaele 2020.

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not all artists are interested in situating their work as (partly) research. In particular, the question as to how far and in which form research processes and outputs are effectively shared is important, as the process and activity of sharing is what brings a research project into critical discourse and into the larger conversation that research is.

At this point in time, it is impossible to frame artistic research in a way that is finite – regardless of the framing. But that does not render conversations on artistic research – its methods, strategies, methodologies, output, and potential impact – meaningless and useless. On the contrary, the continuing diversification of artistic research naturally leads to the question of how one can think about its methods and methodologies; it is precisely the rich and diverse discourse on artistic research (as a mapping of the possibilities of what it potentially might be) in countless publications that sets the stage for the following conversation on method, research strategy, and methodology. In this sense, it is a necessary conversation in order to be able to depart on the journey, to be able to make this journey together, as fellow travellers, even if the journey leads us through unexpected terrain and possibly not entirely along the same paths.

Why method?

Why is it important to talk about research methods and methodology? In 2020, during a lecture and workshop on methodology in artistic research at Utrecht University of the Arts, an aspiring PhD candidate (already an experienced professional filmmaker) who was still working on her application, asked me: “How big is this method-thing supposed to be...?” This question, although asked by only a single candidate, can help to illustrate a few basic intentions of this book. The question asked here is specifically about the role that method, research strategy, and methodology can play in setting up a PhD trajectory, or any research trajectory for that matter. This is not an easy first question that can be answered quickly, as method is entirely entangled with what research is, at least according to the view presented and developed in this book. Research is not just a theoretical exercise in which one thinks and writes *about* one’s fascinations, questions, urgencies, and ideas; it is something one *does*. Research is a complex and multifaceted practice, and method means designing, thinking, planning, and carrying out this practice. There is no necessary “ticking-the-method-box”, and then one can finally start the research and do whatever one must or wants. Method includes both the design of the research process *and* carrying it out, yet it also means experiencing the process and finding a balance, often while in the middle of it, between the designed parts of this trajectory and the unexpected, new elements that emerge in and from the research process itself. In fact, the more elaborate answer to this question about how big this “method-thing” is supposed to be is woven into the journey of this book and often a result of decisions made by the researcher.

Despite the rich discourse on artistic research, and also on methodical and methodological levels, there are only a limited number of publications that are explicitly devoted to method as well-considered, systematic, and goal-oriented procedures, as concrete techniques or activities that the researcher carries out. Authors such as Erin Manning even articulate a certain fear, or at least a stance, against using or designing methods at all. In her chapter “Against Method”, Manning argues: “Research-creation does not need new methods” (Manning 2015, 66). One aspect of Manning’s critique is targeted towards the tendency for artistic research practice to become subsumed by other research traditions – including adopting their most basic defining principles, such as the nature of knowledge that is understood as valid output – while it is vital for artistic research to form and develop its very own discipline and tradition. I do agree with Manning to some degree, given that she understands “method” as pre-defined and relatively strict procedures that predominantly work through language and produce a more or less pre-given kind of knowledge as outcomes. However, the stance I take in this book is that what artistic research needs in terms of method and methodology lies somewhat “in the middle”. Certainly artistic research needs a way to think about method “on its own ground”, to take its own practice and reality of playing and making as its point of departure. At the same time, a vision on method in artistic research needs to acknowledge that

Artistic Research is – not unlike environmental science or medical research – a research field with an overall purpose in need of collaboration and support from different established research disciplines. There, artistic research cannot be dissolved into or identified completely with any combination of its component disciplines. Artistic research should be able to make use of any research tool, method, or knowledge base across the entire range of traditional research disciplines and methods.

(AEC/Polifonia Third Cycle Working Group 2007, 15–16)

Building on what the AEC working group is proposing, I understand the core of a methodological vision on artistic research as one in which the artistic practice is the central part of a network of a wide variety of research activities that can be chosen from in order to explore and investigate the research questions at hand. Method and research strategy, in particular, also have a rather practical function, which is to be able to plan and manage one’s research process in a realistic and manageable way. Human geographer Kevin Ward points out a general urgent need for design and planning in research projects and offers the advice to students that the “capacity to manage, organize and plan will also be important if you are to deliver your dissertation on time” (Ward 2020, 15). Obviously, this is also applicable in the context of artistic research, even in the most exploratory and unpredictable forms. But methods

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and methodology are not only critical in order to meet academic requirements, such as in a PhD or Master's thesis; more importantly, they are necessary in order to devise complex inquiries and to be clear about how one actually works, and on what grounds. This goes for research as well as for artistic processes, where explicitly designed and articulated methods and strategies can help the practitioner and/or researcher to improve, change, or make their processes more effective, specific, and articulated – which would be much harder without any articulated knowledge about one's methods and strategies.

One main proposition of this book is to become aware of the various steps and elements of research while at the same time developing a flexible understanding of them, a flexible understanding of how all these elements can be brought into a meaningful research design process. As Ward puts it:

The main [elements of dissertation support classes] are the review of existing academic literature and the generation of research questions; the planning and design of the research; the gathering, generation and analysis of data; and the writing up of the dissertation. However, do not be fooled by the way they are listed here. You do not do one, tick a box and then move on.

(Ward 2020, 15)

Ward refers here, for example, to the necessity of continuously reviewing literature until one is deep into the phase of writing up, rather than spending time on the literature review only at the beginning of a research journey. In general, the process of designing and carrying out a research project is much more fluid than this: it can include passing over methods or steps as they were initially planned, recalibrating an entire phase of the research process, or designing new methods that were unimagined or unexpected at the outset of the project.

In the view presented here, methodological development in artistic research often faces two tendencies: It either still leans (too?) much on established models from mostly qualitative research traditions and is adapting to and adjusting these models rather than relying on its own, intrinsic methodologies, including discipline-specific modes of knowledge. Henke et al. argue that

this remains the case: artistic research is still considered at best a junior partner of the academic disciplines – followed by some of them with interest, sometimes taken note of with dismay, and often enough derided.

This is due not only to the universities' sense of owning the domain of research; artistic research itself also bears responsibility. To this day, it derives its self-understanding essentially from its engagement with

academic research, and this in multiple respects: artistic research imports academic theoretical models and methodological options, adopts its forms of evaluation and distribution, and strives after respectability through traditional academic qualification formats like PhD programs.

(Henke et al. 2020, 5)

The other end of the spectrum is one I often witness in academies, where occasional statements such as “everything in our work and process is research” leads to conducting research in an undisciplined fashion, with a loose sense of “everything goes”.¹ I do not mean to imply, especially in regards to the first point, that all well-known, defined, and proven research methods should be abandoned but rather that the aim should be to explore a middle ground between both ends and to take a step towards a methodological approach that is thorough and rigorous on the one hand and takes into account that which is specific and essential to artistic practice as the subject of research on the other.

In this book, I develop and offer a research design model that strives for balance, a middle ground between what might be called the “legacy of science” – the strictness of scientific rigour (to which much artistic research and the education of artistic research still relates) – and the notion of “everything goes”. Artistic research (and arguably all research, depending on its context) needs both: the thorough and carefully-thought-through design as well as ways of opening to the realm of the unknown, of what is yet to emerge. Both approaches should be part of the way we design and perform research. What is needed is a strong methodological framework for artistic research, one that responds to the immense diversity of research that is specific to the field and, thus, remains flexible enough to be actually used. With this book, I aim to offer such a methodological framework.

One might wonder, what kinds of methods or activities are we thinking and talking about? How do they look and work, actually? When we examine introductory texts on methods and methodology on artistic research, we can extract a series of activities that are understood as valuable, or at least possible, methods, next to the traditional interviews, observations, surveys, focus groups, or case studies:

- making art/design work
- observation and drawing (in all forms)
- sketchbook/notebook, idiosyncratic notation/symbols
- visual diary/self-reflection/personal narrative
- critical writing
- photography, video, sound
- modelling, experimentation with materials
- concept mapping, diagrams
- use of metaphor and analogy

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- organisational and analytical matrices, flow charts, storyboards
- multimedia/hypermedia applications
- modelling/simulations, soft systems
- electronic databases, visual and textual glossaries and archives²

Another list of possible research “practices” is included and discussed in the *Handbuch Künstlerische Forschung* (Badura et al. 2015):

- annotating
- expositioning (“ausstellen”)
- designing (“entwerfen”)
- experimenting
- arranging
- improvising
- installation
- staging
- inter-action³
- intervention
- collective work
- composing
- modelling
- notating
- rehearsing
- working serially
- singing
- translating⁴

Even before one actually explores all of these activities and potential methods in detail, it is immediately obvious that the thinking, ways of working, culture, and understanding of what knowledge means behind these methods are different from that behind the traditionally-formed and extensively-written-about methods in the humanities, and in the social sciences in particular. Employing artistic practices as research methods/activities – as the methodological core of artistic research – is generally tied to a considerable degree to the (at times highly) individual and personal artistic practice of the artist researcher and therefore defies traditional grounds of objectivity or proof. These activities are also typically not easy to frame in a way that produces conventionally-accepted data, as is usually the case in traditional methods in the social sciences and humanities. In fact, I argue that notions such as proof or repeatability are not the point of artistic research at all, but that documentation, transparency and followability – enabling others to follow the steps, considerations, and process of decision-making – are far more crucial to the communication and dissemination of artistic research.

Points of departure

I make use of three points of departure for the proposed approach towards methodology. At the outset is what Henk Borgdorff (2017) calls “methodological pluralism”. He observes that, besides conducting research in and through practice, practitioners

make use of a wide variety of research methods and techniques whose provenance lies in social science, humanities or technological research. [...] [T]hese methods and techniques may include ethnographic research [...], survey research, interview techniques or other social science-approaches, as well as historical, hermeneutic or culture-critical modes of investigation.

(Borgdorff 2017, 7)

In short, this means that artist-researchers depart from their own (artistic⁵) practice and potentially look into any discipline that resonates with their topic and enables them to formulate questions in a meaningful way and use methods from such disciplines as the inquiry necessitates. The same goes for the way in which artist researchers theorise and reflect upon their work: as their practices are often situated at the intersections of disciplines, cultures, and practices, this same intersectionality applies to their choosing of literature, theorising, and methods (Marshall 2016, 7). What I will add in greater detail in the course of this book, specifically in Chapter 3, is the understanding of methods as developed and designed entirely *from scratch*. This opens up the idea of methodological pluralism even further: A researcher does not necessarily need to draw on *existing* methods (from any discipline), but rather devises their own methods, depending entirely on the research question(s) at hand and the parameters that are necessary to respond to.

A second point of departure is the consistent rejection of a hierarchy of methods or kinds of knowing (textual/conceptual, tacit, how-to knowledge). There is no method that is by definition more relevant or more useful than another and not one that by definition *has* to be included in a research strategy. This does not mean that hierarchy is abandoned altogether but that any kind of hierarchy would be determined by the research design itself in the sense of emerging from the situation of a particular inquiry. As concerns research strategy, I propose to radically take the research subject, area, and context itself – as well as the questions that the research generates – as points of departure rather than contextualising and positioning the research – in advance – within existing methodologies, such as the methodological traditions of quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, or even performative research.⁶ Specifically in education, to position the research in advance would considerably limit the potentiality of inquiry, as students tend to

immediately turn to the limited choices offered by traditional methodologies while not *actually* engaging in the – admittedly more complex, difficult, and hard to predict – open process of investigating within what actually fascinates them, approaching questions to which they really do not know the answer.

As the third point of departure, I consistently regard the research design, or the process of designing research, as a *creative process* (that continues during the phase of carrying out the research) rather than a fine-tuned strategy to help one answer a question or set of questions. A research strategy as presented here is understood as emerging through the creative process of designing it rather than as being something “out there” that simply needs to be chosen. This understanding of research design as a creative process is different from the notion of using creative methods in or as research.⁷ Forms of brainstorming, ways of sketching, quick prototyping, playing with the different elements of the design, and sometimes even improvising can all be valid strategies for designing and devising a research strategy-in-process.

These three points of departure lead to a research design approach that houses a paradox and tries to accomplish two seemingly opposing aims: to provide some rigour, precision, and clarity (especially for students) and, at the same time, to be flexible enough to accommodate unforeseen events, processes, and insights (which, in my experience, always happen and should happen). In other words, a flexible model with the fluid and moving logic of a network that can create a thorough methodological design while providing space for flexibility and emergence (more about this later) as essential parts of a methodology.

Towards a model for research design

The book is located between different strands of literature relevant for artistic research methodology, research design, and research methods. The first strand consists of books that offer a profound conceptual and philosophical exploration of artistic research methodology, yet without providing much concrete practical guidance for *actually designing* research (Bolt 2016, Manning 2015, Hannula, Suoranta & Vadén 2014, Schwab 2018). The other strand is often located in or close to the social sciences, where research design is elaborated very thoroughly and practically, with extensive descriptions of the various methods available, such as interviews, interventions, observations, focus groups, and so on. In itself, this is very helpful and provides much guidance for (beginning) researchers – Denscombe’s *The Good Research Guide* (Denscombe 2014), which I have used to help students for years, is a particularly wonderful example.⁸ However, aside from the often implicit hierarchy between quantitative and qualitative research traditions, these publications are generally written in an exclusively how-to fashion and tend to lack more conceptual and philosophical depth. To put it less provocatively, they address

philosophical issues/resonances (such as the relation between quantitative research, understood from a positivist worldview, and values such as objectivity and quantifiable measurement and what the consequences of this might be) only on the sideline rather than working through their integration and entanglement with concrete design decisions. Both kinds of literature are relevant and applicable in their own way, but the problem that I seek to address here is that these two types of literature hardly connect; although both are designed to address the same area of expertise, they rarely overlap. This observation resonates with the following argument by Dutch methodologist Adri Smaling:

[I hope] to make it plausible that keeping or establishing an independent domain for methodology is justifiable: a domain between theory (philosophy, sociology, and so on) of science and research theory, insofar as we understand 'research theory' as a systematic inventory of research designs, methods, and techniques of doing research. Research theory does not deliver enough reflection, and theory of science relies too much on abstraction for carrying out empirical research in an optimal and responsible way.⁹

(Smaling 2008, 8, my translation)

Smaling's observation and argument are similar to what I outlined above. In fact, Smaling argues for a redefinition of the area of methodology, situated somewhere between the two aforementioned strands. The reasons for the lack of literature *in artistic research* that actually merges these two strands probably lies in the fact that the discipline is still relatively young and that the actual research projects of artists are so immensely diversified that suggesting one coherent approach towards methodology rather misses the point, as Henk Borgdorff (2012), for example, rightly remarks in his argument towards a methodological pluralism. This is precisely the context in which I aim to offer a model with a *flexible* approach that embraces emergence as one of its key mechanisms and as a common ground to start from when designing research projects.

Regarding publications with a more explicit focus on methods and methodology, I like to mention two books. *Artistic Research Methodology: Narrative, Power and the Public* (2014), by curator and art critic Mika Hannula, social scientist Juha Suoranta, and philosopher Tere Vadén presents compelling insights into ways of thinking about methodology. The authors discuss aspects of the political, the social, and the public (such as can be found in moments when the research is disseminated: which aspects of the research become public and which remain "hidden"?). Interesting facets of the book include the argument for a position of commitment and care as research method, for example. However, the book does not discuss the

process of designing research or offer any concrete approach to engaging in this design process. Such concrete offerings, although with a different approach, are made by the German publication *Künstlerische Forschung. Ein Handbuch* [Artistic Research. A Handbook] (2015), edited by Badura, Dubach, and Haarmann. Although the section of the book on methodology is not very extensive, the key part of the book is the aforementioned catalogue of a large variety of practices (not necessarily methods in a strict sense) that provide information and insight into concrete ways of working in the artistic research realm.

As stated earlier, it is precisely the ground in-between the two strands mentioned above that this book will explore. It includes practical guidance for concrete research design decisions, containing elements of a “how-to” approach, such as exercises, pedagogical perspectives, “tips and tricks”, and experiences from artistic research practitioners. Concurrently, the text goes further than the sole consideration of practical design decisions and reflects on the more conceptual, philosophical, and ethical implications of these choices. This book offers manifold connections and entanglements, considered as intra-active relations between concrete and practical design on the one hand and its conceptual-philosophical-ethical implications (or consequences) on the other, as two “sides” emerging *from within* their relations.

This position of standing in-between is not just to connect these two distinct strands, “filling the gap” just because it exists. I argue that this position is urgent because it is exactly the entanglement between these two sides that is at the heart of a complex research practice, and it is precisely this discussion that can drive the discourse on research methodology in the arts forward. To speak with Karen Barad, both sides should be intra-acting with each other, and being aware of this intra-action is relevant for making informed design choices. In this book I primarily refer to discourses around non-hierarchical networks – Actor Network Theory, performativity, and posthumanist philosophy – while drawing on the work of Bruno Latour, Henk Oosterling, Judith Butler, Graham Harman, and Karen Barad. Theory on emergence is another essential area, building on the work of Steven Johnson, Paul Cilliers, Jeffrey Goldstein, and others.

But why is a *flexible* model necessary? As writer and researcher Linda Candy and visual artist and researcher Ernest Edmonds argue, methods and methodology appear to be quite “singular” in most cases:

As the published records of creative practitioners demonstrate, searching for new methods and techniques for realising ideas is a substantial part of everyday practice and is, for the most part, directed toward the individual’s personal research goals rather than seeking to add knowledge in a more general sense.

(Candy and Edmonds 2018, 64)

Considering Candy's and Edmonds' critique on individuality, one can say that methods indeed tend to be very specific in their internal, detailed, nuanced choices, regardless of whether or not they are devised from scratch or based on more traditional, well-known and well-defined/framed methods. Following this observation, the need for an approach to design artistic research projects is not (only) a theoretical, conceptual, or political exercise: the individuality or specificity of methods necessitates a design model that is flexible enough to facilitate the full variety of methods – including the singular nature of methods and research designs – that emerges in practice. Such a model needs to be sufficiently flexible while at the same time providing enough guidance to develop a sound research design. The research project that underpins this model has evolved directly from the practice of doing research, both individually and in groups, as well as the education and supervision of PhD, master, and (final year) bachelor students' research projects.

Another relevant aspect that is barely covered in existing literature is the productive and creative tension between thoughtful and solid design on the one hand and unexpected, emerging elements and processes on the other. Literature from the field of artistic research itself often positions emergence as an essential element of the research process, reflected in Henk Borgdorff's assertion that "methods tend to become clear only bit by bit during the artistic search" (Borgdorff 2012, 81); methods only emerge through the actual process of being carried out – they only find their form through the doing. Other, more traditional, stances from the social or educational sciences argue for a much stricter and more precise design of methods that leave little to no space for emergence, often for the sake of scientific rigour and objectivity. Also here, the proposal made in this book lies in the (complex) middle ground, where it is the tension *between* thorough design choices and processes of emergence that operates with the reality of research design practice and is, thus, necessary to articulate and elaborate upon in a publication on research design.

Flowing from these various considerations and from my own practice as both artist-researcher and educator, I have developed a model for designing research: the Common Ground model. It derives its name from the basic idea that it emerges from every researcher's starting point, the ground from which it aims to support and facilitate the research design process: from scratch, from the ground up. The model (see Figure 1.1) works in three layers that are entirely interconnected: the inner (yellow) layer concerns the design of research methods through five perspectives: entities, activities, documentation, reflection, and learning/experiencing/knowing. The outer layer works on the level of research design,¹⁰ with its elements of collection, structure, and time. Both spheres are surrounded by the layer of emergence. For a brief description of the various elements of the model, see the chapter overviews below.

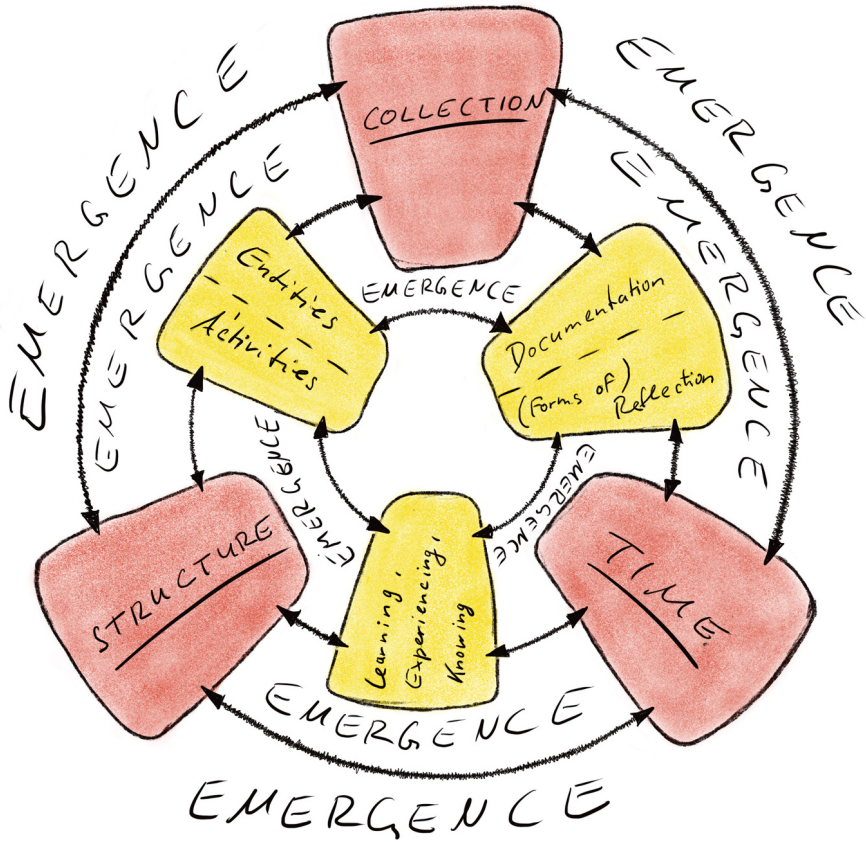


FIGURE 1.1 Visual representation of the entire Common Ground model, including the crafting methods framework as its inner sphere/layer/orbit.

Other models

Next to the model central to this book, I want to mention a few other models that deal with research design, methodology, and related issues in order to provide more insight into the spectrum of research design thinking in which the model I propose is situated. I have collected four examples, all of which differ in their approach towards methodology, internal logic, and tactile nature. It is striking how different these four examples are, which shows how diverse the potential perspectives are from which one can think about methodology and research design in artistic research and how diverse the angles are from which one can depart.

Robin Nelson's multi-mode epistemological model

In *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances* (2013), theatre scholar and expert on practice research Robin Nelson is concerned with how artistic or creative practice is situated within the doing of research and how this practice relates to forms of new knowledge, without prioritising traditional, most often text- and theory-based, forms. Among other topics, the book elaborates on the question of how the research journey in a practice-as-research (PaR) inquiry can be evidenced, not the least in order to qualify for a (doctoral) degree. Nelson's concept and model positions practice at the heart of a PaR methodology and frames practices as a key and substantial evidence-producing mode of the research inquiry among "[m]ultiple modes of evidence" (Nelson 2013, 26). These modes might include an artistic or practical "product", documentation of the process, and "complementary writing". The last contextualises practice and conceptually frames it. According to Nelson, complementary writing is not a means to translate practical work into a different medium, the medium of language, but is meant, as its name suggests, to be truly complementary to the practical work and should "assist in the articulation and evidencing of the research inquiry" (Nelson 2013, 37).

Nelson's Practice as Research model includes the above-mentioned multi-mode approach to practice as a mode of research and evidence. Nelson refers to three different modes of knowledge that produce this evidence: know-how, know-that, and know-what. Know-how acknowledges tacit, experiential, and embodied forms of knowing (the insider perspective), while know-that describes knowledge from the outsider perspective, such as coming from spectatorship studies or conceptual frameworks. Know-what is the kind of knowing that makes the tacit explicit, by means of critical reflection, leading to knowledge of methods, principles of composition, or knowing "what works". The interaction between these three kinds of knowledge is crucial, as, for example, conceptual and theoretical knowledge is brought into a fruitful and non-hierarchical resonance with more experience-based and tacit forms of knowledge familiar to the practitioner (see Figure 1.2).

Paulo de Assis' experimental systems

In *Logic of Experimentation: Rethinking Music Performance through Artistic Research*, pianist and researcher Paulo de Assis (2018) lays out a generic scenario for conducting artistic research. Assis employs a model in which knowledge does not correspond to something that precedes a certain given, which is discovered or recognised, but rather to something that is created and results from a thought process.¹¹ For Assis, this thought process is always accompanied by an encounter between "something" and "something else outside of it" (Assis 2018, 14), leading to unexpected

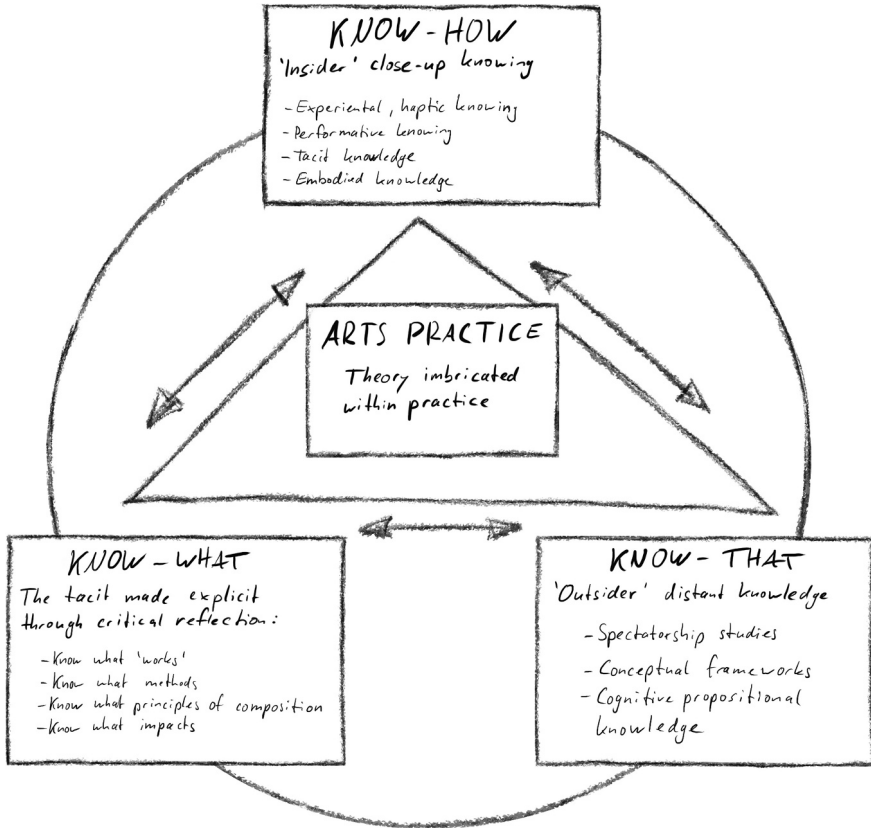


FIGURE 1.2 Nelson’s model regarding modes of knowing, which he calls a “multi-mode epistemological model for PaR” (Nelson 2013, 37).

reconfigurations of materials, connections, and functions. This thought is also prevalent in the work of science historian Hans-Jörg Rheinberger:

The minds of inventors and scientists, much like those of artists, are not oriented toward recognising what exists; they ‘turn more upon future possibilities, whose speculations and combinations obey an altogether different rule of order, described here as a linked progression of experiments composing a formal sequence’.

(Rheinberger 1997, 80, quoting Kubler 1962)

To generate new possibilities, Assis does not rely primarily on a research question but rather on “machines for making the future” (Rheinberger 1962, 33); it is this experimental setting that instigates and stimulates the thought and creation process. Assis refers to Rheinberger’s observations with regard to inventions in science, more specifically in molecular biology, in which everything revolves around an “experimental system”, the smallest functional research

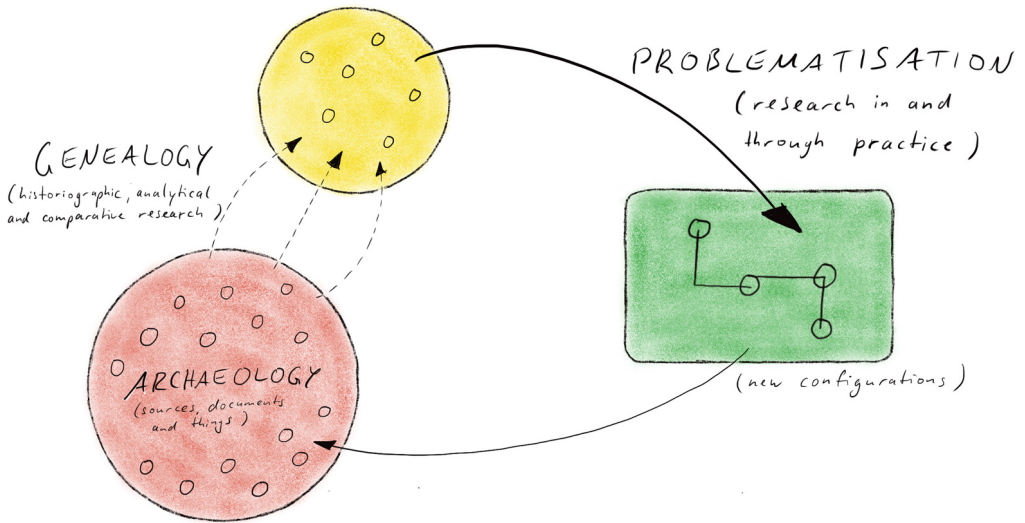


FIGURE 1.3 Paolo de Assis' experimental cycle.

Source: Adapted from Assis 2018, 110.

unit, and an environment made up of tools and technical objects that are put in place to address questions that cannot be clearly formulated in advance. This underlines the central importance of method: the driving force behind the invention of both concepts and new artistic configurations will actually be the method rather than a well-defined research question. The model deployed by Assis involves the creation of an experimental environment in three distinct movements: in a first, archaeological, phase, Assis collects sources, documents, and “things” – all pertaining to the issue he is focusing on – in a conventional manner. In a second phase, “things” are selected, isolated, and subjected to historiographical, analytical, and comparative research (“genealogy”), to be subsequently presented – through new configurations and arrangements – in an artistic practice, thus triggering a problematisation phase. This problematisation can, in turn, become part of a new experimental cycle (see Figure 1.3).

Research Design Canvas and IDEO Method Cards

The last two examples of this section are not models in themselves but rather practical tools to organise and design one's research. Business and management scholar Ben Ellway has developed a “Research Design Canvas”,¹² which is not specifically designed for artistic research but generic for all kinds of research and arguably specifically directed toward young researchers. The central idea of the canvas is to simplify the research design process by dividing it into nine building blocks (see Figure 1.4). The canvas is meant to be













Name:		Title of Thesis:		Date / Version:	
Research Design Canvas					
Literatures What bodies of literature or areas of research will be used? What are the key papers / studies in each literature? Will each literature play an equally important role in research? Are the literatures from different disciplines / fields?	Observations & Arguments What themes / issues are evident in the literatures? What gaps / (problem)s are evident in the literatures? What are the costs or risks of not addressing the gap(s) / problem(s) for researchers in the literature?	Research Questions What are the research questions? What is the value of investigating them? Are there any tentative hypotheses?	Contributions What are the potential contributions of the research? Who are the key stakeholders and what benefits will the research provide to them?	Sample / Context What sampling methods and sample will be used? Will the context of the research play an important role? If so, what are the distinctive characteristics of the context?	
			Methodology / Design What is the overall design or methodology for the study? What are the key principles / objectives of the methodology? What are the quality criteria for evaluating the design or methodology?	Methods What methods of data collection and analysis will be utilised? What are the key features or strengths of each method? Will the methods be used in a particular sequence? How do the methods complement each other?	
		Theory Will theory be an important part of your research? What role will theory play in your project? What theoretical ideas / concepts / models / frameworks do you intend to use or develop? What does theory mean or what constitutes theory in your discipline or field?			
Problem / Phenomenon Does a real-world problem(s) motivate the project? What are the main phenomenon and specific sub-phenomena being investigated?			Assumptions / Paradigm Is the research based upon particular philosophical assumptions? Does the research operate within a specific paradigm?		
					
					
					
					
					
					
					
 Designed by Ben Ellway @ Academic-Toolkit. CC-BY-NC-SA. This work is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.					
 www.academic-toolkit.com					

FIGURE 1.4 The research design canvas by Ben Ellway.

Sources: Retrieved from <https://michaelduignan.files.wordpress.com/2020/06/research-design-canvas.pdf>, 21 August 2023.

downloaded and printed so that one can actually physically work with it, including sticky notes and physical handwriting.

Just as with the Research Design Canvas, the IDEO Method Cards are made to be used in physical form, held and played with on a table or in a studio. The card deck has been developed and created to inspire design and not necessarily research design in particular. However, in my view, the cards also work very well in supporting the development of new ideas, approaches, or techniques in the context of research. The deck is structured into four categories: ask, look, learn, and try. These verbs are connected to the idea of keeping people in the centre of one's work, as the instruction of the card box states: "**Ask** them to help, **look** at what they do, **learn** from the facts you gather, and **try** it yourself" (IDEO Methods Cards box, bold in original). Each individual card has the same structure (see Figure 1.5), which includes a short "how" description and an accompanying "why" section to explain the Idea behind the method at hand. A third paragraph gives a short example of the IDEO team's practices and design projects. With this simple structure as basis, the way to use the cards is, in fact, left to the user, depending on what is necessary in a particular design (or research) project.

To summarise: Nelson's multi-mode epistemological model is clearly positioned as an analytical perspective and structures different modes of knowing that emerge within practice as research. Assis' generic approach to methodology lays out a general route as to how researchers might "move" from beginning to end of a research trajectory but is not so much concerned with the question of how to actually design the methods that drive his experimental system. Finally, both the Research Design Canvas and the IDEA Method Cards are, as mentioned, tools devised to "get the researcher going", to collect ideas and materials and to brainstorm. However, in a methodological sense, they do not provide a particularly overarching perspective (although the Research Design Canvas perhaps comes closer to a methodological perspective than the IDEO Method Cards) for entire research projects.

In the following sections I will return to my own Common Ground model, and elaborate on the different possibilities regarding how this design model, or approach, can be used and by whom.

Use of the model

Formal models, specifically graphical ones, tend to bring several affordances with them, such as the tendency to clarify more complex contexts or connections and simplify them and, in so doing, blend out important aspects of their complexity. The Common Ground model presented here¹³ is conceived in a slightly different way: not as a simplification of complex relationships but rather as a framework to *open up*, to think through, to provide space for content and to facilitate connections that have yet to be made, in each research project anew. One metaphor for this kind of use I like in particular is the one of "good software": the basic skills needed to use good software can be

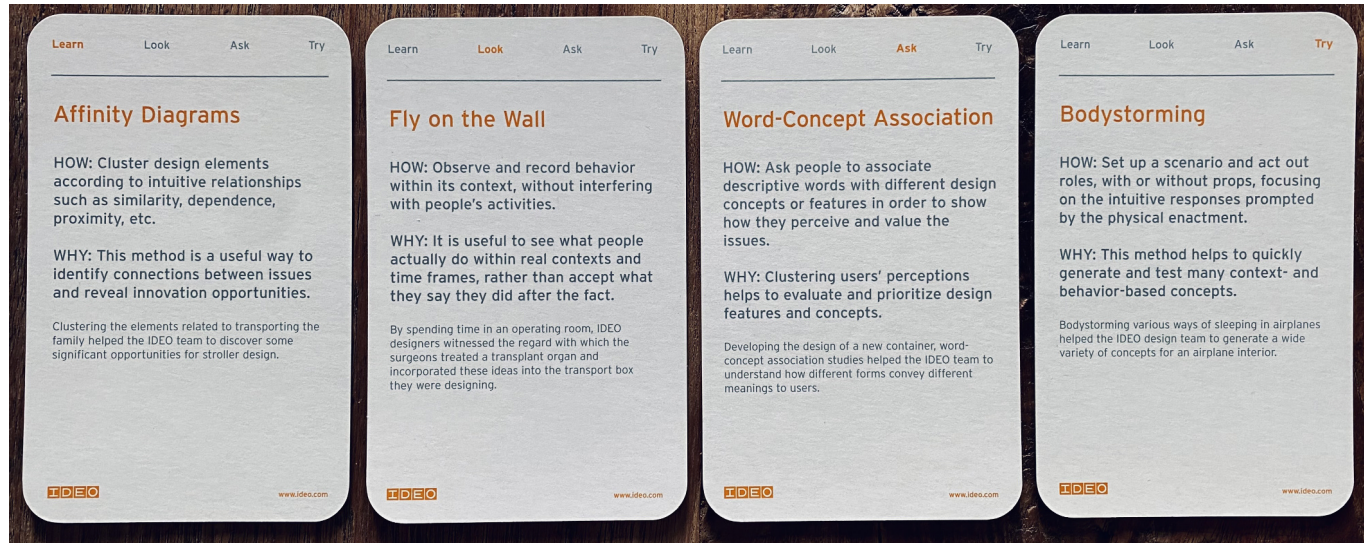


FIGURE 1.5 Four cards of the IDEO method cards set, with each covering one of the categories: learn, look, ask, and try.

Source: Photograph by the author. See also <https://www.ideo.com/journal/method-cards>

explained and learned in just a few minutes, while at the same time the software provides sufficient depth, flexibility, and customisation to accommodate a huge variety of users, from amateur to seasoned professional. Such software is built as a flexible framework and allows the user to use it in the way she needs, including the flexibility of changing her way of using it once she becomes more experienced.¹⁴ The software itself is not directive, not forcing the user into just one particular way of usage. In this understanding, the research design model offered here is meant as a frame, a starting point, including the possibility to bend or, at times, break it.

Broadly speaking, there are two main processes for which the Common Ground model can be used. First, during the actual research design process and, second, when describing, analysing, or reflecting on a design, both finished or in process (of being developed or carried out). These main moments of implementation can be further diversified by using the model as a feedback tool and as a framework for educators in supervision situations. The model can facilitate young and unexperienced students in initiating the design of their research projects, to get to work, literally. And it also facilitates the (presumably) higher methodological complexity that comes with a PhD or later.

The model's aim is to offer a flexible approach that can be used in the practice of designing research as well as in peer-feedback, supervision, and teaching contexts, including a conceptual-philosophical grounding and contextualisation. The underlying hypothesis is that the quality of research processes, outcomes, and impact can be increased considerably through a thorough yet flexible approach to research design. And this is not necessarily due to a "better" design (whatever this might mean) but because of a more explicit thought process, brought into motion through a number of perspectives, lenses, or categories.

The most obvious use of the design model is by the researcher herself, who employs it, in a variety of ways, to design her research project. The model can be used in a relatively systematic way, using its elements as a series of steps reflective of the order in which they are presented in this book (beginning with designing a method first, according to the five elements of the Crafting Methods framework and then working on a research strategy through the lenses of collection, structure, and time¹⁵). Moreover, the elements can also be employed as non-linear perspectives, or lenses, through which a research design can be conceived, thought, or revised in an emerging fashion.

Applying the model as a (self-)feedback tool or tool for supervision is another possible way of using it, both for the researcher herself as well as for colleagues or peer group members. It can shed light on underdeveloped or not-yet-sufficiently-looked-at aspects of one's own or other's designs. Each layer and each element of the Common Ground model provides a perspective and a number of questions for exploring the layer and element, and exploring these questions might possibly lead to new or different design decisions or

alterations of the research strategy. Especially in cases of supervising less experienced students, a supervisor can use the various layers, elements, and corresponding questions (➤ Appendix: Designing through questions, p. 159) to help the student further develop or strengthen certain aspects of their design or help the student to become more aware of various aspects of their project and design – without the immediate need for the student to know and understand the entire model.

As these examples show, there is certainly not one (correct) way to use the Common Ground model. It is not meant to be used as a kind of prescriptive recipe or even a method in and of itself. In instances in which artist-researchers have worked with the model until now, they have not “used” it in a straight-forward way, meaning to just “take” the model and “fill in” its different element and “Voilà, we have a well-finished research design!” Instead, and this is in line with how I propose the model *should* work, researchers are enabled to think about their research strategy *through the elements and perspectives the model offers*¹⁶ and, from there, shape their design in forms that match their own thinking. In such real-world scenarios of artistic research practice, various resonances can be at play between a project taking shape (or being carried out) and the model. The model not only enables analysis or reflection on a research design and project, but I argue that the way in which the model is conceived makes it possible that model and project *intra-act*. The model does have a foundational form, but at the moment or through the process in which it intra-acts with a research project, it is neither fixed nor finished. It could be understood as a form of “continuous prototype”.¹⁷ The model continually re-emerges in a new and distinct form through each intra-action with a project or research design. A similar process happens – hopefully – with the project at hand: it is not only analysed through the model being “used” or being “looked at” through the perspectives of the model, rather, it intra-acts with the model and changes through this intra-action.

Although the model can be mapped to any kind of research project, created by every kind of researcher or supervisor reading this book, I assume that it works best (meaning, is most helpful) in cases where research trajectories are non-standard and open-ended or methods are created entirely from scratch. I suppose its use would be considerably more limited in cases in which the research journey is already very clearly framed (with a more traditional research design, for example), as its greatest potentiality lies in cases where much original work needs to be done.

What does this book want?

The purpose of this book is to offer an inclusive approach to artists, researchers, and educators regarding how to design research projects, including the possible matters that are at stake; how to become aware of the interrelations

between the different elements of a research design; and how the design decisions relate to larger questions of what is actually meant when we say “We do research”. That being said, the book wants to make a case for methodology and research strategy as something truly important (which is not as self-evident as it might seem), especially in a field like artistic research, where no unifying or generally accepted vision on methodology exists. The main argument I make here – or, better, the methodological core of the model I am offering – is that design and emergence are intimately linked and entangled, which is part of the vision on methodology offered here. This is one of the key points of the model: the necessary tension between properly designing and laying out the research process in advance and remaining aware of the emerging aspects.

Another core purpose is to both develop a methodological approach that arises from the specificity of art-making and present a framework that works for researchers of different levels of experience: students and educators alike. The intended use cases for the book and the Common Ground model are: designing research for one’s own research projects as well as providing peer feedback or supervision. The following four points are the key contributions the book offers:

- the practical aspects of conceiving a strategy on the basis of one’s research questions, knowledge of the area in which one is inquiring, and the limitations of time, budget, etc.
- ideas and guidance in the choice of subsequent steps when designing a research project with the Common Ground research design model. This model acknowledges that both the nature and the order of such steps are different for every researcher and project. The book, and the included model for research design, advocate a true “from scratch approach” that can operate relatively independently of research traditions (and the implicit assumptions regarding, for example, the amount of literature involved or kinds of knowledge created through research).
- support in creating an awareness of the conceptual, philosophical, and ethical grounds of research design: both from a “bottom-up” perspective – What are the philosophical-conceptual-ethical grounds upon which one actually starts designing? – as well as from a “thinking-through” perspective – What are the conceptual, philosophical, and ethical *consequences* of one’s design choices?
- in line with the previous point, support in developing an understanding of what it means to conceptualise a research strategy and the process of conducting research as a non-hierarchical network.

These four points add the book’s practical grounding to the common ground to which the title of the offered design model refers. I had already mentioned

some elements in the earlier section's "points of departure": the notion of inquiry in and through artistic practice, a pluralistic vision on methodology, the sense of a non-hierarchical approach to methods or kinds of knowing, and the understanding of the research design process as a *creative* process. Methodological uncertainty is part of this common ground of research design in practice-based research, which, by definition, cannot be worked out in a hierarchical manner. The research design model offers an approach for working with this uncertainty. It makes a case for a methodological vision where thorough preparation and design on the one hand and emerging elements, activities, and findings on the other are deeply entangled: these two "sides" or "poles" condition and deeply impact each other. Both non-hierarchy and emergence are key aspects that will be developed throughout the book.

A central force I am working with is, indeed, emergence and how emergence has a place in the overall research design and process, amounting to what I call the "basic methodological tension". That emergence happens, or that unexpected outcomes and processes play a role during a research project, is not a new insight in itself. However, in research design, this role is not often explicitly defined. Researchers are implicitly aware that unexpected events and insights will occur but do not typically articulate this in the research strategy. Actually *addressing* emergence in its full complexity means more than only the implicit knowledge and norm that "it happens, but we don't actually write it into the proposals". One could argue that this is just the way things are, but my wish is to address emergence more explicitly (while it happens mostly implicitly, which highlights a fascinating paradox of emergence within research design already). Additionally, I am also curious about what happens if we include these emergent aspects from the very beginning – to include something in the design that we don't yet know. And this is the origin of my quite desire to literally give emergence a voice in the process of designing research: "as a description for the way creative ideas, images, and insights can arise unexpectedly and radically distinct from whatever inputs that may have served as a groundwork for the created product" (Goldstein 2005, 4). The urgency to give voice to that which is yet unknown is one of the explorations in this book.

Don't just read it – work with it!

The notions of practice and application are essential for the book: designing a research project is, as mentioned before, regarded as a creative practice and a creative *process* – it is something one *does*. The book is intended to be a guide in this creative practice by offering concrete perspectives and a variety of examples from research practice in and through the arts. I hope this translates to one basic quality that the book should offer: that it deals with methodology in such a way that it is not only "be to read about" but "to work with". *Dear reader, please see this as a direct and most welcoming invitation*

to work with the book in the way that is most meaningful, useful and fruitful for your own processes of designing, making, exploring, researching, and educating. Perhaps this book can be seen as an attempt to provide a workshop (both in the sense of “giving a workshop” as well as a space to work in and with) for some good work on method, research strategy, and methodology – a workshop that takes the form of a book. This idea translates into various sets of questions or small reflexive assignments that are offered throughout the chapters and that provide various challenges of research design (such as dealing with questions of time and timing, issues of ethics, or thoughts on the necessary and most appropriate ways to document).

How does this book work?



The overall structure of the book

Before going into chapter details, I would like to offer a few pertinent words on the overall structure. Traditionally, books on research methods and methodology follow the more or less linear structure of a research cycle’s timeline, progressing, roughly, from preparation and research questions to research design, a more or less standardised repertoire of research methods, and dissemination. This book – even if experienced in a linear way – offers a slightly different approach.

In general, the structure of this book reflects the structure and approach of the Common Ground model within the linear limits of a written text. The model in itself works through a non-hierarchical networked structure of its elements, which have strong – intra-active – relationships with each other; it also aims to give emergence an important voice in the process of designing research. It is *possible* to work through the model in a more or less linear manner (from preparing to “collecting” research activities and elements, crafting these as research methods, structuring them, and assigning time to them), but less linear and more iterative paths are just as likely. The book facilitates both a linear *and* a nonlinear, more network-based, way of reading. One way of going through the book is, therefore, chapter by chapter, following the proposed dramaturgy of the table of contents, located in the traditional position at the beginning of the book. The second way is via a *map of contents* at the back, which offers a more network-oriented and non-hierarchic perspective on the contents of the book by implementing a variation of the visual form of the Common Ground model.¹⁸ If one wants to get to the core of designing one’s research as efficiently as possible, through directly understanding how the model works and might function, Chapter 3 (“In the Centre of the Orbits”) and 4 (“Connecting the Orbits”) will be most useful.

A third approach is that the sections and chapters are accompanied by and complemented with additional examples and sets of questions, for personal study and individual design or teaching/supervision practice, parallel to

reading the book. Much of the context of the book, the model in particular, will make the most sense when it is used in the practice of designing research rather than just reading and thinking about it theoretically or conceptually. The exercises, assignments, and questions are meant to facilitate this important part of the learning process and offer an experience of the “book as workshop”. These exercises or suggestions include drawing or sketching exercises with subsequent questions that invite the researcher to reflect on these design sketches and on the possible steps or decisions they might make in the design process. Although these materials are put into place consciously and serve their function alongside the material they are placed next to, these smaller bits and pieces can also be used entirely independently: as inspiration, as exercises to work out with students, as materials for reflecting on one’s own and others’ research processes, methods, and strategic ideas. The same applies to examples and case studies, which will not be presented in a separate chapter but as a thread of stories throughout the various chapters, connected to each other (or to related content) by means of “analogue hyperlinks” (in-text references to other places in the book). For example, a case study might present a particular strategy of documentation (one element of the model) but could also be an example of how researchers have treated *time* in a particular way. So, this example might be placed along the discussion on documentation and also receive a link within the section on time. This allows for a close connection between the case studies and examples – the subjects and matters at hand – in the various sections of the book.

As a last but important complementary tool provided within the book are the abovementioned “analogue hyperlinks” inserted in various places so that the reader can jump to other places that resonate in a meaningful way with the section just read. This is done in the following way: the sign  accompanied by page number and section to look at ( [title], [p.n.]).

Just as research design is often, especially in the early phases, playful and trial-and-error, there is a self-reflexive element of play included in the book in which I provide insights into the design process of the research that led to this book; I use the process of designing the very model of this book as an example and dismantle this process at the same time. This means, for example, that the reader will come across a number of different versions of the visual representation of the design model, which is explained in Chapters 2 and 4, and through these iterations will be able to experience the thinking process and gain insight into which methodological steps were necessary for this evolution.

The chapters

This Introduction will be followed by the first “interlude”, a short chapter that develops a terminological framework regarding the key concepts of research method, strategy, and methodology and the relation between them. The

literature is not always clear about what these terms exactly delineate, and definitions overlap at times. This interlude aims to develop the reader's awareness of overlaps in the literature, to help the reader "find their way" while reading other books with different applications of terminology while at the same time setting a clear framework for the terms as they are used in this book. In short: methods are understood as well-considered, systematic, and goal-oriented procedures, concrete techniques, or activities that the researcher carries out. Methods are situated within a larger research strategy or research design, the overarching trajectory the researcher is developing in order to investigate their research questions. Such a research design consists of a series of methods in a specific order or structure and explains why it includes the methods in this particular order, thus demonstrating that the methodological framework of the study is sound. While methodology often overlaps with research strategy, particularly in qualitative research and the social sciences, this book aims for a broader – more meta-level – understanding of the term methodology as the "discipline of methods", including the underlying ideas of and world views of a research strategy and their philosophical and ethical bases.

The second chapter will build an understanding of research ethics, how ethics are entangled throughout and integrated into the entire research process, and offer a few examples of how ethics concretely work in research in and through artistic practice. Rather than presenting ethics as an element of research that comes as an afterthought, an "extra" that the researcher needs to pay attention to "as well", I suggest that ethical thinking needs to be positioned up front. As such, the topic of ethics works throughout the entire book – as it should within the entire design and research process, consistent with common stances on research ethics in the humanities. Ethical behaviour plays a role as soon as other human or non-human entities¹⁹ are involved, be it colleagues, professionals from other disciplines or areas, participants in projects or group sessions, responders in interviews, animals,²⁰ plants, or non-organic objects and surroundings. Due to the diversity of artistic research practices, often multidisciplinary in nature, it is unproductive to provide a detailed guide to research ethics that can be directly applied to all artistic researchers. Therefore, this chapter aims to bring attention to a number of ethical issues that are relevant in a variety of settings, motivate the individual researcher-practitioner to actively "transpose" these issues and steps suggested in the chapter into her own context, and offer a more overarching yet integrated approach to acting ethically in research.

The third chapter, "In the Centre of the Orbits", will introduce the reader to what can be understood as a *method* in research and what the function of methods entails. The core of the chapter develops the Crafting Methods framework, situated at the "inner core" of the offered research design model and created to help artist-researchers develop methods from scratch rather

than using those predefined by discipline, convention, or tradition “by default”. Structurally, I have chosen to work “from the inside out”: to first frame methods as the smallest entity of research methodology – and the closest to the actual artistic and research practice – before discussing the level of research strategy of overall design, which will be covered in Chapter 4, “Connecting the Orbits”. The third chapter opens with an exploration of how methods are generally understood and defined in different research contexts and what the criteria are for methods in various disciplines, such as the social sciences, philosophy, or the natural sciences. As will become clear, there are, currently, not many clearly defined criteria as to what a method is or entails; in most publications on research methods and methodology the framing of what a method actually is is taken for granted or answered on the concrete level – rather than on a generative, overarching, or defining level – by providing examples of research methods. Through asking the question “What is a method, actually?” or “What constitutes a method?”, this chapter proposes a reframing of method as a *non-hierarchical and flexible network* of five elements: (human and non-human) Entities, Activities, Documentation, (Forms of) Reflection and Learning/Experiencing/Knowing.

Once the devising and crafting of methods has been covered, the fourth chapter, “Connecting the Orbits”, concerns itself with the overall level of strategy, or overall design level, which builds a layer “on top” of the Crafting Methods framework (or actually *around*, as can be seen in Figure 1.1). In short, this part of the research design model I propose consists of five layers: Preparation, Collection, Structure, Time, and Emergence. *Preparation* includes the points of departure, various underlying or root conditions, aims, and research questions. This layer (or rather phase) will be covered separately in the second interlude chapter, situated between Chapters 3 and 4, and is not an integral element of the model. Research design practice shows that most of the variables of the preparatory phase do not become an element of constant re-negotiation and thus return less during the actual design process. Even if research questions might be rephrased on the basis of design choices, this seldom means that the entire preparation needs to be reviewed as well. The last of the five layers, Emergence, provides an opening for the unexpected, to what “comes up” during the research process. This layer is arguably the most complex one, and at the same time the most difficult (if not impossible) to actually design, and will be covered in greater detail in its own Chapter 5. Further, collection, structure, and time will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Collection means, quite literally, a collection of research methods: different activities, in principle non-hierarchical and based solely on the research subject and questions as framed in the preparation. The formation of this collection reveals overlaps with brainstorming activities, and it is worth mentioning that in this brainstorm phase of collecting methods, these methods will most likely not yet be fully formed or articulated – depending, obviously, on

whether they are based on more standard methods or are devised from scratch. But this does not mean that one should, therefore, refrain from “collecting them” – this is exactly the step that needs to take place, even if the methods are still incompletely framed.

Structure leads towards a certain ordering of the collection into what I call a “flow of data”: how information travels through a research process, which methods are carried out in which order, and the different kinds of structure that the data can have, such as single threaded, parallel, or feedback loops.

The element of *Time* goes further than scheduling and planning and is motivated, instead, by content as well as the notion of *spending time* with things or persons – entities. How much time do we want/are we ready to give? This perspective is closely related to discourses of temporality and, in particular, slowness. For example, philosopher Paul Cilliers notes the importance of delay and iteration “against the alignment of speed” and its accompanying qualities, such as “efficiency, success, quality and importance” (Cilliers 2006, 2).

In the fifth chapter, “Emergence emerging”, the reader will gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of *emergence* and how emergence is an essential element of the research process and its design. The chapter will begin by picking up the threads of what has been said on emergence in Chapter 3. These threads extend from three initial thoughts concerning emergence:

- about what comes up – the unexpected.
- against a (too) strict delineation of what research outcomes will be *in advance*.
- strongly based on experiences of how complex processes (including research) tend to take shape – and the desire to give this a voice in research design.

These basic threads, based on actual artistic research practice and experience, will be taken up and unpacked towards relevant theories on emergence. Elements of emergence will be examined in greater detail, including the understanding of it being a form of higher-level knowledge and behaviour that is related to low-level interaction in complex systems, decentralisation, or feedback. The critical step the chapter will take is in making the transition from theories on emergence and complexity towards the concrete practice of research design, the design decisions necessary within research practice, and the Common Ground model and its elements in particular. The chapter will also offer a few suggestions and thoughts on how a theoretical understanding can help when actually *working with* emergence. The chapter will do this by arguing that *through* thoroughly thinking about, making, and carrying out design choices during the research process, emergence happens in a fruitful, potentially challenging, way. With stronger elements in the design (that also

need to be considered as context-sensitive and flexible to a certain degree), emergence and the unexpected become more accentuated and relevant for the research journey at hand. This chapter proposes that it is precisely the productive tension between thoroughly devised design and emerging elements that works at the heart of a research process. The chapter will close with a few suggestions for the readers regarding working with emergence or, rather, how to let emergence do its work.

Finally, in thinking about what the book's vision on research methodology entails, it proves difficult to arrive at a conclusion that offers a summary of the key points spread throughout the book or provides final reflections on how or how not to design a research project in and through the arts. The ideas and elements of the model have been presented as a network (with, intrinsically, no hierarchy of key points) for a variety of readers in different professional contexts and for different purposes. Extracting key points would seem authoritative and defeat the purpose of the intended openness. Consequently, the final chapter will not function as a traditional conclusion but will present a few more brief thoughts about the expansion of what methodology can be and do. In doing so, the chapter will still use the framework and elements offered by the Common Ground model – thus using the material of the previous chapter and building on them – but will also extend them by thinking further about research design and our practices of research and inquiry. The core idea of this last chapter is to open up the idea of a distinct research design, such as for a specific research project, towards a broader notion of research as an *integrated practice*: to think research as a behaviour, a habit, an overall state of mind and “state of doing”. The notion of artistic research as an integrative practice is closely related to, resonating with, and inspired by Judi Marshall and her ideas on living life as inquiry (Marshall 2016). And as Marshall brings “together into one place so much aspiration for living an inquiring life” (p. 192), so do I aim to show how knowledge on research design and methodology can be of value not only for the researcher who is designing distinct research projects but also for the hybrid art professional who aims to pursue daily practice with a sense of curiosity and habit of asking questions.

Notes

- 1 For a review of a variety of research procedures and methodologies – and potential new paradigms in artistic research (including the notion of research “at the edge of chaos”) – see Gray and Pirie 1995.
- 2 This list is taken from Joost Vanmaele's presentation slides at the DocARTES seminar on method, 3.10.2017 (Vanmaele 2017). In this presentation, Vanmaele provides an overview on method in artistic research from a variety of angles, leading to a “multifactor approach”.
- 3 Architect and professor of interaction design Karmen Franinović uses the hyphen between “inter” and “action” in order to assign a “relational understanding of inter-action” (Franinović 2015, 161) and avoid rather authoritative forms of

- interaction between artworks (such as installations, for example) and audiences. “Inter” describes/assigns a position within an experience, while “action” provokes questions regarding processes and agency.
- 4 See the section on research activities in the middle of the publication, pp. 111–216. As the handbook is in German, it might be helpful for the reader to consult a review I wrote on the book, “Artistic research... Where to start? Why not with a handbook?” (Hübner 2020a).
 - 5 My repeated use of the term “artistic” research is meant in an inclusive sense and includes design practices as well as hybrid professional profiles, such as artist educators, artist activists, artist therapists, and so on.
 - 6 Performative research is an approach coined by Brad Haseman (2006), offered as an “emerging paradigm” that utilises “symbolic data other than words”, compared to the “symbolic numbers” in quantitative and “symbolic language” in qualitative research. “These [data] include material forms of practice, of still and moving images, of music and sound, of live action and digital code” (Haseman 2006, 5–6). The essential argument for our context of practice-based research is that practice in research is not an optional extra but rather primary and “the necessary precondition of engagement in performative research” (Haseman 2006, 6).
 - 7 As explored by Skains 2018, for example. Skains mentions the “basic method [...] to engage in the creative practice in order to explore a research question” (Skains 2018, 92), which is a different conceptualisation of the process than the research design process as a creative process itself.
 - 8 A number of publications do cover methodology as one part of what they examine but rarely focus on methodology in an explicit and exclusive manner. Robin Nelson’s book *Practice as Research in the Arts* (2013) is a good example of a fabulous book and important contribution to the field of research in and through the arts. However, methodology is just one of the areas Nelson covers, next to general principles of practice as research (PaR), protocols in the educational system and pedagogies as well as other themes, such as the perspectives on PaR in other countries (“Regional Perspectives”). The same goes for John Freeman’s edited *Blood, Sweat & Theory* (2010), which presents a number of case studies and complementary chapters providing reflection. All these books provide some insight into method and methodology, but rather implicitly and not on methodology in depth.
 - 9 “[Ik hoop] aannemelijk te maken dat het gerechtvaardigd is voor de methodologie een eigen domein te bewaren of in te richten, een domein tussen wetenschapstheorie (-filosofie, -sociologie, enzovoort) en onderzoeksléer in, voor zover we onder ‘onderzoeksléer’ een systematische inventaris van onderzoeksontwerpen, methoden en technieken van onderzoek verstaan. Onderzoeksléer levert te weinig reflectie en wetenschapstheorie is te abstraherend voor het optimaal uitvoeren en verantwoorden van een empirisch onderzoek” (Smaling 2008, 8).
 - 10 For the specification of the terms and levels of method and research design, see the first Interlude chapter on terminology.
 - 11 See also Deleuze, Gilles & Guattari, Félix Guattari (1991). *Qu’est-ce Que La Philosophie?* Minuit.
 - 12 Retrieved from <https://www.academic-toolkit.com/the-research-design-canvas/>, 8 September 2022.
 - 13 This model is the conceptual core and outcome of a post-doctoral research project (2019–2021) on research methodology at HKU University of the Arts in Utrecht, generously funded by SIA, the Dutch governmental organisation for the support of practice-based research in The Netherlands. The experiences during this research – including workshops with diverse groups of participants (Master and PhD students as well as teacher researcher colleagues from the institution) – were crucial for the development of the model and the way I use it.

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- 14 For myself, the notes and writing software Bear is such an example, as is the writing software Ulysses or the music composition and performance software Ableton Live.
- 15 Obviously even such a linear “walk-through” of the model will have some iterative practice in it, as the “collection of methods” (see p. 108) can change during the work on structure and time (see p. 110 and 112) – which also means going back to design and work with other methods or re-design and work with methods already on the table. The Crafting Methods framework will be discussed in depth in Chapter 3.
- 16 The words are not chosen accidentally here, as the notion of “thinking through” or “reading through” is inspired by Karen Barad’s understanding of diffraction (see Barad 2007, Bozalek and Zembylas 2016, Murris and Bozalek 2019). The idea of reading sources through each other, rather than letting one source predominate, is central to how I present the use of the Common Ground model here.
- 17 The term “continuous prototype” is used as a metaphor by the methodology working group of the European Artistic Research Network (EARN) and its researchers Tero Heikkinen, Petri Kaverma, and Denise Ziegler, in order to describe a state of a work in progress as being continuously “non-chronological and/or non-stable” (Slager 2021, 27).
- 18 Obviously, a reader of a traditional table of contents is not forced to read a book in a linear structure either, and well-trained readers and researchers, in particular, have their own non-hierarchical and individual ways of reading. However, I strongly believe that the visual structure of a map means that different associations, different connections, and thus different routes through the book become possible.
- 19 The notion of entities, be it human or non-human, is introduced and discussed in Chapter 3.
- 20 In the first chapter of *Staying with the Trouble* (2016), “Playing String Figures with Companion Species”, Donna Haraway elaborates on *PigeonBlog*, an art activism project in which pigeons, artists, and pigeon fanciers collaborated to map and reimagine air pollution.

INTERLUDE I

Terminology: Method, strategy, methodology

As mentioned earlier, one of my central aims for this book is to develop an approach for thinking about – and working with – methodology that is not bound to one particular discipline or tradition but can be put to work in a variety of artistic (and possibly non-artistic) disciplines. A central issue regarding this aim is terminology: various disciplines, both in their education as well as in professional practice, apply a number of different terms in different ways, resulting in divergent meanings. Often this divergence is enough to complicate understanding within a single discipline, and the conversation between disciplines becomes an even greater challenge. One example of such a discipline-specific term is “design research”, a term I encounter regularly in educational or design disciplines with different meanings attached to it. This variance makes these terms difficult to use and work with in other disciplines: most musicians, for example, do not identify as designers, nor do they have a particularly embodied idea about design as a way of creating work or doing research, regardless of whether the methodological aspects of design research might actually work for them or not. It is my intention to offer an inclusive terminology that is productive in diverse disciplines, that enables, quite literally, practitioner-researchers to “talk to each other”, to work with each other’s ideas, questions, and approaches to methodology and inspire each other in these areas. The inclusive terminology offered here is, originally, situated in and developed within the contexts from which I am coming, namely, interdisciplinary artistic and research practice and teaching. However, I believe that the usages offered can work productively in that they articulate certain relations between terms – including those derived from different artistic disciplines and contexts – through relatively simple adaptations without colonising the individual disciplines and their terminology in any way.

The terms “method” and “methodology” are frequently used ambiguously, sometimes even interchangeably. This happens both in practice and in literature. Robin Nelson notes:

method and methodology are sometimes used as though they were synonyms – they aren't. Methodology is the study of methods and deals with the philosophical assumptions underlying the research process, while a method is a specific technique for data collection under those philosophical assumptions.

(Wilson, as quoted in Nelson 2013: 98)

However, as much as Nelson's remark might help in distinguishing between method and methodology, it does not, of itself, solve the ambiguity surrounding the ways “methodology” itself is used, especially within literature from the social sciences and qualitative research: C.R. Kothari, for example, describes research methodology as “a way to systematically solve the research problem” (Kothari 2004, 8). In this usage, methodology is obviously not a “study of methods” and the “philosophical assumptions” that the research process is based on but is closer to a “practical work plan”, so to speak, a term that signifies the combination of a number of methods into a larger research strategy. I introduce the term *research strategy* here as indicating such a level in-between, and a third term next to, *method* and *methodology*. In the following sections I will elaborate on all three terms: method, research strategy, and methodology.

Method

Undoubtedly, methods are at the core of research *practice*: “they are the driving forces behind generating, collecting and processing data and information” (Hübner and Vanmaele 2020, n.p.). Methods are the locus of concrete activity, the space in which the researcher encounters her research subjects, objects, and entities, the space from where most unexpected ideas within the research process emerge. In short, this is “where it happens”. Importantly, methods offer the possibility for carrying out practice in a way that is different from the ordinary, well-known paths or techniques (that every experienced practitioner has and knows), a possibility for developing or experimenting with alternative forms of practice.

Methods can be considered and understood, broadly, “as deliberate, systematic and purposeful procedures in which a careful description of the *modus operandi* gives rise to an intersubjectivity that allows for both transparency and critical reflection” (Hübner and Vanmaele 2020, n.p.). Within the layers of method, research strategy, and methodology as presented here, methods are the most concrete and “practical”, as they are the actual techniques, actions, or activities that are carried out in the here and now of the research “as it

happens” – with the aim of finding clues, building blocks, or elements, to eventually answer the research questions. Traditionally, methods – such as interviews, observations, interventions, or experiments – are understood as tools for data collection. In the course of this book, in particular in Chapter 3, I sketch a somewhat broader conceptualisation of methods, which can generate materials, learning, experiencing, and knowing. The outcomes of a method can then be further developed or explored by the researcher, as input to work with, to process further with a subsequent method or set of methods. Using a metaphor of the traveller, a method can take us from one point to the next. However, despite the certain straightforwardness of method as a concrete research action and tool, it is also the source of unexpected findings and emergence:

a tension between, on the one hand, the aura of method as something that is predictable, reliable, traceable and reproducible and, on the other, method as a source of exciting innovations and even (in those instances where it truly has a major impact) as an act of rebellion.

(Hübner and Vanmaele 2020, n.p.)

Methodology

In much literature – in particular coming from (areas of) the qualitative research tradition and the social sciences – methodology is used synonymously with research strategy. As C.R. Kothari adds to the already-mentioned notion of methodology as an approach to solving research questions or problems: “In it [methodology] we study the various steps that are generally adopted by a researcher in studying his research problem along with the logic behind them” (Kothari 2004, 8). Joost Vanmaele and I (2020) call this use of the term methodology “in the narrow sense”. In this book, however, methodology is used

in a “broader” sense, which surpasses research strategy. This enables us to think of larger movements in research, like quantitative, qualitative and performative research, as methodological traditions that work with different kinds of data (numerical, non-numerical and symbolic) and that imply different visions and worldviews. Methodology, then, functions on a meta-level – more particularly as a “study of methods”, including their philosophical and ethical basis [...].

(Hübner and Vanmaele 2020, n.p.)

This overarching use of the term resonates with Nelson's quote above. Thus, there is a clear differentiation to make between methodology and research strategy: Research strategy (and in some cases *research design*, see below) is the concrete planning and path, which includes a designed set and structure of methods, that one sets out in order to work on or with one's research

questions. Methodology is the set of underlying (conceptual-philosophical) assumptions, world views, values, and ethics. Ethics, which will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter, lies at the very core of how research is conducted (thus impacting one's methods and research strategy as well), for what reasons, and with which kinds of values, as independent researcher Helen Kara so passionately explains:

Research ethics is a multi-faceted, endlessly fascinating subject. It is linked with how we make and use laws, how we care for others and how we earn and spend money. [...] [T]here is an ethical dimension to most – perhaps all – of the decisions we make and the acts we perform. In research, ethics underpins every stage of the process, and permeates our relationships with participants, colleagues, commissioners, funders and others.

(Kara 2018, 18)

To summarise, methodology can thus be understood more as a “theory of methods”, a reflective perspective on methods. In the same way a research strategy provides an overarching organisation of methods, methodology provides an overarching perspective on research strategy (and methods, too). In this sense, the larger research approaches – such as quantitative, qualitative, performative, and mixed methods research – can be seen as emerging from methodological traditions – with their own paradigms and world views – that work with different kinds of, and visions on, data – for example, primarily numerical, non-numerical (such as text and language), or symbolic (neither text nor numerical). However, this does not imply a strict, unchangeable, or inflexible hierarchy, as the three levels can constantly influence and inform one another during the design and research process.

<i>Quantitative Research</i>	<i>Qualitative Research</i>	<i>Performative Research</i>
“the activity or operation of expressing something as a quantity or amount – for example, in numbers, graphs, or formulas” (Schwandt 2001, 215)	Refers to “all forms of social inquiry that rely primarily on qualitative data ... i.e., nonnumeric data in the form of word” (Schwandt 2001, 213)	Expressed in nonnumeric data, but in forms of symbolic data other than words in discursive text. These include material forms of practice, of still and moving images, of music and sound, of live action and digital code.
The scientific method	Multi-method	Multi-method led by practice

Three methodological traditions and their corresponding preferred data types, according to Haseman (2006).

Strategy

As already mentioned, I position *research strategy* as a level in-between method and methodology, as a term which should help to specify the other two and differentiate between them. The overarching level of research strategy is important: it not only brings a collection of methods into a structure but also establishes the logic and rationale behind the choice of the individual methods and their relation to each other. It

refers to the ‘route’ that is actually shaped and designed, and that the researcher wants to take in order to answer his or her research questions. It consists of a series of well-thought-out methods that are applied in a certain order.

(Hübner and Vanmaele 2020, n.p.)

In this sense, research strategy serves as a link between the concrete research activities (methods) and their philosophical underpinnings (methodology). I apply strategy and design more or less interchangeably. The metaphor of a “route” is to be understood to mean “a certain order”. This *could* take a linear form, but not necessarily. A route (during travel, for example) can change or (partly) take shape along the way; its direction might change, or one might walk in circles. Different kinds of “order” are possible: All methods might be carried out in a linear way, one after the other, but nonlinear forms are probable as well. One might work recursively, for example: “I am going to observe, then I will review related literature before I return to observe again.” I will go deeper into matters of structure and order in Chapter 4.

Although I use strategy and design fairly interchangeably, there is a differentiation to make: Both *can* mean the same, but strategy always refers to the actual strategy (noun) that is to be carried out, while design can also mean the actual *process* (verb) of developing the research strategy. There are different possibilities to work with research strategy in the actual research (design) practice. Traditionally, designing a research strategy is part of the preparations – before beginning any practical work – and is a crucial element of research proposals. On the other end of the spectrum is that of artist researchers who entirely dismiss the idea of designing a research project from beginning to end and decide to leave as much space as possible for whatever they encounter along the way. In this way, a research strategy – if it can still be called as such – is only discovered or identified much later, perhaps even at the end of the research process, and acknowledged with something like: “This has (apparently) been my strategy.” As Borgdorff indicates: “In artistic research, both the research topic and the research question and methods tend to become clear only bit by bit during the artistic search, which often transcends disciplines as well” (Borgdorff 2012, 81).

The approach I am suggesting in this book is positioned in the middle of the two poles: between a precise and strict planning in advance on the one hand and allowing strategy to emerge along the way on the other. I argue that it is important and useful to prepare and design a research strategy beforehand, to think about and work with one's subject and ideas as comprehensively as possible: what needs to happen at which moment, in which order, who might be involved, how much time is necessary, and so on. However, this strategy should not be entirely fixed or become inflexible but should, rather, *include* the openness and flexibility to change along the way, depending on what the researcher encounters, what materials offer, and which insights emerge. This is the core of the methodological argument and thinking offered here, which will be developed further in the coming chapters: creating a thorough design on the one hand, leaving space for emergence on the other, and taking both of these approaches truly seriously in the process of designing and carrying out research projects. Notably, this entails embracing the rather complex and amorphous task of working within a certain tension between these two poles, to think of emergence not as a force working outside of the design – disturbing it, as it were – but as an integral force within of it.

The relationship between the three levels

The model of nested circles (see Figure Int. Int. 1.1 below) visualises the relations between the three levels of method, research strategy, and methodology and includes a number of possible examples that can be understood as “fitting” within a certain level. The relationship between the three levels can be understood as hierarchical, but even more apt is an understanding of the levels as being interconnected and entangled; “it is not a question of difference or similarity but relationship” (Gabriel 2011, n.p.). The three levels share an intimate connection. They are not isolated from each other but entangled, which is represented by the arrows between the different levels. The borders between the three levels are fluid – if methods change during a research project (or in the phase of designing it), this has an impact on the overall strategy, for example, and vice versa. The same goes for the relationship between the levels of strategy and methodology, as Vanmaele and I note:

although methodology offers an extra (overall and reflexive) perspective relative to research strategy, the former can also be influenced by choices at the level of the latter. This is why the relation between the three levels – methodology, strategy and method – is neither a top-down nor a bottom-up affair, but should be regarded as a relation of interconnections [...].

(Hübner and Vanmaele 2020, n.p.)

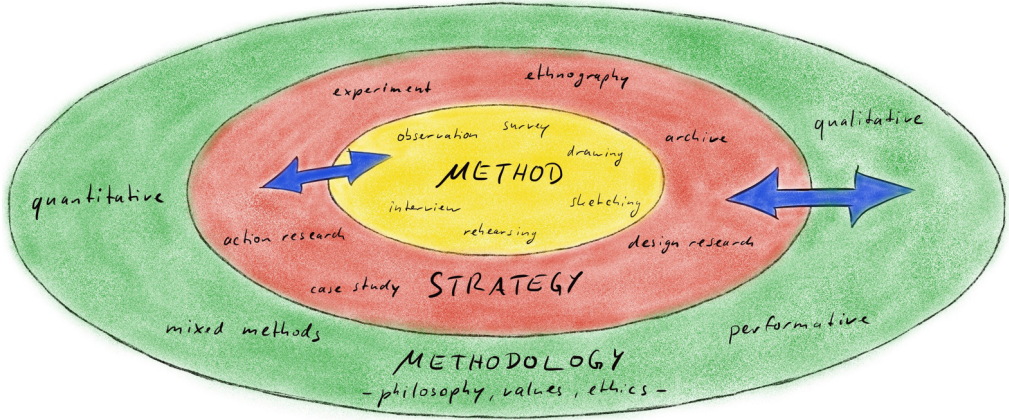


FIGURE INT. 1.1 Relations between method, research strategy, and methodology.

It is also important to note that the examples mentioned in the circles are not meant to be understood as “absolute categories”. The possibilities are certainly not limited to these examples, and there is some potential overlap. An experiment can also be a method but is included here as an example of a strategy: in the form of an *experimental study*, for example. Such a study might include several methods – such as interventions, assignments, or tests – which then add up to an overall strategy. In a similar way, archival research can be considered a strategy, for example, in cases when an entire research project (or the largest part of it) actually takes place in one or multiple original archives. In cases where such archival work is only one element of a project (e.g., in cases of musical research into historically informed performance practice), it might be considered a method within a larger research strategy.

To offer another example: ethnography can be understood as a research strategy – in which methods such as literature review, interviews, informal conversations, community-work, and participatory observation might be used – but it might also be understood on a methodological level as an “ethnographic approach” (or, in the words of Rayond Madden (2017), as “being ethnographic”), in the sense of how one acts as a researcher in one’s field, how one works with data, values, trust, and so on, which operates on a field underlying the concrete research actions and the logic between these actions.

The overall idea here is that the categorisation of terms is not the actual issue. What is important is the logic behind the categorisation, which enables the researcher to make sense of the terms used, gain more understanding about their role in the project, situate them according to an underlying logic in the overall research project, and articulate this understanding to others. It must be noted that the form of the three circles is not meant to be a “model”

in itself, which describes “what research is”, for instance. Its purpose is to clarify the way the three terms of method, research strategy, and methodology can be visualised as levels and made usable – to develop a shared language across (artistic) disciplines¹ in such a way that both the terms themselves and the hierarchy between them is clear and useful for a range of research practitioners and students. This includes the fluidity and flexibility of the terms and the relations between them: how a choice on one level can have consequences on another, for example.

Closing

Whereas method and strategy are two terms that are constantly at play in the practical and concrete process of carrying out one's research project, this is somewhat less true for methodology: one cannot really “do” methodology in the same way method or strategy can be “done”. The Common Ground model, which will be developed in the following two chapters, acknowledges this, as its main elements, perspectives, or “windows” are situated within the levels of method and strategy. Methodology is not situated explicitly within the model itself; rather, it “flows through” the entire model and is included more implicitly, with notions such as non-hierarchy, network logic, and posthumanist philosophy, all interwoven throughout the method and strategy choices. I will elaborate more on this in Chapter 4. Nevertheless, the chosen methods – including their processes and outcomes – are not only informed and guided by a chosen methodology but also feed back into methodology. The two have a rather *intra-active* relationship in the understanding of the concept as developed and proposed by physicist and philosopher Karen Barad, who describes *intra-active* as “the mutual constitution of entangled agencies” (Barad 2007, 33). In short, this means that entities don't exist (or, rather, pre-exist) as more or less fixed entities prior to their relationship but emerge from within their relationship. Concerning the relationship between method and methodology, *intra-action* offers a fruitful perspective to think and work with: Neither of the two precedes the other; they are intimately entangled and co-create each other continuously during the research process and beyond. The same applies for all the other relations between the different layers: between strategy and methodology and between method and strategy.

Methods or strategy are never neutral or, rather, are never as neutral as we as researchers might like them to be. Ideas of methods as functioning as a neutral way of collecting data might still exist somewhere in some fields. And while this might seem viable for certain disciplines, one must not forget that methods, disciplines, researchers carrying out methods, discipline-specific criteria, funding bodies, institutional missions, and so on, are all intimately connected. There are no neutral methods or, rather, no methods operating outside these connections and relations. Which methods are chosen for the

research design, and how a method is employed, depend at all times on an extensive number of factors, including the culture one has grown up in, the culture one is working in, any personal ideas regarding what research is, what motivations behind the overall research are operating, and so on and so forth. And, let's remember, the choice of methods and research strategy cannot be separated from the methodology and underlying world view, values, and ethics of the researcher. Thus, as a researcher, it is crucial to have a precise idea of and a critical view on which underlying (and possibly implicit) values are in place from the very beginning.

Note

- 1 A striking example comes from a workshop series on research methodology that I conducted in the academic year of 2020–2021 with teacher-researchers from HKU University of the Arts Utrecht. The participants came from three departments: Music, Theatre, and Arts & Economics. The group had extensive conversations on the nature of what research is, both in a general sense and in their own disciplines and respective departments. The framework of the three circles with the accompanying terminology – method, research strategy, and methodology – was seen as an essential tool, at times even more important than the Common Ground model itself, for creating and cultivating a common language, which in the end made it possible to share ideas and co-create a project of huge diversity.



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HOW ETHICS ARE EVERYWHERE AND WHAT THIS ACTUALLY MEANS*

Ethics is an area that is deeply embedded and entangled in the very methodological grounding of one's research design and tangible actions. As already mentioned in the Introduction, ethics should not be treated as some kind of "extra" that a researcher needs to pay attention to "as well" but should, rather, be integrated into the entire design and research process, from the very first collection of ideas to the dissemination and publication of results. Therefore, it seems important to explore and elaborate on ethics not in a later (or final) chapter but at the very outset of the journey of this book.

In this chapter, I take a number of basic ethical principles into account that are relevant for most types of research in addition to issues or potential dilemmas that are specific to artistic research. A key point is that acting ethically is not the same – despite obvious overlaps – as acting lawfully. Often, general rules offer only a minimum standard of conduct, and much is left to the judgment, behaviour, and integrity of the researcher. Ethics and research ethics play a role in every research project, whether artistic or not, and all practitioner-researchers should obey and follow ethical guidelines. However, it is critical to understand that, in the context of academic and institutional research situations, these guidelines and ethical protocols are an absolute requirement. Due to the diversity of practices and artistic disciplines, it is challenging to provide a detailed guide to research ethics that can be directly applied to a specific discipline.

In light of the above, I aim to raise awareness on a number of ethical issues relevant in a variety of settings, motivate the individual artist-researcher to actively "transpose" these issues and steps to their own context, and present

* This chapter builds on, and partly includes, material from an earlier chapter on ethics: "Ethics Through an Empathetic Lens" (Hübner 2021a).

a more overarching and integrated approach to acting ethically. Traditionally, research ethics are seen as strongly connected to fields such as medical research and the social sciences, where patients or participants “should be protected from researchers who might be tempted to use any means available to advance the state of knowledge on a given topic” (Denscombe 2014: 306). Essentially, besides ensuring that no one is potentially harmed in any way by the inquiry, the interests of the people who are involved in the research must also be protected. Next to minimising the risk of harm, general principles include protecting anonymity and confidentiality, obtaining informed consent,¹ avoiding deceptive practices, and giving participants the right to withdraw from a project.

I open the chapter with an exploratory journey through the field of research ethics. This includes a general introduction to research ethics from the perspective of the practitioner, elaborating on what the field of research ethics entails and what its general areas of concern are. I largely follow ethnographer Raymond Madden’s (2017) approach to working with the concept of human rights as a guiding principle and address the researcher’s sense of responsible and moral behaviour rather than proposing more or less directive guidelines or predefined notions of what is good or bad. The general introduction is followed by a brief review of principles, codes, and the work of ethics committees and an exploration into Indigenous ethical perspectives and their resonances with artistic research.

The main part of the chapter develops a practical stance towards working with ethics in the context of research projects and their design. Starting with preparatory matters, I explore a few rather practical questions and considerations regarding research ethics and how practitioner-artist-researchers can work with these in practice. From there, I draw on five behaviours as suggested by social scientist Uwe Flick (2018b): *being pushy*, *being ignorant*, *being accurate*, *being fair*, and *being confidential*. In my discussion of these points, I take the specific difficulties into account that emerge due to the often hybrid or multifaceted professional identity of the artist-researcher, who is always practitioner as well and often has to fulfil various roles in relation to participants, collaborators, clients, other parties, and/or contexts.

Progressing from these five behaviours, I propose a step-by-step plan regarding ethics and, following a series of practical examples, move towards the core of the ethical concept offered in this book, which is situated more in the sphere of a mindset (that results in concrete behaviour and ways of acting). I develop a perspective on ethical behaviour that, in my view, is more empathetic, “positive”, and possibly poetic, rather than viewing ethics as an obligation or hindrance. This “positive understanding” of ethics reveals itself as a fully integrated element of one’s behaviour as artist-researcher. The essential ethical stance of this concept is *to do justice to all present human and other-than-human voices*. Ethical awareness should continually remain in one’s thinking and acting as a positive impulse and moral compass that impels

us to care about other human and non-human entities, our surroundings, and our world at large. This stance is closely related to the multispeciesism thinking of Donna Haraway and Karen Barad's ethico-onto-epistem-ology – two important resonances here concerning ways of being ethical in the world.

Ethics and the practitioner – An introduction

At the outset of this chapter, I would like to make a statement of focus: ethics is an extensive field within philosophy, broadly concerned with questions of values and morals, distinguishing between what is good and bad, what is right and wrong. This includes several sub-categories, such as meta-ethics, normative ethics, and applied ethics. The focus of this chapter on research ethics is largely situated within the branch of normative ethics, concerning “questions such as: What kinds of actions are right or wrong? [...] What is the basic matter of moral concern? And what are the fundamental or basic moral truths?” (Copp 2007, 19). However, the stance of this chapter is not so much a philosophical one, *per se*, but a practical one that deals very concretely with the behaviour of researchers, predominantly in relation to other people directly involved in the research but also to human and other-than-human entities in general. How are we behaving, ethically, in light of our relation to others? How can we develop “ethical antennas” (Zilfhout and Wouters 2017) and take care for “being ethical in the world” (Madden 2017, 89)?

One might assume that research ethics plays a smaller role in artistic research than in other research strands, as much of this research centres for a large part around the individual practice of the practitioners, those who, as artist-researchers, also carry out the research and write about it. Obviously, it makes little sense to protect them from themselves, right? On second thought, one might realise that other human and other-than-human entities quite quickly and regularly become involved in one way or another: people working in the context of inquiry or acting as participants; at times it might be the case that these colleague-artists are also one's friends. In fact, relations might start long before the research and continue long after. As the researchers in artistic research are usually also the practitioners, there is no “getting out of the field” in a way that is comparable to traditional anthropology or ethnography; artist-researchers are typically already part of the field and remain there after a research project is finished. This includes the likeliness of having “pre-established friendships – often close friendships – in that field, and it is also probable that such close friendships will shape the researcher's work and influence their positioning within the field” (Taylor 2011, 8). Having said this, it can be problematic when a researcher, next to their own artistic work, only includes work from colleagues she knows very well or is a friend of. To be “wholly beneficial”, a “spectrum” of relationships is important, including a “mix of intimately familiar and unfamiliar informants”; “a mixture of informants acts as a checking mechanism” (Taylor 2011, 15).

Additional relations include the spaces, organisations, institutions, technology, other species, and non-living entities in and with which the researcher works.² Ethically speaking, it is important to understand that as soon as research happens in and through the researcher's field of practice, it is likely that they come close to others and therefore "must consider the ethical dimensions of being close to others" (Madden 2017, 81). These ethical dimensions might include uncertainties, vulnerabilities, discomfort, shame, and/or embarrassment, which need to be noticed, addressed, and/or adequately resolved (Madden 2017, 88).

Additional ethical challenges can emerge exactly *because* it is one's own practice that is subject to investigation and therefore "at stake". Our own practice means a lot to us, as practitioners, and we are potentially ready to make sacrifices for it: artists often practice, rehearse, and edit their own work for countless hours, without considering the notion of overtime, in order to create what they want to create. This is not an ethical problem, per se, but we need to be aware of possible over-enthusiasm that can impact others, such as participants or collaborators, who might feel less deeply involved (see "Being pushy" below).

In many traditional research contexts there is a researcher and a research subject that the researcher is studying: this subject might be a communal context, might consist of people, animals, or machines. What is distinct, in many cases even defining for artistic research, is the hybrid role of the practitioner-researcher,³ an insider – both in practice and in theory – in the area of investigation. Going one step further, often the researcher forms part of the very question that is investigated, or, put differently, investigates part of their own practice. Thus, the researcher is not only the practitioner but the research subject as well.

There are a few questions that emerge from this hybridity of roles: What are the advantages and disadvantages of such a hybrid position as practitioner-researcher? What are the possible ethical issues that could emerge from such hybrid roles? In which ways do practitioner-researchers need to stay aware and awake regarding their role as insiders? And what kinds of behaviours are helpful when dealing with these ethical issues? It is not my intention to establish a rigid insider/outsider dichotomy; however, it needs to be pointed out that practitioner-researchers usually are insiders, and their intimate familiarity with their own practice and its context introduces a number of advantages and challenges that may otherwise be implicit or hidden in some way.

As the practitioner enters her own field of practice in the role of researcher, power relationships with others – who might be institutional superiors, students, colleagues, or friends of the researcher – need to be managed and sometimes re-negotiated in cases where relationships already existed (Costley and Fulton 2019, 87). In general, I agree with Robert Labaree's (2002) observations of the advantages of such an "insider" position, which include greater access, intimate knowledge, and shared experiences that are difficult or

impossible to access as an outsider. Added to this is a deeper understanding of and greater ability to interpret what happens within a particular (artistic) culture and a higher likelihood of strong relationships and ability to build trust, both of which can lead to more depth in reflection and writing.⁴

Naturally, the researcher needs to handle these obvious advantages – including the trust of colleagues and, in some cases, friends – with responsibility and care. An often-cited difficulty is hidden bias, arising from overfamiliarity with the field in which one is moving. This requires a certain “unlearning” of familiarities, attitudes, and values taken for granted in an attempt to “make the familiar unfamiliar” (Taylor 2011, 16). Another challenge is making one’s own position as insider-researcher transparent and explicit, both in writing and reporting as well as in communications with participants and colleagues during the research itself. In order to do this responsibly, musicologist and pedagogue Jodie Taylor has developed a practice in which she makes transcripts and drafts accessible to informants, participants, and others who have been involved prior to submission or publication. This gives the people involved the opportunity to review and react to what has been written about them (Taylor 2011, 16–17).

Principles, codes, committees

Frameworks of ethical guidelines are commonly achieved at universities or other research institutions by means of a procedure in which each research proposal needs to be first approved by an ethics committee. These are often complex and lengthy procedures, sometimes taking weeks or even months before approval to begin the research is granted, and mostly involve an analysis of methods of primary data collection (surveys, observations, or interviews). I have collected a few sets of principles (not exhaustive) from various sources to offer as a kind of “panorama” of various research ethics principles and provide the reader with an overall sense of ethics guidelines and principles. First, social researcher Martyn Denscombe offers several possible scenarios in which it would become necessary for researchers to be assessed by an ethics committee. These include situations of (working with):

- vulnerable groups such as children or patients
- sensitive topics such as illegal behaviour or illness
- deception or research carried out without the informed consent of participants
- confidential information about identifiable individuals
- processes that might cause psychological stress or more than minimal pain
- intrusive interventions (e.g., administration of drugs or vigorous physical exercise that would not be a part of participants’ normal lives)

(Denscombe 2014, 307)

Professor of work and learning Carol Costley and director of postgraduate research John Fulton detail a number of key ethical principles as outlined by the Economic and Social Research Council:

- Research should aim to maximise the benefit for individuals and society and minimise risk and harm.
- The rights and dignity of individuals and groups should be respected at all times.
- Wherever possible, participation should be voluntary, consensual, and appropriately informed.
- Research should be conducted with integrity and transparency.
- Lines of responsibility and accountability should be clearly defined.

(Costley and Fulton 2019, 78)

The World Economic Forum (WEF) Young Scientists' Code of Ethics includes seven ethical principles. While there is overlap with what is already mentioned, three principles are interesting additions: support diversity, be a mentor, and be accountable (World Economic Forum 2018). What stands out here is that these principles do not particularly or primarily focus on avoiding risk or harm but rather aim for a "safe and sound research environment" (WEF 2018, 4). The code suggests a two-way exchange with the public, with the motivating idea that research facilitates social change when its results emerge in a form that the public trusts, not the least because such a mutual exchange has taken place.⁵ The code acknowledges that research bears risks and that researchers are obliged to minimise potential harm to others, despite these risks. Mentoring is an important principle in this code, as it specifically addresses the support of younger, less experienced researchers with the goal of enabling them to do their best work within the research environment and community. Finally, the aspect of accountability introduces the responsibility of the researcher and acknowledges that it is the researcher who needs to make ethical choices and be accountable for them – regardless of the nature of (or the lack of) pre-existing rules.

A last example of a collection of research principles is the New Brunswick Declaration, as compiled by the UK-based Social Research Association (2013). The Association offers different possibilities to engage with ethics, including extensive guides on research ethics, an ethics forum, and the "New Brunswick Declaration" itself, "signed by an international gathering of researchers committed to enhancing ethical research practice" at the 1st Ethics Rupture Summit in New Brunswick, Canada, on 13 February 2013. As does the WEF Young Scientists' *Code of Ethics*, mentioned above, the New Brunswick Declaration acknowledges mentoring and education in ethics, which should be implemented from the ground up in socially embedded settings, "to promote the social reproduction of ethical communities of

practice". The declaration further argues for a regulatory culture in which researchers are granted "the same level of respect that researchers should offer research participants" (both quotes from Social Research Association 2013, n.p.). Alongside the inclusive character of the declaration, its open-ended character – which aims at a variety of academic and research disciplines and includes institutional, coordinating, or systemic aspects of research contexts – is also put forward. This declaration succeeds in keeping references to "avoidance of the negative" (such as the risk of physical or psychological harm) to a minimum and actually focusing on the positive impact of being ethical, in part through using vocabulary like "integrity", "encourage", "committed", and "work together". This creates a much more stimulating and engaging discourse around ethics.

Returning to actual institutional ethics procedures, a good example of how these often-lengthy institutional ethics procedures can be organised more effectively is revealed through the work of the Creativity and Cognition Studios (CCS) at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS). The CCS research group has developed a process based on an application to the ethics committee in order to get a "programme clearance". This application thoroughly describes the group's kinds of research activities (such as interviews, focus groups or surveys), the topics under study, and processes that are followed (such as a template for informed consent or how to anonymise participants). Essentially this concerns transparency, informed consent, and the right for participants to withdraw from participation at any point: from initial data collection to final publication. Once the ethics committee has approved the group's standard operating procedures and methods, the individual project applications can be sent to an internal committee in the group. These applications are much shorter (as they do not need to repeat the overall framework already submitted for the group) with a standard form of just a few pages, which massively expedites this process: from three to four months to a couple of days. Anything that is more complex or more controversial than these standard procedures would be routed through the normal ethics application procedure.⁶

As necessary as ethics committees are, their approval of research subjects can never *guarantee* that a project and all of its discussions are carried out in an ethical way. Ethnographer Raymond Madden remarks that

[w]hile these formal approval processes are indeed about ethics at some level, they are also about managing 'risk' and avoiding the commissioning institution becoming liable to legal action as a consequence of the behaviours or research practices of an employed researcher.

(Madden 2017, 82)

Anthropologist Harry Wolcott extends this critique even further, stating that ethical review boards "turned human research into a bureaucratic nightmare,

a series of steps and procedures designed ultimately to protect only the institutions themselves. [...] Ethics are not housed in such procedures” (Wolcott 2002, 148). According to Wolcott, such procedures “take up the valuable time of others trying to keep them from completely closing down the discovery-oriented approaches qualitative researchers follow” (Wolcott 2002, 148).

As important as the avoidance of institutional risk is, I agree with Madden that most ethical choices are made and carried out quite performatively in the moment, “on the ground” of the research-in-action and by the researchers themselves. Institutional entities indeed have their limitations (see Kara 2018), but beyond that, this book argues for ethically integrated research behaviour and research design processes, for making ethical choices during these processes and during the entire research project, regardless of whether ethical committees or institutional regulations are in place or not. As researchers, we need to act ethically and not lean on institutions and regulations. And although not every researcher might experience ethical committees as negatively as Wolcott does, he offers a perspective which is important to consider here. As an alternative to an institutional perspective, Wolcott says, of his relationship with his informant Brad, “my assurance that I would turn off the tape recorder any time he wanted to go off the record, and that he could read and critique what I had drafted,” was of far more importance to Brad than any approval by an ethics committee (Wolcott 2002, 148). What Wolcott sketches here is not only about consent to an action or situation but also about an actual *relationship* between researcher and an entity. It is about ethical behaviour as providing a safe environment and engendering trust – which goes beyond simply avoiding harm.

The “discovery-oriented approach” Wolcott mentions is also worth considering in the light of artistic research. As discovery and (more or less open) exploration is central to most cases of research in and through artistic practice, how could a committee or review board be able to control everything – in terms of real-time ethical decisions – that emerges along the way? Or, for that matter, how could a researcher herself foresee or organise all ethical eventualities in advance and include this in an application or proposal? There is little alternative, outside of creating the aforementioned bureaucratic and organisational nightmare, to situating the responsibility for and commitment to ethical behaviour on the side of the artist-researcher(s). This is the focus of this chapter: to develop, in Helen Kara’s words, “a series of principles for *continuous* application [and] to develop ethical knowledge and skills, to enable [researchers] to design and conduct research ethically and to manage effectively when inevitable unforeseen ethical difficulties arise” (Kara 2018, 2, my italics).

And this hints at a last approach that I want to emphasise in this section: despite the fact that the approval of an ethics committee has an operative function in many research projects and institutions, the view presented here

is that the researcher constantly needs to be aware and “stay awake” with regard to ethics and act empathetically, be it in the preparatory stage, in the field, or while creating the final account and sharing the research results. This includes aspects of care, taking time, and paying attention to all human and other-than-human entities⁷ in a research project. Kara simply calls this “the real world”, in which “ethical research requires an ongoing and active engagement with people and the environment around us” (Kara 2018, 1). In the same spirit, I take a very practical approach, which is to offer a number of considerations for the artist-researcher to take into account before, during, and after carrying out a research inquiry.

Indigenous ethics and artistic research?

In addition to the situations surrounding ethics committees, I like to bring up another issue: research ethics never exist in isolation but, rather, in the context of a particular time and culture, as Helen Kara (2018) shows by juxtaposing the ethics of the Euro-Western research paradigm with the ethics of Indigenous research paradigms – not to put the two in opposition but to show that “[r]esearch ethics’ is not a single or a universal approach in either paradigm” (Kara 2018, 1). On an integral level, as I will elaborate later, ethics are intimately and inseparably entangled with methodology and the research process, or, as physicist and philosopher Karen Barad puts it, “questions of ethics and justice are always already threaded through the very fabric of the world. [...] Epistemology, ontology, and ethics are inseparable” (Barad in Dolphijn and Van der Tuin 2012, 69). Kara offers a series of principles from the context of Indigenous research ethics.⁸ To give one example, below are the ethical guidelines as conceived by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) (quoted in Kara 2018, 38):

- 1 Recognition of the diversity and uniqueness of peoples, as well as of individuals, is essential.
- 2 The rights of Indigenous peoples to self-determination must be recognised.
- 3 The rights of Indigenous peoples to their intangible heritage must be recognised.
- 4 Rights in the traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions of Indigenous peoples must be respected, protected and maintained.
- 5 Indigenous knowledge, practices and innovations must be respected, protected and maintained.
- 6 Consultation, negotiation and free, prior and informed consent are the foundations for research with or about Indigenous peoples.
- 7 Responsibility for consultation and negotiation is ongoing.
- 8 Consultation and negotiation should achieve mutual understanding about the proposed research.

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- 9 Negotiation should result in a formal agreement for the conduct of a research project.
- 10 Indigenous people have the right to full participation appropriate to their skills and experiences in research projects and processes.
- 11 Indigenous people involved in research, or who may be affected by research, should benefit from, and not be disadvantaged by, the research project.
- 12 Research outcomes should include specific results that respond to the needs and interests of Indigenous people.
- 13 Plans should be agreed for managing the use of, and access to, research results.
- 14 Research reports should include appropriate mechanisms and procedures for reporting on ethical aspects of the research and complying with these guidelines.

Kara's discourse on Indigenous ethics provided a few interesting aspects from, and resonances with, the perspective of artistic research. This concerns understandings of objectivity and subjectivity, collectivity, collaboration, interdependence, trust, and notions regarding what are considered to be eligible (re) sources (such as stories, dreams, songs, dances, or rituals). I propose, carefully, that artistic research ethics has much in common with what Kara includes within the scope of Indigenous ethics. By this, I do not mean to say that artists or artistic researchers share the contexts and knowings, challenges, and oppression of Indigenous cultures or to suggest any form of superficial "unity" between the arts and Indigenous cultures. I write this section rather from a place of fascination regarding the resonances between what Kara refers to as Indigenous ethics and several aspects that I believe are important in artistic research.

The understanding of objectivity and subjectivity seems of obvious importance in a research context. Interestingly, in research conducted by Indigenous scholars, "[t]here is little debate about subjectivity and objectivity; most Indigenous scholars agree that subjectivity is fundamental to, and permeates, Indigenous knowledge" (Kara 2018, 24). Including one's subjectivity in research is understood to be crucial; this makes one's own perspective explicit, which can contribute to transparency concerning one's possible bias, among other aspects. This immediately resonates with the position of the artist within artistic research, where personal subjectivity is always included. Due to the entanglement of the artist with their work, this subjectivity cannot be extracted from the artistic research process, yet, at the same time, it needs to be accompanied by critical reflexivity: making one's own practice and position explicit.

Kara mentions four principles of Indigenous research ethics: relational accountability, communality of knowledge, reciprocity, and benefit sharing

(Kara 2018, 25). Relational accountability recognises that “research happens in relationships with people” (Potts and Brown 2015, quoted in Kara 2018, 25). Kara goes further than Potts and Brown by including a broader perspective: “Those who are in relationship with researchers are not only other living humans, but may also be, for example, animals, ancestors, the land, the cosmos, the research itself, ideas and dreams” (Kara 2018, 25). Community of knowledge acknowledges that “everyone has valuable knowledge to contribute to research” (Kara 2018, 26). Reciprocity, as the term suggests, is concerned with the mutuality of relationships and exchanges. As is the case in relational accountability, these mutual relationships “are not limited to those between people. They include, for example, relationships that people have with the environment” (Kara 2018, 26). Benefit sharing, finally, “means that participants and communities should benefit from research as much as researchers do. Giving back to communities and participants is a central principle of Indigenous research methods” (Kara 2018, 26).

These four principles should be perceived in a holistic fashion: as one multifaceted approach concept rather than four isolated and clear-cut principles. They come from an understanding of research as being embedded and integrated in both one’s personal as well as one’s larger professional life and strongly acknowledge that the researcher is part of the world she is investigating and not positioned outside of it. The ongoing processes of community building and social change within research are strong elements here and work against the conceptualisation of research “as something that exists within time-limited projects” (Kara 2018, 27). Additionally, “the world” is not framed as an assemblage of humans only but includes other-than-humans, the land, one’s dreams and the environment. Multispecies theorist Donna Haraway comes to mind, with her thinking on the decentralised human and the polyphonic intra-active relationships between multiple species, the planet, the living and non-living. I will draw on these notions later in this chapter in my suggestion of ethics as doing right to all human and other-than-human voices – the concept of voices, also, again, in resonance with posthumanist thinking. Additionally, the ensemble of the four principles offers a more open stance towards what might count as eligible (re)sources – away from predominantly text-based and towards the performative, experience-based, or ephemeral – a stance obviously shared with research in and through the arts, where other-than-text-based (re)sources⁹ are often the central media through which the research works.

Preparatory matters

Often, the notion or slogan of “Just do it!” is used “as being the best way of going into the field, finding something new there and developing interesting knowledge from it. [...] However, we should think about how to prepare our

research(ers) carefully for working in the field” (Flick 2018b, 86). Flick observes the tendency of wanting to avoid any overthinking and just sort out any emerging issues “in the moment”, so to speak. He argues from a sociological perspective, but I think it is safe to argue that such notions of “just doing it” are equally – if not even more strongly – present in practice-based research. One should deal with such slogans with extreme caution, as carrying out research activities is generally much more complex than thinking in terms of “just doing” it. The researcher needs to ask herself:

- Do I really know what I am doing and how to do it – also in potentially unexpected situations?
- To which degree am I certain about which, and in which way, people will be affected by me and my work?
- Am I prepared for all kinds of people or events I might encounter in the field and how to deal with them?

Such ethical considerations need to be made throughout an entire project, optimally beginning already in the preparatory and planning phase (including writing proposals). Here most, if not all, decisions about collaborators are made, and one should sketch out a clear approach to acting in the field, guiding participants, and using and interpreting information. In many research contexts, the researcher “typically enter fields in positions of relative power to those of the participants” (Madden 2017, 77). Raymond Madden speaks from the context of ethnography here, but the issue of power is equally relevant in other contexts and disciplines, such as education, health or medical care. In order to avoid taking a position that is too naïve in a particular context, especially in new or unknown contexts, it is important to have access to sufficient knowledge regarding the background and context of the field and groups in which one will be working. If this is uncertain or lacking, one can think in advance about any necessary professional knowledge and possibly ask other professionals to join and support, including during preparation, so as to avoid overlooking anything.

When this approach is applied in a truly integrative way, one also needs to be aware of power structures, and how these power structures emerge and manifest themselves, as well as group politics. This not only concerns how the researcher – the one who holds and facilitates knowledge (such as in case of research dissemination or teaching) – functions and creates systems of knowledge but also how this knowledge is disseminated and by whom it is or could be used. And while this does not immediately seem to so relevant to projects involving one’s individual artistic practice, it can come into play very quickly in institutional contexts (for example, when artistic research might have implications for curricula) or in contexts that touch upon disciplines outside of the arts, such as socially engaged projects, artistic research related to health, and so on.

This is not to suggest that, from the beginning, the researcher is (or could be) able to oversee *all* situations and ethical potentialities at all times and in each and every project. Especially in the often-messy areas of practice it is most likely that unforeseen situations will arise at some point. But, as Costley and Fulton note, this should not mean “that researchers should blindly attempt things, but rather to learn from and use learning experiences to shape the iterative ethical development of the research” (Costley and Fulton 2019, 86). This iterative learning, next to planning prior to and throughout a project’s trajectory, is crucial, also for the researcher’s learning across projects.

Because of the choices that continually – and sometimes unexpectedly – come up in the practice of carrying out research, it is of enormous help if certain issues, ethical or otherwise, have already been considered and thought through from the outset. On the one hand, this means that certain choices are already made in an intentional way and, on the other, it creates a frame of reference from which emergent and unexpected choices can be made with more certainty than if not prepared in an earlier phase.

For better or worse: Five behaviours

In order to both develop an awareness for ethical issues and questions as well as a certain habitual way of acting while carrying out research, I opted to pay attention to a set of five behaviours, as framed by sociologist Uwe Flick (2018b, 90–92). These five behaviours – being pushy, ignorant, accurate, fair, and confidential – signify kinds of behaviours towards other people; some of these behaviours are meant to be pursued, others to be avoided.

Being pushy

Practice, education, and research are all dialogues, consisting of asking people for access: to spaces, information, biographies, stories, observable processes, and so forth. Researchers are not always happy with answers to their questions, the access they have been granted, or the time they have been given and, thus, continue to ask questions. This can be true for varying professions and contexts – think of community artist-researchers, documentary film makers, or journalists – looking for a particular kind of story in their participants. It is important to be aware of and “to develop a feeling for the limits of our participants, [...] when we should stop insisting” (Flick 2018b, 90). This means to respect borders of privacy and intimacy and to be aware of (and grateful for) the time participants take in order to join one’s research process. Integrity also means to remain within the areas of the other person’s life to which we are invited.

Being ignorant

In contrast to moments in which researchers do not get the information they are looking for, there are situations in which participants provide more information than they were asked for or offer unsolicited information and stories. In such moments this information, these stories, should not be ignored, but the researcher should proceed with integrity. This goes for interviews, focus groups, reflective talks with participants, audience talks after events/presentations, and so on. "In this context it is again the balance between working with the participant in a very focused way and taking him or her seriously in what they reflect about the issue beyond what we expected" (Flick 2018b: 90). Regardless of whether the researcher specifically asked for such information or not, this information arose within the context of the research, and the participant might feel the urgency to articulate such stories. When such situations emerge, as researchers we have the responsibility and should have the integrity to follow these emergent stories, take them seriously while also respecting the boundaries of privacy set out in the research.

Being accurate

This behaviour – which entails accuracy and integrity while analysing collected data or experiences – probably speaks the most for itself. It involves reading and re-reading the collected material – information and material offered by others – continuously, in order to stay in touch with it. At the same time, which can be understood as closely connected to research strategy, being accurate involves a thorough appraisal of appropriate methods and instruments for analysis: different kinds of data, experiences, learning, and knowing ask for different kinds of analyses and reflections.

Being fair

It is important to avoid interpretation of data in a way that results in a devaluation of people or objects; in practice, this can happen faster than we expect, especially when our own practices or creations are involved. We need to respect people's intentions and agencies while absorbing and interpreting their statements or actions. This means being as neutral and non-judgmental as possible, particularly in the case of wide discrepancies between data, such as opposite or highly differing experiences by participants of an experiment, for example.

Another risk is over-generalisations, which might result in developing certain stereotypes of people or patterns of behaviour. Especially in practice-based research, which often concerns smaller projects with fewer participants than typical quantitative studies, Bruno Latour's notion to "follow the actors

themselves [...], in order to learn from them what the collective existence has become in their hands" (Latour 2005: 12) might be helpful. To put it differently, I suggest to stay faithful to the divergence among the various participants rather than induce any kind of collective identity through generalisation. A common strategy, if possible, is to return to participants and review, possibly in a debriefing, the correctness of certain interpretations.

Being confidential

In short, confidentiality implies that – to ensure anonymity and privacy – private data will not be reported. A widespread technique is to anonymise information immediately, including the occasions when researchers talk about participants to each other while still in the research process, so that there is no risk of making people or places recognisable. However, this might be difficult in certain contexts, with small and easily recognisable groups, or situations in which participants want or *need* to be credited. At the end of this chapter, referring to a case study of a project I was involved in, I will discuss the artistic ownership of participants in a transdisciplinary research project in which a group of artists worked with a group of children coping with absence seizures, a light form of epilepsy. During the project the youngsters became co-creators of the artistic works, and we as team were confronted with an ethical dilemma: anonymise them as patients or credit them as co-creators?

Proposition: A step-by-step plan regarding ethics

I end this chapter by offering a concrete set of steps that the researcher might consult or internalise. This is certainly not meant as a set of fixed rules but as a set of guidelines and thoughts which the practitioner-researcher can use to think around potential issues; they are, therefore, offered in the form of questions. It is offered as a practical list that can be consulted repeatedly during the various phases of a project.

Please note that these steps are relevant in all phases of a project, from initial planning and preparation through the carrying out of the research field work and all the way to the final delivery and possible closing discussions. The researcher should constantly go through these steps, reflect, and seek to develop an "integrated" behaviour or habit of being intuitively and constantly aware of these aspects. Action researcher and Professor Emerita in Learning and Leadership Judi Marshall offers the notion of "holding things lightly" (see Marshall 2016, 19, 31, 54), which can be of help here. I do not intend to convey that the researcher should regularly carry out a full ethical scan but, rather, go through the list of questions in a light way, regularly taking a few minutes to review and revisit one's ethical choices (or the ethical

consequences of one's choices), who is involved, and what kinds of action might need to be taken to respond to changes in the project or emerging insights concerning ethics.

The questions offered here are not meant to be implemented as a linear step-by-step plan but as a series of questions the researcher needs to ask herself. Although the questions are written in a loose timeline-oriented structure, they can certainly be reorganised depending on the project at hand. They are written from the first-person perspective of the researcher:

- In which way does my/our work involve others?
- What is the background and context in which I am/we are working, including people, spaces, ethnicities or other groups, objects, and processes?
- Which knowledge from other professions/professionals might be necessary or helpful to consider?
- Which people are affected by my/our work, and in which possible way(s)?
- How do I/we make sure that human and non-human entities (people, places, and objects)¹⁰ are not affected in a negative way? What are possible strategies and concrete measures to protect them?
- How can I/we avoid pushy or ignorant behaviour?
- How do I/we safeguard acting in a way that is accurate, fair, and confidential?
- Have I/we made sure that all participants know what they are participating in, including possible consequences, and have they given informed consent?
- In which way might this work have impact on me/us as practitioner-researcher-person(s)? Am I/Are we proceeding in a way that recognises the need for self-care and well-being (be it physical, emotional or mental)? If necessary, is there a colleague or supervisor on my team who can support me with sufficient expertise?

Following these steps does not, however, guarantee that a research trajectory will proceed without any ethical issues, challenges, or difficult choices. Various publications on ethics suggest different ways – ranging from very rigid to rather loose – to work with ethical challenges. Madden, for example, suggests a three-step order of “ethical priorities”, based on “issues of doing what is right by one's participants [...], doing what is right by oneself [...], and doing what is right by the discipline” (Madden 2017, 87). Essential in this is that Madden places participants at the top of priorities, which should make hard decisions more apparent in many cases (though not necessarily less difficult to actually make, as this might mean to decide against other stakeholders, one's institution, or a previously agreed timeline). Madden refers to the discipline of ethnography, but his argument is valid for other disciplines as well, which brings me to an example coming from the visual arts world that shows how ethical agreements can work, even implicitly, within a specific discipline.

Example one: A long list for the visual arts

One of the points brought up by several authors is that ethical standards are usually not clear cut, are not implemented as strictly as the law, and remain open to interpretation and choices by the researcher-practitioner, who is responsible for her own ethical behaviour and decisions. In this respect it is important to note that ethical principles are not the same in different areas or fields; different disciplines and professions have different views on ethics and ethical practices. As Costley and Fulton put it, it is “important to emphasise that many professions have a code of practice, and that this is something which should shape and guide our actions” (Costley and Fulton 2019, 86). And, indeed, what makes the field here so interesting, in terms of ethical principles, is that two understandings, or discourses, meet: Ethics within the arts and artistic practice and what is generally understood as “research ethics”.

Visual artist and software programmer for artists Karen Atkinson offers a perspective on ethics from the perspective of the (visual) arts in her text “Ethics for Artists” (2017 [2011]), where she discusses a number of attitudes, behaviours, and principles that, she asserts, are either important to take on, or necessary to avoid. Atkinson refers to the actual *artistic* discipline and the core practices of making work – presenting the work in places such as galleries and selling it as artwork – so it is not *research* ethics she is concerned with. That being said, I think it is interesting to look at this example in the context of what might be called “disciplinary ethics” or “discipline-specific ethics” – an ethical code of conduct specific to a certain discipline. And Atkinson is not alone in thinking that such a code in the visual arts world is necessary and important, as Patricia Maloney and Kara Q. Smith (executive director and editor-in-chief of the online arts magazine *Art Practical*) also point out in their 2015 Op-ed column that “no real shared code exists [...] [f]or practitioners in the contemporary art world”.¹¹ They clearly argue for the necessity of such a code, particularly as concerns fair practices in the industry.

Atkinson lists a number of ethical behaviours specific to the context of the visual arts world. Some of these points might sound entirely self-evident, raising the question as to why one would include them in such a list. But the fact that Atkinson mentions them suggests that they might not be as obvious as they seem and that what happens in daily practice often comes close to violating these “ethics for artists”. Another aspect to consider is these rules are generally understood to be implicit (and not explicitly written down, as Atkinson has done), either taught by mentors, teachers, or supervisors or learned through (bad) experience over the course of a (young) artist’s education and/or career:

- Treat colleagues (including curators, galleries, and funders) with respect.
- Don’t keep information to yourself – share it.
- Don’t be selfish.

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- Don't tread on other artists' spaces.¹²
- Follow the agreements you make – all of them.
- Consider how to leave a gallery (with dignity and respect). (Particularly interesting here are the various reasons one might want to leave a gallery, as they all have a close relationship to ethics, responsibility, and moral commitment.)
- Think carefully about galleries that tell you what to make. Carefully consider any decision to go into production as a commercial artist, as this may decrease the value of important work.
- Making work that closely resembles or imitates someone else's is unethical.
- Don't steal other people's ideas.
- Give back – donate parts of the sales from your work to non-profit organisations who might have supported your career in its early stages, thus making it possible for other young artists to be supported as well.
- Do what you say you are going to do.
- Do not talk shit (about other people).
- Be professional (for example, don't be late or get drunk at your own opening).
- In cases of criticism and rejection, always try to get feedback on your proposals.
- Avoid deception at all times.
- Always be respectful of private and public property when utilising it as an area for your work; consider how your work will affect others in the community.
- Don't take advantage of others.
- Consider the privacy of other persons before you show them in your artwork in any way.
- Take the safety of your audience into account.
- Be thankful to those who support you, regardless of the nature of their support.
- Be considerate and thoughtful when you ask others for recommendation letters.

It is important to realise that in an art practice, ethical issues such as stolen concepts or techniques or unacceptable behaviour towards other artists or organisations are not always as easily recognisable as one might think. Power structures and differences in authority can often serve as a smokescreen, such as when – as in an example Atkinson offers – artists of great reputation copy the work of students, unknown and potentially even unaware that this copying has taken place. In light of the above, I think that Atkinson's list, with examples, offers both a helpful compass to young(er) artists entering the field as well as good reminders for more experienced professionals. Also, many of her points are transferrable to other artistic disciplines.

Example two: The ethics of telling other people's stories

Be respectful.
Think about the others.
It's about being a decent human being.¹³

Writing about other people is a part of many forms of research, including practice-based forms. Anna Derrig,¹⁴ researcher and tutor on life writing and ethics, offers a number of thoughts on how different forms of writing (scholarly and non-scholarly, which might consist of interview reports or memoirs and might include non-textual elements, such as photographs or moving images) raise a number of moral and ethical questions, questions of responsibility and agency (for more questions on ethics: ↗ Appendix: Designing through questions, p. 159):

- What might be the possible negative consequences for anyone participating in a research (or writing) project?
- How does telling someone else's story and using someone else's material and life impact this person's future?
- In how far and to what degree do participants actually have the capacity to oversee all possible consequences and give *fully* informed consent?
- As the final phase of a project or publication approaches: Has the researcher or writer gone back and checked with everybody regarding welfare and results that will be made public?
- Does anonymisation actually help when the community context is very small? What are the possible alternatives to ensure the privacy of participants?
- Using other people is not good: What's in it for them?

Derrig offers a powerful example concerning writing about others and ethical considerations in life writing, which she explains in her lecture "Other People's Stories": "Our stories are our most precious possessions. They are our identity. Getting them wrong, misusing them can cause real hurt and harm" (Derrig 2016). This touches on certain work in practice-based research as well, as researchers are also creating narratives – telling stories – within the contexts in which they are working and conducting research, including talking and writing about others in one way or another.

For Derrig, the issue of consent is one of the central questions when considering the ethics of life writing. This resonates with many discussions on research ethics. For example, Costley and Fulton point out that the

consent of participants must be gained and information may need to be made accessible, thereby ensuring that participants can provide informed consent. This is paramount and should never be viewed as an extra step to be taken, but as an integral part of the research process.

(Costley and Fulton 2019, 88)

However, regardless of the researcher's effort to provide this fully informed consent, the question remains: "Can [...] any of us truly consent to our story being told" (Derrig 2016)? As with other aspects of ethics, the responsibility lies with the researcher; she needs to ask herself, "How do I manage my obligations to truth and to the person concerned" (Derrig 2016)?¹⁵ In her research of "intimate insiderness", mentioned above, Jodie Taylor demonstrates that receiving consent alone will not necessarily guarantee that one behaves ethically:

Looking back over my interview transcriptions, in each one I see occasions where I have inserted "[off the record]" [...] not [...] because my informant explicitly said so, but because I understood implicitly that what they were telling me here was not as a researcher but as a friend and therefore – it felt to me – unethical to transcribe this statement for future analysis.

(Taylor 2011, 14)

It is crucial to understand that the decision to exclude specific parts of the conversation – keeping them "off the record" – is not due to regulations or lack of consent on the side of the interviewees but because of careful and empathic consideration by the researcher. Taylor refers here to settings in which her interviewees are also friends, but the example she gives is also applicable to practice-based research settings.

Example three: Concerning anonymisation and ethical paradox

The last example – about anonymisation of participants – highlights how emerging ethical questions might affect a project in process.¹⁶ This case study concerns the work and creative process of a group of artists in a transdisciplinary research project between medicine, neuroscience, and interdisciplinary arts. Nine artists from different artistic disciplines work in collaboration with a group of eight young people between eight and twenty-eight years old.

The aim of the project "If you are not there, where are you?" (IYANTWAY) is to find a language for the often-frightening and misunderstood experiences that children have during absence seizures. Science and art interweave in an experiment that aims to make the invisible experience visible, audible, and experienceable. Alone or in duos, the artists worked with the youngsters on artistic utterances (music, paintings, interactive installations, and so on) that align with the experience before, during, or after a seizure and attempt to do justice to the multimodal nature of the experiences. The participating neurologists were mainly present to inform the artists at the beginning of the project as well as during presentations but did not interfere with the co-creative process between artists and participants. The outcomes provided the young people with alternative ways to communicate with the world about their disease – through image, sound, and experience rather than language alone.

Clearly, this project sparks ethical questions on various levels. First of all, we are working with young people, some of them children who suffer from an illness that is not openly shared in many situations or contexts (such as the classroom). Furthermore, the children were filmed in a variety of situations, and this footage has been used for a research film. In the final phase of the project, all material may potentially be used for the final documentary film (of which our research forms just one part). Of course, all of these activities took place with the consent of either the participants or, in the case of the younger participants, their parents. The issue presented here is thus not about the legality of the use of the material but the ethical considerations that arose.

A crucial emergent aspect of the project – observed by all artist-researchers in the project – was the considerably heightened sense of ownership on the side of the participants that came into being during the process of co-creating the artistic works, up to the point of co-creatorship. The shared ownership was not a planned outcome, but emerged through the work itself. Because of this emerging co-creatorship, the ethical practice of anonymising became an issue. From a traditional ethical perspective, patients and participants – as a vulnerable group – should always be anonymised. However, from a perspective of ethical practices in the arts, it would certainly be unethical to anonymise co-authors of a work.

The final decision has been to “fully acknowledge the ownership and artistry of the participants, maintaining their names, their stories, and the connection between both” (Hübner 2017a, 212–213). This is an affirmation of artistic ethical practices but at the same time does not defy traditional aspects of research ethics. Indeed, my final argument in this case study is that through making this decision, we not only prevent harm – one of the traditional values of research ethics – but also use this decision-making process to empower the participants.

Towards a “positive” approach

As the previous three examples have shown, often when ethics in research is discussed, a substantial part of the conversation (and the literature) suggests what “not to do” or “to avoid”. Parts in this chapter up to this point have done so as well: The five behaviours from Flick include attitudes to avoid: being pushy, being ignorant, devaluating, or over-generalising.

To be clear, I do not seek to discredit such “stances of avoidance”, as certain behaviours and situations definitely need to be identified and avoided, with great care, and this cannot be taken lightly. However, in the reality of research practice many grey areas can emerge, situations where standpoints are not so clear anymore and decisions regarding doing no harm become more complicated to make. Anthropologist Harry Wolcott provides a

fascinating and challenging example with his account of his friendship and intimate relationship with a young man who is also his informant. He reflects:

[T]he case illustrates the need to be accurate and compassionate in reporting, and modest in claims of what we have accomplished and what we understand. I was tempted to fall back on the old [saying] ‘First do no harm,’ but that would be a cop-out, for I do not believe one can do this kind of research at all without there being risk, if only by having attended to some things and ignored others. Even studies intended to paint a glowing picture can inadvertently produce stress among other groups equally deserving but not chosen.

(Wolcott 2002, 143)

Next to Wolcott’s argument that it is actually close to impossible to avoid risk – certainly when a researcher tries to account for all aspects and contingencies of their study – I sense another aspect. From a practical standpoint, I feel empathy for practitioner-researchers who experience thinking about ethics as a hindrance, who have the impression that they need to take precautions for all kinds of hypothetical situations they would otherwise not even think about. I think this feeling of hindrance is unnecessary and that, instead, ethics should play a part of our continuous thinking and acting as an *integrated* moral compass that helps us act in a caring manner towards humans and other-than-humans, our surroundings and our world at large, in a responsible and positive way.

Towards the end of this chapter, I would like to propose a view, or a perspective, on ethical behaviour that I feel is slightly more empathetic, positive, and possibly poetic, rather than viewing ethics as a hindrance, a list of strict rules including negatives (what one must *not* do, such as “do not harm”). In short, what I am suggesting is to *listen¹⁷ to and to do right to all present human and other-than-human voices*. The idea of using “voices” as a metaphor builds on the work of playwright and research professor Nirav Christophe and his work on co-creation in the performing arts as well as the different (internal and external) voices in complex situations of collaboration.¹⁸

Different kinds of questions might be evoked by thinking about ethics in this way. How can we work in a way that does justice to all voices that are present? If we think about the voices involved in a project or in a certain situation, experiment, or conversation, which ones might run the risk of being overwhelmed by others? Which voices have the risk of becoming marginalised and thus need to be taken care of more than others? Where are our own potential blind spots in terms of ethics? This concerns issues and dimensions of power as well (see Marshall 2011, 248), as giving space to the diverse voices in the area of inquiry is especially relevant in contexts in which voices of different hierarchies and power dynamics are present or when certain voices tend to dominate the discussion.

In the case of the project IYANTWAY, mentioned above, this notion of listening to the present voices – particularly the voices of the participants, their stories and creative impulses – clearly led to becoming aware of a heightened sense of ownership by the participants of the project, which led to the relationship of becoming co-creators of the artistic works and being publicised as such.¹⁹ The voices present in this kind of work were diverse: those of the patients/participants, their parents (when relevant), the spaces in which our conversations took place, the various materials the participants shared with us, and the professional experience held within all participating artists and doctors as well as the enveloping institutions. Karen Atkinson’s list can also be considered from this perspective, with a multitude of different voices to pay attention to, such as colleagues, agreements made, other people’s ideas, private or public property, audiences, or one’s own promises. Finally, the opening quote by Anna Derrig in the section on the ethics of telling other people’s stories also accentuates this point: holding the voices of these stories as precious possessions. Looking back on the example of life writing, it is not so much the question of what to cautiously *avoid* in writing, what *not to do* but, rather, to offer the stories of other persons with respect and empathy – which can be both inspiring in itself as well as sparking creative writing.

I do not mean to say that these points essentially change the arguments for ethics made within other literature or that the necessity for ethics or an ethical stance, or even the concrete choices regarding ethics, will necessarily shift. My hope here is for a shift in the researcher’s perspective and inner attitude towards ethics. That the researcher perceives ethical behaviour not as an obligation or hindrance but as an invitation to develop and practice empathy, thinking about and being aware of others. I am sure that the many texts, narratives, and conversation on ethics are *meant* in this or a similar way, but my point here is that they are far too often perceived differently. In relation to this, I close this chapter with a final quote from Jodie Taylor, who reminds us that – regardless of the information on ethics and various examples of ethical guidelines that are designed to help the practitioner-researcher make informed choices and decisions – it remains important to “not only think but also feel our way empathetically in the field” (2011, 19).

Notes

- 1 Informed consent is particularly important in cases where researchers work with young people or marginalised groups: “Prior to interviewing people, whether formally or informally, you must be explicit concerning what your research project is about, the expected outcomes, and any possible risks (or benefits) to participants. Your participants must voluntarily choose to be part of your project and must be deemed capable of making this informed decision” (Swanson, quoted in Ward 2020, 65).
- 2 See, for example, Solomon and Baio (2022).
- 3 I follow Robin Nelson (2013, 90) in my use of a hyphenated term – practitioner-researcher, artist-scholar, and so on – to signify the hybrid roles of professionals.

- 4 One difference to consider between the described insider perspective by Labaree and the context of practice-based research is that most of the researchers-as-insiders who Labaree is describing are still “looking at” a particular situation, process, culture, or community, albeit from the perspective of an insider rather than an outsider. In practice-based research this insiderness is of a slightly different nature: (individual or collective) practice is both the object of as well as the tool for inquiry. Therefore, it is not only a process of looking at but also working with as well as inquiring in and through. And this is, so I argue, only possible through an insider perspective, because the questions actually emerge from the (insider) practice under study. The researcher is not entering the field as an observer but as a member-practitioner. She never looks at a situation from outside but is intrinsically part of this situation – experiencing it from inside.
- 5 The focus on trust between research and public resonates with philosopher Isabelle Stengers, who argues for a “public intelligence of the sciences” (Stengers 2018, 2) and the need for “connoisseurs”: “A cultivated science should produce not only specialists but also connoisseurs, as is the case in sport, music or software production, i.e., in domains where producers know that they have to take into account the existence of people who are able to evaluate the products, assess the kind of information they are given, discuss its relevance, and differentiate between mere propaganda and calculated risk. For specialists, the existence of such connoisseurs, or amateurs, creates a demanding environment, which obliges them to maintain a ‘cultivated’ relationship with whatever they are proposing – they know the danger of skipping over the weak points, because the people they are addressing will pay just as much attention to whatever is neglected or omitted as to what is asserted” (Stengers 2018, 7–8). What Stengers points out here is that connoisseurs provide a critical mass of those who are both genuinely interested in what kind of knowledge is produced as well as in critically evaluating it from a non-professional perspective. This is what creates a healthy environment for trust and mutuality.
- 6 I would like to thank Andrew Johnston for sharing information on this work and process. I should note that this process works in large part because the activities of the group are at a relatively low risk, ethically speaking (which also resonates with most artistic research projects): In most cases, this simply involves participants talking about their experiences while engaging with technology, artworks, or installations. Another element to keep in mind is that this process is based on trust: the institution’s ethics committee provides trust to the research group, who respond to this trust with integrity, responsibility, and care.
- 7 Regarding the notion of human and other-than-human entities, see the next Chapter, ↗ “Entities”, p. 70.
- 8 Kara highlights the multiplicity of the term “Indigenous”, emphasising that Indigenous peoples are certainly not a homogenous group. While it is obviously a difficult, contested term, Kara uses it “to mean peoples native to lands that have been colonised by settlers from other nations” and to “reflect the global aspect” of this work (Kara 2018, 10).
- 9 With “text-based” I mean predominantly reflective or academic use of text. Obviously, forms of artistic writing from playwrights, poets, and so on, are artistic practices in themselves.
- 10 See the next chapter, ↗ “Entities”, p. 70, for a more in-depth discussion of entities as an element of crafting research methods.
- 11 Maloney, P. & Smith, K.Q. (2015). “Is it possible to create a code of ethics for the arts?” *Art Practical Online*. Retrieved from <https://www.artpractical.com/column/is-it-possible-to-create-a-code-of-ethics-for-the-arts/>, 4 September 2020.

- 12 This point refers to “invading” other artists’ spaces, during their exposition, for example, in order to talk about one’s own work or invite curators to one’s own studio rather than actually paying attention to the others’ work and allowing the space and time of that exposition to be for and about them.
- 13 Anna Derrig in an online conversation with Falk Hübner, 4 September 2020.
- 14 My sincere thanks to Anna Derrig for this in-depth conversation with me, sharing her thoughts about the ethics of life writing for the purpose of this publication. The ideas and issues mentioned here are largely based on this conversation and a lecture Derrig gave on the BBC (Derrig 2020), without which this section would not have been possible.
- 15 It is interesting in this context to look at the etymology of “consent”: The term comes from Latin and combines the syllables “con” – meaning “with, together” – and “sent” – originating in “sentire”, meaning “to feel”. The two meanings combine into “to feel with”, which resonates with the notion of empathy and response-ability of the researcher.
- 16 I have written about this case study in greater length in Hübner 2017a.
- 17 The notion of “listening” is to be understood not only in terms of sounds but also in a multimodal sense: listening as paying attention with all the senses.
- 18 See Christophe (2017). Such voices can be the voices of collaborators, participants, or commissioning parties but also inner voices, such as the voice of one’s own imagination, experience, inner critic, or reflection.
- 19 For a more in-depth account of the aspect of heightened ownership in this project, see Hübner 2017b.

3

IN THE CENTRE OF THE ORBITS – CRAFTING METHODS*

Introduction

I first turn to methods, understood as concrete research actions. Method is the inner circle of the Common Ground model, as well as the core of the method–strategy–methodology scheme presented earlier. I have chosen to work “from the inside out” – to frame methods as the smallest entity of research methodology – before proceeding to the surrounding level of research strategy or overall design, covered in Chapter 4. Method, in my experience, interests students and beginning researchers the most, as it is the level at which *doing* takes place.

The core of this chapter develops the Crafting Methods framework from the design model, created to develop methods from scratch rather than using methods which are predefined by discipline, convention, or tradition. The chapter opens with an exploration of how methods are generally understood and defined in different research contexts, the function of methods, and what the criteria are for methods in various disciplines – such as social sciences, philosophy, and natural sciences. As will be made clear, there are not many clear-cut criteria as to what a method is or entails. In most publications on research methods and methodology, the framing of what a method is either implicit or discussed on the concrete level – through providing examples of research methods – rather than a definitional, generative, or overarching level. This chapter proposes a reframing of what a method is and what constitutes a method.

* Parts of this chapter have been published or are further developed or revised versions of Hübner 2021b.

Situating method

Before focusing on the concept of Crafting Methods, I will briefly revisit several notions, understandings, and examples of what a research method could be in order to contextualise and situate the approach I offer in this chapter. This builds on the more generic framing of methods described earlier (☞ section “Method”, p. 32).

Admittedly, offering only a few paragraphs to help the reader differentiate between natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities does not properly reflect the rich histories, traditions, and subtle developments of their paradigms. At the same time, the full content offered by a wealth of publications committed to these paradigms and their differences does not need to be repeated here. In order to offer a basic sense of the demands placed on methods in these different traditions, I draw upon artistic research theorist Henk Borgdorff’s brief overview on methodological orientations in mainstream scholarship. He divides academic scholarship into three methodological domains and their associated methods. Firstly, the natural sciences have an empirical-deductive orientation; they utilise experimental methods designed to explain phenomena. Laboratory settings and experiments are characteristics of this kind of research. Secondly, the social sciences are also empirically oriented, but their methods are primarily designed to describe and analyse (quantitative and qualitative) data. Participant observation is a characteristic method for the disciplines of ethnography and social anthropology, and it is here where several resonances with research in the arts can be found. Finally, the humanities are generally more analytically than empirically oriented and focus more on interpretation than on description or explanation. Characteristic forms of research in the humanities are historiography, philosophical reflection, or cultural criticism (Borgdorff 2012, 51–52).

In artistic research, methods rooted in the researcher’s own artistic practice typically form the core of the repertoire of research methods. These might include, and are not limited to, some of the methods listed here (list after Vanmaele 2017):

- making art/design work
- observation and drawing (in all forms)
- sketchbook/notebook, idiosyncratic notation
- visual diaries/self-reflection/personal narrative
- critical writing
- photography, video, sound
- models/maquettes, experimentation with materials
- concept mapping, diagrams
- use of metaphor and analogy
- organisational and analytical matrices, flow charts

- story boards
- multimedia/hypermedia applications
- modelling/simulations, soft systems
- electronic databases, visual and textual glossaries and archives

On top of, or next to, such a repertoire of methods derived from individual artistic practice, practitioner-researchers or artistic researchers commonly extend this repertoire with social science methods, such as case studies, participant observation, interviews, or questionnaires/surveys. However, none of these methods provide a more generic understanding of what a method *actually is* or what defines an activity in order for it be considered a research method within a certain field or for a specific peer group. What, then, constitutes a research method? This “meta-question”, which is of crucial concern here, is hard to answer by turning to literature and theory.

The Cambridge dictionary defines a research method as “a particular way of studying something in order to discover new information about it or understand it better”. An example given is that: “[a] focus group is a research method that’s typically used to understand a consumer’s reaction to a product or service”.¹ However, most publications on research methods and methodology proceed from an implicit understanding of what a method is. In several instances the literature answers the question of what a research method is on the concrete level of providing examples of research methods (often presented in the form of lists in a table of contents that are worked out further in small sub-chapters that cover the different methods in greater detail) rather than on a definitional, generative, or overarching level. The reason for this is not entirely clear to me, but it is possible that the general goal of discovering new information or answering specific research questions is considered sufficient for framing a research activity as a method.² Perhaps in the more established methodologies there is enough consensus about the body of available methods that a reflective conversation about what constitutes a method as such is not considered necessary. However, in the field of artistic research, where diverse practices often call for newly invented or emerging methods, it makes sense to conceptualise methods using a framework that is flexible and provides a guideline for conceiving “new” methods, adapted to the practice at hand. This still leaves us with a set of questions to answer, such as: What “particular way of studying” qualifies as something that could be called a method? What are the criteria that would determine if an activity could be called a method or not? And, finally: What is it that constitutes what is described as a “particular way of studying”?

This chapter aims to offer a response to these questions and also reply to (beginning) researchers’ questions regarding what they need to consider when designing their research methods. Within this chapter, I suggest a re-framing of what constitutes a method, not seeking to achieve a strict definition or even

needing to include a means of data collection but moving towards a flexible network of entities, activities, documentation, forms of reflection, and learning/experiencing/knowing.

Rethinking method

Inspired by artist and philosopher Erin Manning's "Against Method" (2015), the initial impetus for the concept of Crafting Methods was resistance: against "method" as something predefined in terms of procedure, participants/actors, and outcomes shaped by tradition. Crafting Methods proposes that methods can be devised "from scratch", from the experience and reality of playing and making. Manning argues against looking at methods with the assumption of a (more or less) known standard repertoire of research actions that lead to a (more or less) solid form of knowledge, especially knowledge in the mode of language or written text. She argues for "acknowledging that non-linguistic practices are forms of knowledge in their own right" (Manning 2015, 66). This includes embracing the difficulty inherent in assessing and evaluating those extralinguistic forms of knowledge. Instead of choosing methods from a "pool" or repertoire, my proposition here is to let methods emerge in and through practice, radically oriented to the specific research subject and question(s) at hand.

This approach seems to work against the notion of relying upon a list of possible methods or a catalogue, as presented above (in the list after Vanmaele) or as included in Badura, Dubach, and Haarmann's *Handbuch Künstlerische Forschung (Handbook for Artistic Research, 2016)* mentioned in the Introduction. Taken further, this would certainly impact one's pedagogical approach for teaching research methods: If predefined methods and research actions are less applicable anyway, why would one offer a more or less standardised set of methods (e.g., interviews, observation, focus groups, interventions) to students who need to learn how to design and conduct research? In my own teaching I opt against presenting such a catalogue to students and explaining these methods in detail. Rather, I ask students to get to work as quickly as possible and encourage them to start designing their research projects. The core of this chapter will be devoted to a number of categories that I have developed for students to work with that provide just enough direction and guidance.

It is important to mention that I do not reject lists of methods – or "practices", as they are called in the *Handbuch Künstlerische Forschung*.³ In fact, I find it quite interesting and inspiring to study the chapters exploring the different practices in the *Handbuch*. The key lies in how I see these methods: not so much as recipes that need to be followed (nor do I believe they are intended as such) but rather as case studies of practices that others have used, which might inform researchers' "thinking repertoire" when designing research strategies or when teaching research design to students.

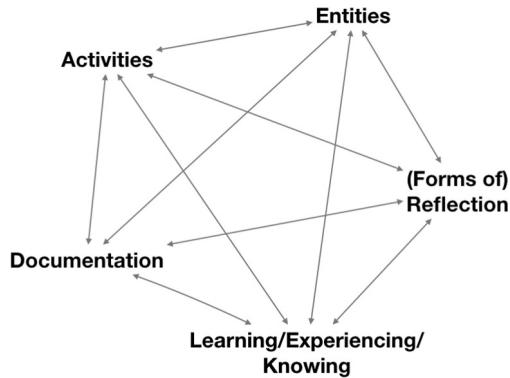


FIGURE 3.1 The network of Crafting Methods.

As a point of departure: a method is a means of inquiry that addresses a research question and contributes to its exploration with the potential of providing (partial) answers to it.⁴ I suggest re-framing our conceptualisation of method to the form of a fluid and flexible network consisting of five elements (see Figure 3.1): Entities, Activities, Documentation, (Forms of) Reflection, and Learning/Experiencing/Knowing.

Entities

The first element of the Crafting Methods framework concerns human and non-human *entities*. Entities is the term I use for those aspects that are most central to crafting a method and indispensable for every research activity. It is entities, either human or other-than-human, that carry out a method and play an active or passive role in it.

Entities are thus most closely connected to the element Activities (discussed in the following section). The determining questions for understanding entities are: who or what is involved in what way and in what kind of role or function? In practice-based and artistic research in general, a crucial entity is the practitioner-researcher herself. Other entities can be, in no particular order and not restricted to these examples:

- authors of literature or the texts themselves
- spaces or locations in which practice takes place, such as classrooms, rehearsal spaces for musicians or theatre practitioners, homes for the elderly, and so on (remembering it is important to be very specific about spaces in order to convey a precise idea about how they function as entities of a research activity)
- interviewees or other types of conversation partners
- musical instruments

- a Virtual Reality installation
- members/participants of group conversations or group activities
- craft tools or other kinds of objects used by practitioners

In their design, the researcher determines who and what the important and necessary entities are within a method (and within the entire research strategy) and what their function is, might be, or might become. Within this function (or functions) it is again the researcher who assigns hierarchies, relevance, and modes of acting or non-acting to the various entities. Choosing entities and structuring them has an ethical dimension as well, as it involves the seemingly simple question of what or who to include and exclude. In light of this, the researcher should be aware of their position and aim for an ethically sound “collection of entities”, taking care to include a variety of voices that matter within their research topic.

One should aim to describe, frame, or map all entities involved in a method in a thorough manner, not because of a misguided ambition to be “complete” but in order to achieve a realistic and tangible idea of who and what will be involved and in what ways. This process of describing and framing will often also generate new ideas, associations, and questions that can further enrich the method itself, the research questions, and the overall design.⁵ In terms of ethical behaviour, the researcher should keep in mind the necessity of what researcher and writer Helen Kara calls “[c]ultural competence” (Kara 2018, 74) and cultivate a practice of being neither naïve nor hasty in framing their ideas. A research practice that is ethical in one context may be unethical or harmful in another. What matters, in terms of ethical practice, is that behaviour is adjusted to the particular context the researcher works in, with regard to the human and other-than-human entities that are a part of that context. As a researcher, one needs to learn “about the ways of life or cultural sensitivities” (Kara 2018, 74) of the people one wants to work with, within the existing contexts, in order to optimise a collaboration.

The concept of “entities” is a synthesis of two distinct yet related theoretical notions: the human and non-human actors – as presented by Bruno Latour (2005) in the context of Actor Network Theory (ANT) – and the objects of Graham Harman’s (2016) and others’ Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO). In terms of the inclusion of both human and non-human entities, Latour writes:

objects do [not do] things ‘instead’ of human actors: it [ANT] simply says that no science of the social can even begin if the question of who and what participates in the action is not first of all thoroughly explored, even though it might mean letting elements in which, for lack of a better term, we would call non-humans.

(Latour 2005: 72)

Harman offers a few additions to Latour's and ANT's flat ontology insofar as he does not restrict objects to their acting or actions.⁶ It is important not to misunderstand the opening towards non-human or other-than-human entities as a negation of the human, as Harman notes:

Yet it is often wrongly assumed that OOO, with its focus on objects, must reach those objects by expelling or exterminating humans. [...] The point is not to *subtract* humans from any given situation, but to focus on the way that humans are themselves ingredients in a symbiosis rather than just privileged observers looking on from the outside. We must remember that humans themselves are objects [...].

(Harman 2016, 54, italics in original)

This resonates with a similar clarification regarding the relationship of posthumanism to humanism and *ant*humanism, as pointed out by theorist Karen Barad:

Refusing the anthropocentrism of humanism and antihumanism, *post-humanism* marks the practice of accounting for the boundary-making practices by which the 'human' and its others are differentially delineated and defined. [...] Posthumanism, as I intend it here, is not calibrated to the human; on the contrary, it is about taking issue with human exceptionalism while being accountable for the role we play in the differential constitution and differential positioning of the human among other creatures (both living and nonliving).

(Barad 2007, 136, italics in original)

The crucial argument here is that both humanism and antihumanism still position the human as a pivotal entity among others. Neither Harman's OOO nor Barad's posthumanism argue for or against such a position of the human but rather position the human in a *network* of living and nonliving entities and not at the centre.

Objects are also accounted for if they are passive, or mere "informants". Entities, in the model offered here, like Harman's objects, can have various functions in varying degrees of being (or not being) active, as long as they have a meaningful function in a method. A crafted method might include active entities alongside less active or passive ones, entities that Harman calls "dormant objects". "A dormant object is one that is present but without effect on other objects, or at least not yet" (Harman 2016, 64). Here the potentiality for a dormant object to become influential or active at a later point is of interest, as might be the case with an inactive entity within a research method. This is also a reminder that less active entities are never less important – they just have a different function and play a different role, which may potentially change or be open to review.

The design of entities also concerns the “amount” of performativity, or performing. Latour remarks that

[i]f a dancer stops dancing, the dance is finished. No inertia will carry the show forward. This is why I needed to introduce the distinction between ostensive and performative: the object of an ostensive definition remains there, whatever happens to the index of the onlooker. But the object of a performative definition vanishes when it is no longer performed – or if it stays, then it means that *other* actors have taken over the relay.

(Latour 2005: 37–38)

Although my understanding of an entity is that it is, in essence, performative – an entity *does* something or is supposed to do something in the context of a method and in a feedback loop with other entities – that does not necessarily mean *at all times* or in a completely equal and mutual relationship to other entities present (or acting) within a certain method. In the case of the work of a scenographer, there might be situations in which a space or theatrical object *suggests* ideas, thus becoming active, and other moments when the scenographer *directs* the – at that moment rather passive – space and its elements by design and on purpose, not just by chance or accidental intuition. The function of an entity can be performative or informative, or both, depending on the situation at hand.

Activities

Activities are thought of from a practical and performative point of view, in the sense of “what is to be done”: What is the researcher (or any other entity) going to do, how will they or it engage? Obviously, entities and activities are closely interwoven and overlap; they are two sides of the same coin. An activity needs an entity in order to be carried out. However, in the design phase it can sometimes help to not think of the two together. Thinking of them separately might bring unforeseen and unexpected ideas to the table, such as a completely different kind of activity. As a second step, one could think about which entity would “fit” this activity. Or the other way round, one might recognise a strong urgency to work with a specific entity, without yet knowing what this entity needs to do, or how it needs to engage with an activity.

In the case of traditional research methods, the name of the method often already frames the type of activity that it includes, such as literature review, observation, or interview. However, in the context of crafting a method from scratch, it would likely be more useful to first accurately describe the kind of activity, to avoid the pitfall of quickly naming an activity – and thus suggesting a traditional method – without being entirely conscious of the consequences of this naming. Traditional research methods often have specific guidelines

attached to them that one needs to be aware of and that might not necessarily match the kind of activity one wants to describe as part of one's own crafted methods. As one might already be thinking, given the above, activities are only a *part* of a well-described and well-framed method. More is necessary for a complete framing of a method – including consideration for all human and other-than-human entities – while documentation, reflection, and outcomes are just as important and often closely entangled with the kinds of activities involved in a method. Often all or most of these elements are only implicitly understood or communicated, but it helps to articulate them explicitly, as this makes a method more transparent and more followable for others.

To present a complete list of possible activities here would be against the ethos of the methodological approach offered in this book, and, moreover, such a list would be virtually endless. However, in order to spark the imagination, I have listed a number of activities (note that these are phrased in a way that does not suggest the potential entities who/that carry out the activity):

- reading
- having a conversation
- walking
- improvising
- mind wandering⁷
- exploring related/resonating practices⁸
- writing⁹
- drawing/sketching
- briefing/debriefing¹⁰

In closing, it may be noted that an activity, also in a research design, does not need to be complex. It can be as simple as reading a book. However, it can be helpful to include a description of an activity as straightforward as this in one's research design, as it is more concrete and practical (especially for the inexperienced researcher) than the rather abstract and unspecific "literature review".

Documentation

Documentation is a key part of research. In general, this concerns the documentation of both processes and products, such as performances, workshops, session formats, teaching protocols, and so on. It also might include documenting one's own thought process in the form of diaries, sketches, or (reflective) journals. Many artists and researchers automatically do much documenting, such as making notes, jotting down ideas, making sketches or drawings, taking pictures, and making audio and video

recordings. The reason why documentation is explicitly included in the Crafting Methods framework is to provoke and stimulate researchers to carefully consider the *how* of their research documentation. Already in the planning and design stage of a research project, Nelson suggests that “it may help to look forward to a notional end of the project anticipating what kind of documentation might be useful to evidence the research inquiry” (Nelson 2013, 31). For example, if the artistic outcome of a research project is an exposition of images in a gallery, a useful approach might be to document the creation process of the images visually, with photos and a collection of sketches.

In the context of crafting methods, I refer in particular to the documentation of the research process and insights rather than the documentation of the final product of a research inquiry. Insights can naturally be generated in and through an activity itself, “in action” so to speak, caused by or during a method or activity. They can also be sparked by (the act of) documenting and reflecting. Thus, there is a possible overlap between documentation and reflection, and at times documentation might evolve from activity into a kind of method. As Nelson notes: “Modes of documentation constitute *methods* of capturing evidence” (Nelson 2013, 99, *my italics*).

Documentation of processes can have different functions that, taken together, can be summarised as evidencing the inquiry and making it transparent – both for oneself as researcher and for outsiders during or after a research project. Documentation can also help the researcher recall a specific situation after a research activity, enabling deeper and more detailed reflection. In general, the researcher needs to provide an account of the process. Without documentation, all is left to memory: to the researcher’s, participants’, or collaborators’ abilities to recall “what happened” without support. This causes at least two problems: the first is that human memory is far from reliable, as ethnographer Kate Swanson emphasises in her advice to students: “If you do not write things down, you will forget them. Allow me to repeat that: you *will* forget things” (Swanson in Ward 2020, 66, *italics in original*). The second problem is that leaving documentation to memory does not grant the outsider any access to the research process and data, access that is crucial in order to review, discuss, and critique processes, insights, and arguments. In an open format for designing research in which traditional criteria such as empirical proof or broadly-established fixed ideas of what knowledge is are understood to be more fluid and flexible, it is essential to document insights. This is because transparency and “followability” – the extent to which the reader is able to review and follow the research process and insights – are central for achieving and securing quality. As a matter of fact, it is simply “important to keep records of what you did, when and why” as “good research practice” (Kara 2018, 89) and as a way to conduct research ethically. The idea of keeping records seems to be very close to writing diaries: diary writing can

be a technique employed either by the researcher herself or by participants, and this writing can be studied and/or analysed for research purposes. This is a method that can be found in a number of disciplines, such as sociology or anthropology. Diaries can also include many forms of communication beyond writing – such as photographs, images, drawings, and sketches – and can extend into the digital, for example, in the form of “spontaneous diarizing on social networking platforms” (Lathan 2020, 105).¹¹

With documentation generally taking visual, aural, or written forms, here are a selection of different possibilities:

- scrapbooks, notebooks
- journals, diaries, logbooks
- sketches
- created materials, objects
- photographs, images
- video footage
- audio recordings
- scripts, scores
- annotated bibliographies

Documentation choices can be approached from different perspectives. First, on a research design level, the researcher should think of the kinds of documentation that will likely work best for a given project; the choice of kinds and processes of documentation begins with *intention* (Garrett 2020, 147). Second, during the research trajectory, or possibly even while carrying out a research activity, approaches to documentation may emerge through doing, as events progress in unexpected ways that open up new possibilities for documenting.

As concerns good practice, all documentation materials should include elements that identify the origin and context of the given materials, such as dates or locations. Likewise, all activities – whether they be individual actions, conversations, or group sessions – need to be specified and documented as well, including information such as the date of encounter, the kind of session (interview, practice session, workshop, etc.), conversation partner(s), a brief summary of relevant points, and anything else of importance (based on Kara 2018, 89). Obviously, this also applies to online searches, literature reviews, or the study of audiovisual materials. The date of search, search term(s) used, date of source, author, title, and a brief summary of main and relevant points should be documented, making later work processing these materials much easier.

Some of the above examples need to be produced purely for the sake of documentation, while others, such as scripts or created objects, are generated through the research process itself. Such materials “only” need to be

collected and kept as documentation. It is not always easy to define what to document, especially in cases where this generates extensive amounts of data and materials. As Nelson acknowledges:

For example, it is neither possible nor desirable to video every rehearsal of a performance production process. First, the presence of the camera can interfere with the process. Second, to record everything would be to end up with an amount of footage too massive to sift and edit in this context. So what is to be documented and when?

(Nelson 2013, 30)

Practitioners usually have a good sense of their own practice, based on experience, which enables them to anticipate what might be useful to capture and document. They can and should generate ideas about how to document this practice, including to what end. Yet, as these crucial moments are not always predictable, it is important to “stay awake” and be “ready to document” in order to be able to capture unexpected insights, happenings, findings, or “moments of discovery” (Nelson 2013, 28). It can help to develop a continuous state of being “ready to document” or a sense of “documenting-as-habit”.¹²

Example: Thresholds of Touch

It is worthwhile to consider not only the question of how and what to document but also *by whom*. Sometimes it makes sense to let outsiders join specific activities in order to document their perspective as well. In a 2020 participatory performance and research workshop on *experiences of touch* – a collaboration between performance maker Marloeke van der Vlugt, sociologist Carey Jewitt, and myself as composer¹³ – we not only employed a variety of modes of documentation (essentially all of those mentioned above) but also included different perspectives with regard to who was documenting. Van der Vlugt, Jewitt, and myself, as direct insiders of this inquiry, documented through recording and writing. Jewitt’s team members documented by means of images and video as well as writing personal notes. They were professionals but not insiders in the research process. Additionally, participants from the audience, including professionals and non-professional visitors, were also asked to take notes during the performance workshop, to share ideas with each other (as documented by Jewitt’s team), and to produce their own short imaginary accounts, either through writing, sketching/drawing, or by using available video cameras. These varied perspectives resulted in a complex and multifaceted approach to documentation and provided us researchers with a fuller image of what happened in the performance workshop.

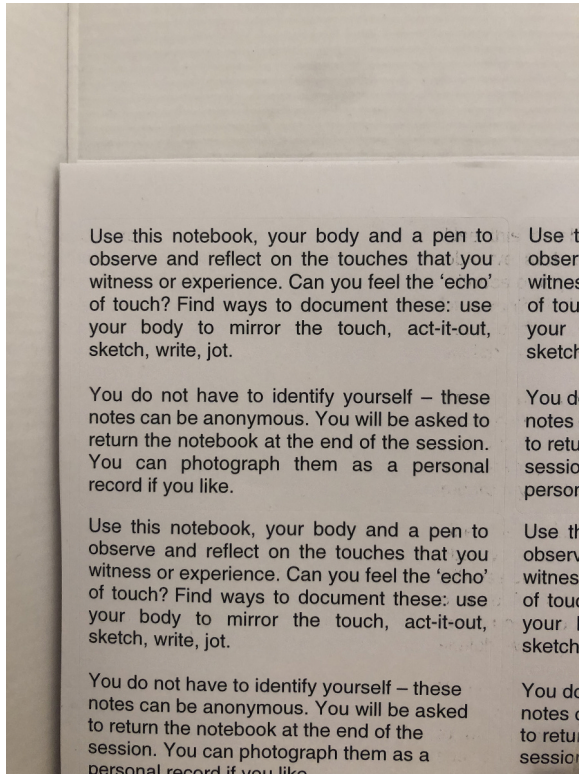


FIGURE 3.2 One of the exercises and assignments for participants during the *Threshold of Touch* experiences workshops. Photograph by the author.

Between documentation and creation

Besides its traditional function of capturing and collecting data and research materials, documentation can be utilised and understood as producing and *creating* media, which can potentially become something other than “pure” research documentation. It is important to be aware – as many artists and artistic researchers are, almost as a matter of habit – that, while one might initially intend to use media as tool within a method for documentation, reflection, and analysis, one is also creating and producing media at the same time. The researcher inevitably becomes a creator of media in the process. For example, this can mean that documentation has the potential to grow into artistic material in its own right. An example of this, while not conceived as part of an artistic research, is the electronic audio work *Wordless* (2004) by

composer Yannis Kyriakides, in which he used documentation and interview recordings as materials for electronic audio works.¹⁴

In an exciting recent development at conferences on artistic research, researchers have been experimenting with ways to include their documentation in the dissemination of their research, merging both “artistic” and “research” materials into a kind of “in-between” output that is simultaneously both artistic and discursive (see Figure 3.3). Especially through the medium of online presentations during the Covid-19 pandemic, a number of formats emerged, in particular through the use of film or video at online conferences and symposia. Many presenters did not talk much themselves but, instead, presented films or videos-as-presentations that connected discourse, theory, and reflection naturally with sound, still and moving images, and artistic work. This generates ideas regarding video as a form or mode and as a *dissemination format specific to artistic research*.

Example: Multimedia audiovisual documentation and/as visual ethnography

The “visual ethnography” work by ethnographer and urban explorer Bradley L. Garrett is an apt example of a project that explores questions of how to think about one’s research documentation. Garrett is “interested in photography and video work as *being* and *doing*, a process of engagement and interaction with the world around us in ways that meld and blur representations and practice” (Garrett 2020, 146). Garrett emphasises that working with media is not only a matter of “collecting data” or “creating representations” but also “working with the ‘media as practice rather than representation’” (Garrett 2020, 153). These ideas regarding the use of audiovisual media developed directly in and through his ethnographic work with urban explorers.¹⁵

This example relates to a number of questions regarding documentation: first, in terms of making choices on what kind of media to use (in this case audiovisual media, including photographs, video, and audio recordings) and, second, considering documentation not only as a means of *collecting* data but also as a mode and possibility for producing and creating. Garrett exemplifies documentation as a way of making – both producing and *creating* – data and, more importantly, audiovisual material that might also become something else (see Figure 3.4a and b). His work demonstrates why the choice of equipment and the specific *approach* to documenting by means of still and moving images is not as trivial as it might seem. Although it is situated in the context of urban ethnography, the project provides food for thought in the context of artistic research as well.

Garrett sees using media as a comprehensive practice, arising from the notion that



knowledge is never complete, never clean; it is disrupted and disputable

‘

Kate Love, “An Exploration of Affect as a Methodology for Examining Experience and Writing as a Practice in the Context of Fine Art” (PhD diss. Central Saint Martins, 2009).

Karen Barad, “Diffracting Diffraction”

Love, “An Exploration of Affect as a Methodology”. An overall approach and sections of my writing owe an enormous debt to the spirit of Kate Love’s thoughts. Kate Love died too young in January 2020, her expanded doctoral thesis, *An Affect of an Experience and how I learnt to write about it in the context of fine art*, is due to be published by Intellect Books in May 2022. For more information see: <https://www.intellectbooks.com/an-affect-of-an-experience>

expert (adj.), late 14c., “having had experience; skillful,” from Old French expert, espert “experienced, practiced, skilled” and directly from Latin expertus (contracted from “experitus), “tried, proved, known by experience,” past participle of experiri “to try, test,” from ex “out of” (see ex-) + peritus “experienced, tested,” from PIE *per-yo-, suffixed form of root *per- (3) “to try, risk.” <https://www.etymonline.com/word/expert> accessed 9th August 2021.

Tim Ingold suggests that the English suffix ‘-scape’ has become etymologically muddled with the verb *skopain*, ‘to look’; “-scape” quite to the contrary, comes from Old English *scoppan* or *skyppan*, meaning ‘to shape’.” Tim Ingold, *Being Alive* (London: Routledge, 2011), 126.

George P. Landow, *Hypertext 3.0: Critical Theory and New Media in an Era of Globalization* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2006), 113.

Love, “An Exploration of Affect as a Methodology”.

Stuart Mugridge (*un*)prepare to be attacked!
<http://smabs.co.uk>

FIGURE 3.3 Moment or “slide” from the online presentation by Stuart Mugridge – “(un)prepare to be attacked!” – at the *Carpa7* conference, 26 August 2021. The video has three spatial sections: the section on the right is used for discursive text and references; the upper left is used for a part-documentary-part-artistic video result; and the lower left is used for “creative comments” in the form of words or signs.

Source: Screenshot by the author.

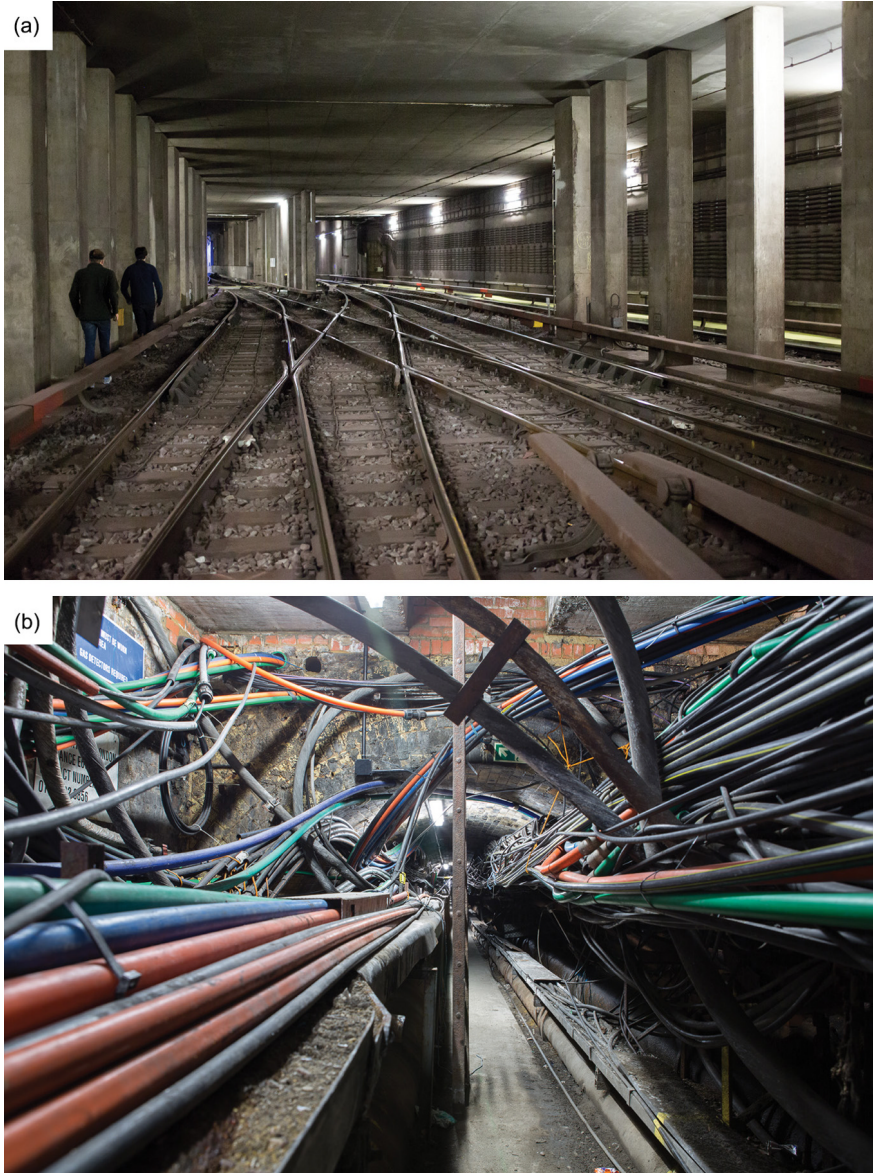


FIGURE 3.4 (a and b) Photographs by Bradley Garrett documenting urban exploration work.

technological devices like cameras are entangled in all the choices we make and the desires we harbour, especially now that those machines are almost always near on our bodies – and will likely soon be in them. In other words, photographs and videos “are not something that appear over and against reality, but parts of practices through which people work to establish realities”.

(Garrett 2020, 146, quoting Crang 1997)

Garrett adds that audiovisual media are never just a representation of the world we live in but rather a means of creating, shaping, and re-shaping worlds and realities.

The use of cameras is embedded in an entire ensemble of documentation methods and modes:

In the process of my work I undertook a wide “visual ethnography”, using four still cameras, four video cameras and various types of note taking, creating a multimodal, multisensual, multimedia ethnography intended to integrate more of the embodied experience of the research process into the final product.

(Garrett 2020, 147)

Especially of interest here is Garrett’s approach to using different kinds of equipment and technical tools, as he explains in his account of long urban exploration trips, including the use of multiple (cheap) cameras:

I took inexpensive disposable cameras that I put in multiple pockets, so I always had one within reach at a moment’s notice. I also gave them to my project participants and asked them to photograph whatever they wanted. Often, they photographed me. We threw those cameras around, took technically horrible pictures of each other and broke or lost a few of them. Seemingly half of the pictures did not turn out. However, those photos and memories, looking back on them now, are more important than I initially imagined. Viewing them triggers the feelings, flashes and fleeting associations that made up my time in the field and are far more important, in many ways, than the ‘formal’ images I took with my more expensive digital camera.

(Garrett 2020, 150)

This short section illustrates how Garrett made the choice to work in a collaborative fashion and include others in the process of documenting and producing images, as part of the process and without attempts to maintain control. It also shows that it is not necessarily only the researcher who needs

to document, especially when others, in this case a collective of professionals who know each other well, can be called upon to document. The resulting material would offer a greater richness and diversity of perspectives.

In closing, it is important to note that using media for documentation (whether digital or analogue) always involves a practising and training component. Garrett emphasises how this, in his work, has involved a considerable time investment,

practising filming and photographing in low-light conditions, learning to identify buttons on my cameras by touch alone (sometimes gluing grains of rice on buttons or wrapping tape around one zoom ring to help with tactile identification), packing and repacking my bag to make sure I knew where everything was intuitively [...].

(Garrett 2020, 151)

This particular example makes clear that, as researchers, we need to intimately know the equipment we work with and what its possibilities are. This might be technical equipment, even something as ubiquitous as a mobile phone with photography and video apps, but might also mean having a variety of different kinds and colours of pens and pencils at hand. It all depends on what works best in one's practice. In other words, no matter which tools we envision documenting with, we need to take the act – and the habit – of documenting seriously as a practice in itself; it is a crucial part of the work we need to do.

(Forms of) Reflection

Much like documentation, *reflection* is more complex than it might seem at first, especially when defined as “a process which can help articulate and enhance [the] meaning-making aspect of practice” (Fook 2019, 69). In some instances, reflection can be designed in such a way that it becomes a method, depending on context and circumstances: for example, as a collective reflection session in which participants are invited to answer a number of reflective questions through free writing, drawing, or sketching. The term is situated close to reflexivity and is also examined in contrast to the notion of diffraction, a term coined by posthumanist philosophers and feminist scholars such as Karen Barad and Donna Haraway. My aim in this section is to create an open understanding of reflection and reflexivity, which enables the researcher to make choices in research (design) practice regarding reflection, and to build it into a method in a way that fits into the overall design and purpose.¹⁶

A few basic considerations need to be made at the outset regarding whose reflection I am referring to. In the context of Crafting Methods, I mean the

reflection *of the researcher*, as opposed to reflection by collaborators, participants, or other human entities during a research activity (which can be part of a research method as well). Reflection, as I understand it in this context, is where time and space for thinking and analysis is situated, where the researcher can make sense of what has happened and what has been documented. They process the materials and experiences into forms that can be utilised in the further course of the research (design), in the form of learning, experiencing, or knowing (see below). However, while reflection “is commonly understood as a predominantly cognitive process [...] located within the mind of the practitioner involving re-viewing and making meaning of experiences and events” (Hill 2017, 1), I understand it more broadly, including both individual cognitive and practice-related forms of reflection (such as reflecting through drawing or improvising musically) as well as collective (rather than exclusively individual) forms. I do not aim – as often occurs within traditional approaches – to position the researcher as the sole locus of reflection. (Forms of) Reflection as an element in the Crafting Methods framework includes all reflection on one’s own role in a given method as well as all reflection emerging from the interaction between other human and other-than-human entities.

Some of the questions that arise regarding reflection in the process of designing a method include how to *work* with the material that is collected by means of documentation while carrying out one or more activities, how to process these materials, and how to make sense of them. Like the other elements in the model, reflection does not stand entirely on its own but relates to, and overlaps with, other areas, in particular with the final element: Learning/Experiencing/Knowing. The overarching aim of a method – what it should do or provide in the context of the entire research trajectory – directly impacts the choice for modes and forms of reflection (just as it affects the other elements in the method to be crafted). Seen from this perspective, reflection can take many different forms: individual, collective, through conversation, writing, drawing, sketching, walking, meditating, and discussing with others (see Figure 3.5). It can also include both individual and collective forms of making, and it might be actively designed rather than taken for granted in form and function.¹⁷

In practice, there might be a substantial overlap between documenting and reflecting, as the two often go hand in hand and can almost merge into one compound process. Ceramics artist and researcher Maarit Mäkelä and textile practitioner and researcher Nithikul Nimkulrat understand the two as being even more closely related: “Documentation [...] functions as conscious reflection *on* and *in* action. Any means of documentation, whether it is diary writing, photographing or sketching, can serve as a mode of reflection” (Mäkelä and Nimkulrat 2018, 1, italics in original).



FIGURE 3.5 Two participants at the 2017 seminar of the Innovative Conservatoire, at Dartington Hall, UK, writing notes and discussing them as reflection on a practical session shortly before.

Source: Photograph by the author.

Reflection and reflexivity

As suggested earlier, in the context of the Common Ground model as well as the Crafting Methods framework, I understand *reflection* as a rather generic term, which can comprise a variety of approaches. Reflection is not just one part of a single method; it takes place throughout an entire research project, mostly in an iterative fashion, in-between as well as during various stages and activities. As critical reflection and social work scholar Jan Fook suggests, this might include reflecting on:

why we choose to undertake a research study; what this means in practice; what issues there are which need to be considered; and what the practical constraints are. When we bring about change in practice things seldom go according to plan and there are often too many other factors involved, not

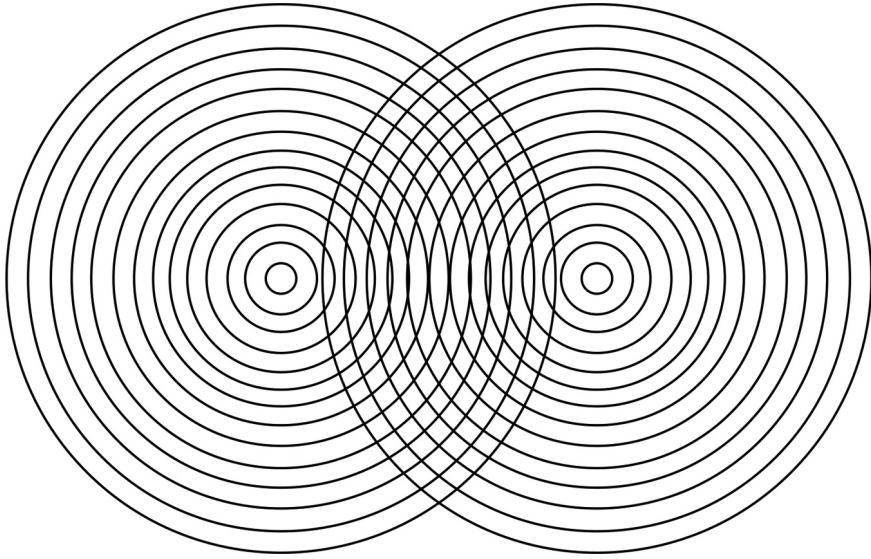


FIGURE 3.6 Diffraction wave interference. Graphic by the author.

least from the other people who are involved. We need to reconsider and often refocus; this is an element which is implicit and indeed runs throughout many of the research studies.

(Fook 2019, 57)

Fook also asserts that reflection is a concept that is difficult to frame due to the large variety of perspectives on it from diverse disciplines (Fook 2019, 60). In this section, my goal is not to pin down reflection as a solidly-defined, clear-cut process but rather to open up the concept and interweave it with the related notions of reflexivity and diffraction in order to offer a range of useful approaches for the artist-researcher who is in the process of designing and carrying out their methods and research strategy.

Fook provides a starting point by quoting philosopher John Dewey: “Reflection, in its most basic sense, can be seen as *learning from experience*” (Fook 2019, 60, quoting Dewey 1933, italics in original). One looks back on one’s experiences in order to think about them, re-evaluate them, and make learning explicit that might otherwise remain implicit, all with the aim of both understanding one’s assumptions and potentially changing one’s behaviour. This may include questions such as:

- What happened?
- What did you do?
- What had you expected?

- How had you prepared yourself?
- How did you feel?
- What was different than expected?
- How did you behave in unexpected situations or moments; what was your reaction?
- What have you learned through this situation?

In a research context, reflection becomes broader and has the function not only of exploring one's own behaviours and assumptions but of making sense, overall, of what happened during a certain activity. How do participants or collaborators act in relation to each other, to their surroundings, to given artistic materials? What can the researcher learn from how a variety of choices were made during the rehearsal of a score or a musical improvisation?

At times authors use the term *critical reflection* to signify that reflection “cuts to a significant depth, enabling a fundamental change of thinking or behaviour” or to emphasise that “a critical theory perspective is applied, making a connection between the ideas unearthed through reflection, and how these ideas have a role in creating power” (Fook 2019, 62). A third aspect of critical reflection “involves critical thinking about our experiences within their social and political context and also a deeper understanding of how to use this knowledge to improve our practices in the future” (Bozalek and Zembylas 2016, 8).

Reflexivity seems to go a step further by emphasising the “ability to analyse and understand one's world (and therefore research it) recognising the particular lenses and influences which one brings to it by virtue of who we are as human beings in the social context” (Fook 2019, 63). This may include one's own perspective, role, background, biography, upbringing, colour of skin, gender, sexual orientation, education, professional training, teachers, culture of one's discipline(s), and the specific focus within that discipline. Anthropologist Raymond Madden, from an ethnographic perspective, summarises reflexivity as “an essential part of managing the influence of ‘me’ on the research and representations of ‘them’” (Madden 2017, 23). Helen Kara adds another perspective to this discussion by relating reflexivity to research outcomes: “Reflexivity is ‘the examination of both the structural and personal conditions which help us understand the knowledge we create’” (Dean 2017, quoted in Kara 2018, 117).

Precise delineations between (critical) reflection and reflexivity are not easy to find in the literature or to establish, due to the dependency on context and tradition and different uses and meanings in different disciplines and professions. Bozalek and Zembylas also acknowledge this difficulty: “The concept of reflexivity has grown to encompass different meanings among different research traditions and disciplines, often lacking a distinction among the different terms used such as reflection, reflexivity and critical reflection, to

name a few” (Bozalek and Zembylas 2016, 3). However, Fook does offer a suggestion for how reflection and reflexivity can go together:

Reflection on our own experience is a form of learning from experience in order to formulate new principles. Reflexivity involves a reflection on ourselves and our experience in order to articulate and understand how we influence the knowledge we create.

(Fook 2019, 64)

In other words: reflection means learning from an experience, whereas reflexivity means acknowledging and interpreting things in ourselves that allow us to articulate experiences as resulting in one kind of learning or another.

Diffraction

A final term of interest in this context is *diffraction*. The term was coined by Donna Haraway and Karen Barad, as both a critique of and an alternative to reflection and reflexivity. Their main critique of reflection and reflexivity is based on notions of mirroring (connected to the optical metaphor of reflection) and sameness.¹⁸ It therefore positions the “researcher as an independent subject who is actually the locus of reflection [...]” (Bozalek and Zembylas 2016, 6), embodying both a fixed frame of reference, as well as “involving extracting objective representations from the world” (Hill 2017, 2).

Diffraction, like reflection, is a metaphor derived from physics.¹⁹ In contrast to reflection, however, according to education researcher Cher M. Hill, diffraction “involves the bending and spreading of waves when they encounter a barrier or an opening. Diffraction therefore, as a metaphor for inquiry involves attending to difference, to patterns of interference, and the effects of difference-making practices” (Hill 2017, 2). Barad emphasises the idea of “reading insights through one another in ways that help illuminate differences as they emerge: how different differences get made, what gets excluded, and how these exclusions matter” (Barad, 2007, 30).²⁰

The notion of reading insights through one another is a particularly intriguing example of working diffractively, as it offers the researcher a particular approach to perspectives other than their own: “reading” a particular situation, activity, or context *through* those perspectives. Kara refers to this idea as a “higher form of reflexivity” and offers an idea how this might actually work in practice:

Stahl posits that reflexivity requires people first to understand their own standpoint, and then to try undertaking analytic work from a different standpoint. For example, a religious person could try analysing as an atheist, a cis person as trans, and so on. Of course this can be made as

complex and intersectional as you like: a sporty young white gay male could try analysing as a sedentary older female heterosexual person of colour. Stahl refers to this as a higher level of reflexivity that requires understanding, and being able to critically evaluate, different standpoint including your own.

(Kara 2018, 118)

Women's and gender studies scholar Vivienne Bozalek and educational theorist Michalinos Zembylas also accentuate the importance of the notion of reading through one another: "A diffractive methodology [...] is not setting up one approach/text/discipline against another but rather a detailed, attentive and careful reading the ideas of one through another, leading to more generative 'inventive provocations'" (Bozalek and Zembylas 2016, 5). Their "inventive provocations" is something I would call "unexpected encounters": how would, for example, Bruno Latour see a given experiment and its outcome if we read the outcomes of such an experiment through his thinking (obviously, one needs to know Latour and his thinking well in order to be able to do this). Hill extends this idea to the point where "a literature review can be viewed as a diffractive apparatus. Organizing a body of scholarship is a practice of establishing, collapsing, and interfering with boundaries, and engaging in a process of world making" (Hill 2017, 3).

An important aspect of the notion of diffraction is the presumption that the subjects and objects of a research activity "are always already entangled" (Bozalek and Zembylas 2016, 6) rather than being separate, as is presumed within the more traditional paradigms of reflection and reflexivity. Within the concept of diffraction, the researcher in particular cannot be understood as a distant outsider; their perspective (through which they look at a situation or, in the words of Barad, through which they read a situation) is always an intrinsic part of what is observed or analysed, how this observation or analysis takes place, and what results or outcomes emerge. Diffraction thus implies the idea of decentering the human subject (the researcher) as "the one who knows" and challenges the "taken-for-grantedness of the coherent 'I' in reflexivity" (Bozalek and Zembylas 2016, 7).

In my view, the critical theory aimed against reflection and reflexivity is at times too harsh. In my reading, most of the authors who favour diffraction present reflection and reflexivity as rather limited concepts with a strong emphasis on their linguistic origins as stemming from a visual metaphor. However, most practitioners and artist-researchers use reflection and reflexivity in far more open-ended ways that are not necessarily human- or self-centred or extractive. I agree with Cher M. Hill (2017) that the purpose is not to replace "reflective practice" or reflexivity with "diffractive practice" (Hill's terminology 2017, 3) but rather to see the notion of diffraction – and the accompanying practice of reading insights, texts, or theories *through one*

another – as a welcome addition to the already broad notion of reflection as offered in the Crafting Methods framework.

Learning/Experiencing/Knowing

The final element *Learning/Experiencing/Knowing* aims to indicate the outcome of a method. What has been learned, which steps have been taken, or what kind of progress has been made? The core idea here is that the outcome of a method can be performative and fluid (hence the use of verbs rather than nouns). The outcome may be not-yet solid or fixed and can be used as one point in the overall research process, to consider or from which to flow into subsequent methods and research activities, thus functioning both as an intermediate result, in and of itself, as well as becoming an “input” for the following step and method in a research strategy. This point in the design process is also where method transitions to strategy, as the artist-researcher thinks about and designs how the various methods work with and in relation to each other.

Concerning what the actual “output” of a method can be (possibly as input to the next method) – what the researcher wants to learn or get out of a certain activity²¹ – the three terms learning, experiencing, and knowing already indicate that this may vary greatly. The purpose of a method, including its outcome(s), depends on where this method is located in the overall research design and what its intended function is. A literature review can result in a set of more thoroughly framed concepts, as outcome, but it can also serve to contextualise and situate an experiment that has just been carried out in a series of related practices (which the researcher has found elaborated upon in the literature reviewed). A visit to an institution or location in the beginning phase of a research project can provide a first (documented) impression (and thus a more experiential outcome) of what kinds of interventions might be necessary in order to facilitate and provoke necessary change at such an institution.

As should be clear by this point, the possible outcome of a method – or a research trajectory in its entirety, for that matter – is not limited to reflective or linguistic outcomes. Neither is it limited to objects or concrete forms. The outcome of a method can also be new processes, techniques, or approaches to making. As teacher and researcher Brad Haseman suggests, the outcomes of a method can be expressed “in forms of symbolic data other than words in discursive text. These include material forms of practice, of still and moving images, of music and sound, of live action and digital code” (Haseman 2006: 6). Erin Manning argues that artistic research “generates new forms of experience” and “generates forms of knowledge that are extralinguistic” (Manning 2015, 53). Experiences can be understood as outcomes of methods that provide learning, especially during the process of a research project, but which cannot always (yet) be put into words. In this sense, methods can certainly “generate new insights, as well as new questions” (Hill 2017, 4) as their outcome. Action researcher Judi Marshall draws upon the extended epistemology

concept of John Heron and Peter Reason (2008) when she presents various ways of experiential, practical, and presentational knowing (Marshall 2016: 42), which she sees as interwoven and connected:

- emotional
- intuitive
- embodied
- experiential
- practical
- spiritual
- intellectual

A final thought for this section is to note that “data”, as the outcome of research activities, are not “passive”: generated by other “active” (human) entities, such as collaborators or interviewees, and collected by the “active” researcher. Especially in a more flexible framing of method, such as the Crafting Methods framework, data can also be understood “as a constitutive force, working with and upon [the researcher] in the event of reading it” (Taguchi 2012, quoted in Hill 2017, 4). I will come back to these thoughts later in the discussion of emergence in Chapter 5, but I wanted to bring them up now to stimulate an understanding of the outcomes of methods as active, potentially constitutive, forces that we as researchers (at times) need to trust and follow.

Crafting Methods in the overall model

In closing, these thoughts suggest a reframing of what a method is or might be as a ***flexible network of Entities, Activities, Documentation, (Forms of) Reflection and Learning/Experiencing/Knowing***. In the first instance, Crafting Methods is a framework for designing research methods. It offers five perspectives – “lenses” or “windows” – through which one can look at or think about methods. Much like the entire Common Ground model, it serves as a flexible framework that operates according to network logic, where all of its elements can influence one another.

It is important to note that the design process of a method is typically of an iterative nature and should include moments of “looking back”. As soon as the researcher has roughly described the five elements of the network – Entities, Activities, Documentation, Reflection, and Learning/Experiencing/Knowing – they can review whether, for example, the desired outcome of a specific method “matches” its chosen set of entities and activities and adjust if necessary. For example, consider a case in which an artist-researcher is developing a participatory performance intervention in a neighbourhood. In order to get a more concrete idea about “what works” with a specific community, the artist decides to start with a series of very small participatory interventions. These are more small tests than full-blown projects, designed to see what resonates best in

this particular context and develop a repertoire for this particular community. So, if this is the actual aim of this crafted method – which might be called “series of initial participatory mini-interventions” – the researcher might want to include the community to some degree in both documentation and reflection, to make sure that their voices are also part of the method’s outcome.

Much like with the entire Common Ground model, Crafting Methods can be used in a variety of ways: to design one’s own methods, to analyse or reflect on a method, or to offer feedback on a method by another researcher or other researchers. This framework is not a method in itself! It is not a roadmap or a blueprint or even an exercise to systematically work through. It needs to be used in service of what the researcher or the research project needs. As mentioned earlier, supervision offers a welcome situation for application. While reading report drafts, one could ask oneself or the student how a particular research action is documented; how what has been learned is articulated; and how, why, or what matters for subsequent research activity. The supervisor can thus use the different elements of the Crafting Methods framework as perspectives through which to ask questions to the student regarding their research method design (for a list of possible questions, ↗ Appendix: Designing through questions, p. 159).

Incorporating Crafting Methods

With regard to the graphical representation of the Crafting Methods framework, this can be visualised in two ways: first, as a network of five elements (see Figure 3.1) and, second, as a “trio” including two pairs of elements (see Figure 3.7). The second representation is the way in which it is integrated into the overall Common Ground model. This change of

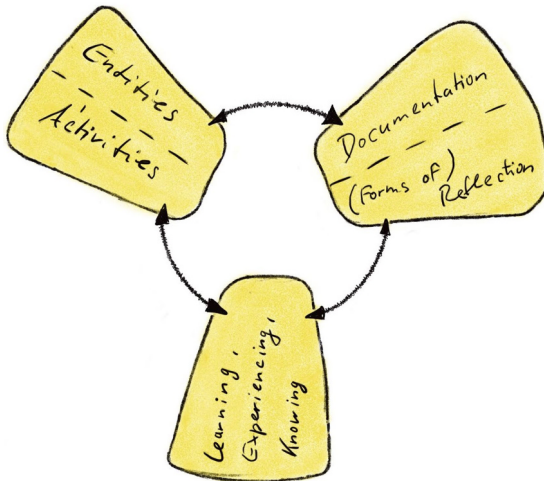


FIGURE 3.7 The final version of Crafting Methods.

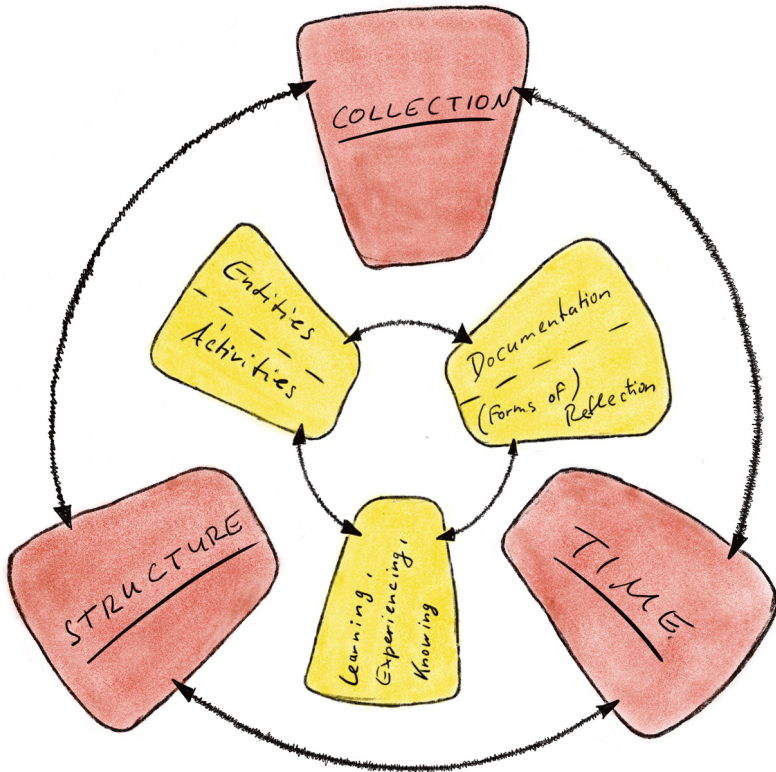


FIGURE 3.8 The graphical-organisational “edit” of the Crafting Methods framework makes it possible to insert the two levels of strategy (red) and method (yellow) between each other.

visualisation of the Crafting Methods framework is necessary in order for it to be able to be incorporated into the graphic representation of the entire model. Through experience, especially through conversations and workshops with other researchers, it proved useful to create two “pairs” with four of the initial five elements of the framework rather than leaving them entirely distinct – connecting Entities & Activities and Documentation & Reflection with each other – with these linked categories separated by dotted lines.

As an almost-final step, Figure 3.8 shows how this graphic version can be moved into the interior of the larger model.

This chapter ends as a “cliffhanger” of sorts, as the Common Ground model is still incomplete, and the connections between the method and strategy spheres within the model have yet to be formulated. The impatient reader may jump to Chapter 4, in which I will quite literally connect the orbits. The reader who can stand the suspense might take a moment to read the second Interlude, which focuses on the *preparation* of a research project.

Notes

- 1 Retrieved from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/research-method>, 29 July 2022.
- 2 Social anthropologist Kate Maguire, for example, defines methods as “the data-gathering tools and the type of analysis employed”. She further differentiates between “*quantitative* methods which are employed when the data being gathered is statistically measurable and *qualitative* methods employed when the data being gathered is that of experiences and perspectives” (Maguire 2019, 100–101, italics in original). However, Maguire does not further explore what such a data-gathering tool actually consists of and how to design or create one from scratch.
- 3 I evaluate the central aims of this book quite positively, as discussed in: Hübner, Falk (2020). “Artistic Research... Where to start? Why not with a handbook?” in *FORUM+* 27/3: 90–91.
<https://forum-online.be/en/issues/herfst-2020/artistic-research-where-to-start-why-not-with-a-handbook>.
- 4 I use “potential” here, as – in some situations – practice can be (part of) an answer to a research question or one possibility in a spectrum of answers uncovered through practice. As such, practice usually does not literally answer a question in the form of language and, in order to fulfil the criteria for research dissemination, might be accompanied or complemented by writing.
- 5 During a workshop series on methodology that I facilitated, educational researcher Esther Willemse was interested in the terminology used by participants and audiences to describe arts experiences. Her idea was to invite people to “informal conversations”, where they could talk about the terms people use and the kinds of values they attach to these terms. By thinking through the idea of informality, she arrived at the activity and form of taking walks, in certain surroundings, such as parks, that support the intended informality. This design step only emerged through the thorough description and discussion of the various entities (☞ example “The informal conversation”, p. 140).
- 6 Harman calls ANT’s ontology “flat” due to its notion that “anything is real insofar as it acts, an extremely broad criterion that grants equal initial weight to super-sonic jets, palm trees, asphalt, Batman, [...]”. His critique is that through doing this, “ANT loses objects completely, by abolishing any hidden depth in things while reducing them to their actions” (Harman 2016, 2).
- 7 For more information on mind wandering as an approach or method to facilitate “creative incubation”, see Baird et al. 2012.
- 8 This relates to what Robin Nelson calls a “literature-practice-review”: “[I]n a PaR [Practice as Research] project, the location of work in a lineage of practice might be more appropriate than a literature review (though it is typically a matter of ‘both-and’). I would expect this chapter to give accounts of several practitioners/companies working in similar territory with a disposition to distinguish what each has achieved. Such writing should set up a platform for the account of process to bring out the specificity of the practitioner-researcher’s own findings” (Nelson 2013, 35).
- 9 Obviously, writing can be a research method, too, and might be framed explicitly as such in a research design. Writing as research method resonates very much with Marshall’s notion of “writing as inquiry” (Marshall 2016, 55), which will be discussed in the conclusion (☞ section “Writing as a tool for ongoing inquiry”, p. 153).
- 10 Depending on the kinds of activities within a method, it might be important, also ethically, to build some kind of briefing – and especially debriefing – into an activity with other people and to consciously think about how to wrap up such an encounter. At times, this might also be framed as a kind of “check-in” and “check-out”, to provide the opportunity for everyone involved to say how they are feeling,

- what their mental and emotional conditions are, and what they take away from the activity.
- 11 However, using the diaries of others as a research method is not without pitfalls. For example, diary making (especially when it contains lots of visual material) can be very personal and thus in large part comprehensible only to the author of the diary. If a researcher asks a number of participants to keep diaries as a particular method within the research, in-depth conversations based on these diaries can provide an excellent addition to material that might otherwise leave too much open to the interpretation of the researcher. For more information, see Lathan 2020.
 - 12 Practically, this means having a variety of tools and documentation devices at hand *at all times*, which means that often a notebook, pen, and a mobile phone is sufficient. A phone nowadays easily serves as a multifunctional recording device, with video and photo camera, audio and voice recorder (despite sound recordings typically being of lesser quality). Although a phone (or tablet) can be used to capture text and notes as well, in my experience this is not an attractive alternative to the immediacy and tactile pleasure of jotting down hand-written notes and sketches.
 - 13 For more information on the project, see the website of the In-Touch research group at UCL, retrieved from <https://in-touch-digital.com/case-studies/threshold-touch-experiences/>, 16 December 2022.
 - 14 See. <https://www.kyriakides.com/wordless.html>, last accessed on 30 July 2022. Although *Wordless* was not conceived as a research project, one can easily understand its potential in the context of research projects: Kyriakides used documentation from interviews with citizens and used the part of language that are not “words” – noises, coughing, sounds from outside, and so on – discovering the musical and sonic potential of these sounds in order to make music with them. Documentation material in the form of sound emerged into artistic material that stands on its own in the form of electronic compositions.
 - 15 For an in-depth account of this fascinating, challenging, and at times dangerous work, see Garrett 2013.
 - 16 I have often seen researchers work with reflection in a relatively *implicit* way, not actually articulating what they are reflecting on, for what reason, and in which way they are taking their reflections further. As with the other elements of the Crafting Methods framework, the inclusion of this element as such is an invitation to researchers to be more conscious and explicit about it. This includes its articulation and thus also the aspect of transparency and followability.
 - 17 See, for example, the work of the HKU Professorship Art and Professionalisation, where work forms, on the methodological basis of action research, were initially developed to provoke change in a wide variety of professional settings and were later reframed as research methods. Particularly the form of the (often-collective) reflection is an essential part of this work. Another example is the reflection part of a workshop at the Symbiont conference on 16 November 2018 at the University of Calgary, where a group of participants (Claire French, Gretchen Schiller, Fredyl Hernandez, Maria Angelica Vical, and myself) carried out a workshop and chose to reflect with the entire group through writing and drawing with chalk on a board, entirely without talking, as a kind of meditative ending to an intense practice session.
 - 18 “Reflection as the physical phenomenon of mirroring has been used as a metaphor to express an inner mental activity in which someone is taking ‘a step back’ and looking into his or her self for the purpose of thinking about one’s life and perhaps changing it” (Bozalek and Zembylas 2016, 2).

- 19 Etymologically, diffraction comes from the Latin words *diffractio* or *diffringere*, which mean breaking to pieces, or breaking apart.
- 20 Diffraction is an essential concept in Barad's agential realism, "which does not assume pre-existing ontological categories, but rather a reality that is continuously re/constituted through material entanglements" (Hill 2017, 3). Barad's idea that "scientific practices do not reveal what is already there; rather what is 'disclosed' is the effect of the intra-active engagements of our participation with/in and as part of the world's differential becoming" (Barad 2007, 361) in fact resonates quite directly with the essential idea behind the element (Forms of) Reflection in the Crafting Methods framework.
- 21 One needs to keep in mind that learning, experiencing, and knowing are intended to be understood in relation to the researcher herself. Obviously there are cases in which a method is intended to provide an experience for an audience or a group of participants. However, the primary question is what the researcher learns, experiences, and comes to know throughout the research process.

INTERLUDE II

Preparation

Before starting to design and making first choices about methods or strategies, a researcher needs to do some preparatory work. Seminal ideas need to be developed, formed, connected, and related to each other.¹ In this short interlude, I offer a few suggestions and ideas about these preparatory steps towards a research project and its design. This is not to suggest that the “design phase” of a research project always has fixed or even clear-cut start and end points or that it should be entirely separate from the preparatory phase. Effectively, from the moment the first notes are jotted down, ideas emerge and questions pop up, including ideas about the “how” and about method and strategy. In this sense, preparation is always entangled with the rest of the research design and the research process, both of which might be subject to review along the way.

It might feel slightly unusual to find a chapter about *preparing* research positioned more than halfway into a book on research design. As mentioned in the Introduction, the structural idea here is that – following the previous chapter on crafting methods – I will turn to the more overarching level of research strategy, which includes preparation, collection, structure, time, and emergence. Preparation is covered separately here, as the parameters and variables of this phase are not subject to review and change to the same extent as the other elements in the Common Ground model.

The preparatory level covers a number of questions and topics, including the area, field, and context of a research project, the topic of inquiry, knowledge about the matter, and the conditions and different aims of the research. The purpose and goals of the research need to be identified. Are these in the areas of knowing, creating change, learning, making, or designing? Helen Kara adds questions of motivation: “Is it a topic worth studying? Could it lead

to social, economic or environmental [or artistic?] improvement? Why might you want to do this piece of work" (Kara 2018, 72)?

It is necessary to articulate the points of departure in terms of both practice and theory: Which part of the researcher's practice is subject to the inquiry? What kinds of practices resonate with the area or matter of research? What is already known and unknown about this matter? What kinds of (re)sources are available?

On research questions

Doing research without asking questions is hardly imaginable. There is always the first step of asking initial questions, or mapping a terrain of inquiry, which then leads to methods and, in turn, to a research strategy. A strategy without anything to inquire into makes little sense. Concerning the origin of a question, typically "artistic practice is the source of and the condition for the research and its outcomes" (Wesseling and Kitty 2017, 211).

Research questions might already be part of these first steps, but this does not necessarily need to be the case. Robin Nelson argues for the "specification of a 'research inquiry'" in order to come to "substantial insights rather than coming to such definite conclusions as to constitute 'answers'" (Nelson 2013, 30). I agree that definite answers are not necessarily the point of artistic research, which means that a research question might be a perfectly suitable tool for framing a research inquiry – without expecting that this inquiry will lead to an answer *per se*.

The central research questions might also emerge along the way. One simply needs to start, by improvising, brainstorming, or experimenting, for example, to get a clearer idea about these questions.² This goes for the experienced researcher, but especially for students or beginning researchers, for whom it might be more challenging to articulate a clear and non-ambiguous research question in the beginning and for whom this might actually be an unnecessary source of pressure. The first steps necessary for developing more precise research questions can just as easily be part of a research design in cases when research questions are not yet in place.

Nevertheless, developing and articulating research questions is an important part of a research trajectory, which is the reason for including it in this section on preparation. The research questions, even if subject to change during the research process, should be "productive enough to set off the research process" (Wesseling and Kitty 2017, 211) and offer the necessary direction for the researcher to move further towards collecting their methods of inquiry (📁 "Collection", p. 108). A research question gives a first hint or, in the best cases, can provide a first framing for the kind of inquiry the researcher is aiming for: an exploratory study to discover what is happening and to gain insights about a certain topic or issue; a descriptive inquiry to develop an accurate

profile of contexts, events, people, or situations; an explanatory research that establishes causal relationships between variables; or an evaluative study that is concerned with how well something works (Vanmaele 2017).

I am especially interested in the research questions that bring the researcher into a mindset of not-knowing within an area, topic, and kind of practice within which the researcher is accustomed to functioning as an expert. This can be challenging at times, as sociologist Amanda Coffey remarks: “The act of systematically observing and recording what is happening sounds straightforward enough, but can be especially difficult in settings where we think we already know ‘what happens’.” This means that the researcher needs to be mindful and “think about strategies to make the familiar strange” (Coffey 2018, 45).

Circulating around one’s research project

As more functional, but no less important, aspects of preparation, the researcher will need to clarify and articulate the conditions, limits, and possibilities for the research, such as the duration, financial means, access to people, places and sources, necessary effort, and ethical aspects – at least to a degree that is possible at the outset of a research trajectory. Here, I draw on the work of Dutch researchers and methodologists Daan Andriessen and Martine Ganzevles and their worksheet “Circling your research” (2019). This worksheet is part of a booklet with the same title, which is meant to help researchers with setting up a research project and writing a research proposal. The central argument of the publication and the worksheet is that, in order to write a research proposal and develop a research approach, a researcher needs to do this from a number of different angles or perspectives (in their system, eight). It is not necessary to do this in a linear or fixed order, but one can “circle” around one’s research and switch between these different perspectives (see Figure Int. Int. 2.1).

The worksheet has three implicit layers: Points 1–6 relate to the preparation of a research project, including formulating the research questions. Point 7 is concerned with the products and outcomes: “Which (partly) concrete products will be delivered? What will have been produced, made, or created when it is finished?” Finally, points 8–1 and 8–2 relate to the actual research design, in which 8–1 asks for information about the entire research strategy and 8–2 about which concrete methods are being employed. As I read it, these two last points are strongly “fed” and informed by the previous seven points and, following the circular motion of Andriessen’s and Ganzevles’ idea, feed back iteratively into the other seven points. While the worksheet is meant to help researchers develop and specify their research *in its entirety* in a circular and iterative fashion, I am more interested in the sheet’s usefulness for the preparatory stage of a research project. As the topic of formulating a research

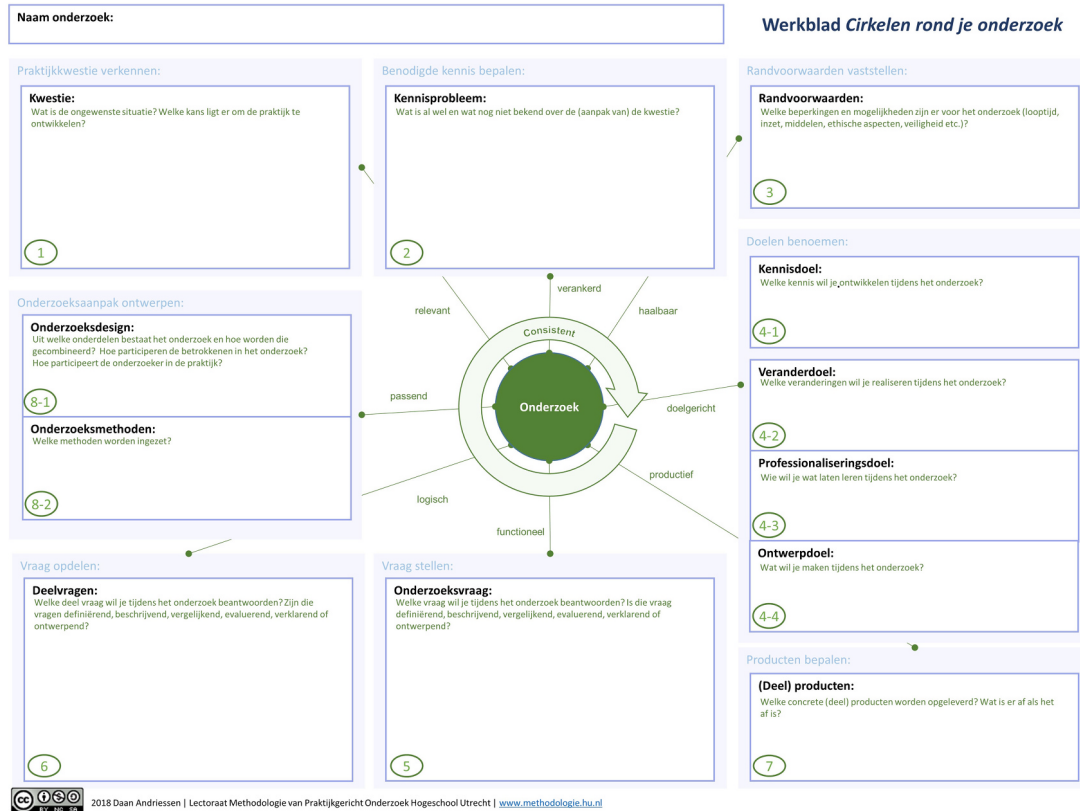


FIGURE INT. 2.1 Daan Andriessen’s worksheet “Circulating around your research” (2019).

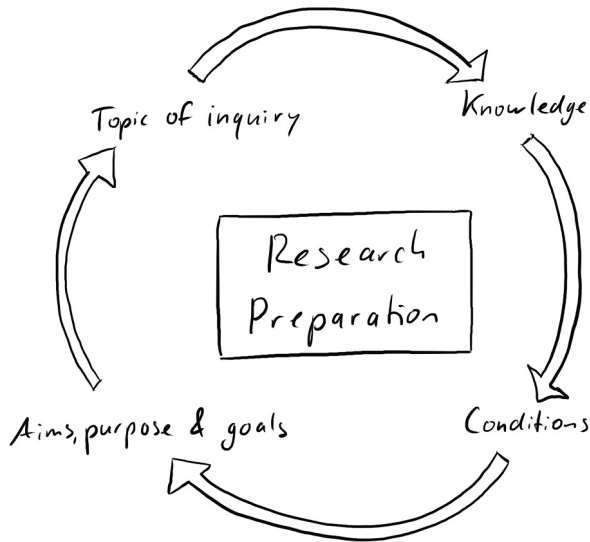


FIGURE INT. 2.2 Adaptation of Andriessen and Ganzvles’s worksheet for the preparatory stage of research design.

question has been discussed above already, I now turn to points 1–4 from the worksheet (see also Figure Int. 2.2):

- 1 *Topic of inquiry*: What is the situation and what is the possibility for or challenge in developing a practice or context? Which part of the researcher’s own (artistic) practice is subject to inquiry?
- 2 *Knowledge*: What is known and what is not known about the (approach to investigating the) matter?
- 3 *Conditions*: Which possibilities and constraints exist for the research (such as time, financial or other resources, means, ethical aspects, safety, etc.)?
- 4 *Aims, purpose, goals*: What kind of *knowledge* can be developed through the research project; what kind of *change* can be realised through the inquiry; what does the researcher want to *learn*; and what is to be *made or created* (think of artistic works, designs, experiences, or writings)?

Regarding the second point, concerning what is known and not known about the (approach to investigating the) matter, it is important for a researcher to situate themselves in the “larger conversation”. This means understanding where the work is located or the kinds of communities it fits into, such as the academic community or communities of practice (Kara 2018, 85). Obviously, this does not (and will not) only and exclusively need to take place during the preparatory phase of a research project. While contextualisation and literature review have traditionally, in the social sciences in particular, taken place at the

beginning of research projects, it is acknowledged today that this takes place throughout the entire duration of a research project. The advancement of a project often implies an advancement of focus and contextualisation, which typically brings the researcher new experiences and ideas, which lead them to consider additional literature and other (artistic or practice) sources as well.

Any contextualisation or situating of oneself should be approached and worked through in an ethical manner. This is another example of how ethical behaviour (see Chapter 2) is continually integrated into the process of designing and doing research, with the following list by Helen Kara offering some central areas for attention:

- how to define 'literature' and its equivalents
- searching thoroughly
- keeping and using records in your work
- reading effectively
- citation and plagiarism
- communicating and publishing research

(Kara 2018, 86)

"Literature" is a good example of this, as much Euro-Western research limits this to written and published (academic) work, whereas in other global contexts this is understood in a much broader fashion. Such a more inclusive understanding resonates with how artistic research typically looks at "sources", which can quite naturally be multimedial and multimodal and include stories, artistic works, novels, poems, websites, blogs, or discussion sites.³ What is important, then, is to have a critical and transparent relation to sources, and one way this can be accomplished is by clearly articulating and communicating the status and nature of a given source. This, in itself, is a good ethical practice.

In this short interlude I have offered a few thoughts on how the artist-researcher can take a few very first steps to prepare the research design and to lay some groundwork for the entire journey of inquiry. This leads directly to the next chapter, "Connecting the Orbits", on research strategy, which connects the previous chapter on crafting research methods and this present one on preparation.

Notes

- 1 In her chapter “Navigating the Unknown”, Hannah Slättne offers inspiring resonances and parallels between the dramaturgical process in the performing arts and the research process in a practice-based research project. Her toolkit is hugely inspiring and insightful in this respect, in particular for researchers who are still developing their ideas early in the research process, even prior to the actual research design. See Slättne 2022.
- 2 As the formulation of research questions, strategies to develop them, and what kind of criteria they need to meet are covered in a large number of publications, I am not covering this (often rather technical) aspect in more detail here.
- 3 On a personal note, I can only encourage anyone interested in the use of diverse kinds of sources to consult the work of Donna Haraway. Haraway uses a manifold of sources (next to academic and philosophical sources) to think with, such as word games, metaphors, artistic works, or the lived relationships with companion species (such as her dog).



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4

CONNECTING THE ORBITS – THE COMMON GROUND MODEL COMPLETED

Introduction

In the wake of the preceding chapters, which have thoroughly considered method and developed Crafting Methods as a way to delineate and understand methods as concrete research actions – framed by a network of entities, activities, documentation, forms of reflection, and learning/experiencing/knowing – it is now time to put method into the sphere and context of the overall research strategy. The strategy level can be conceptualised as a layer “on top” of the Crafting Methods layer, as can be seen in the structure set out in the first Interlude (🔗 image “method-strategy-methodology”, p. 37).

As laid out previously, the Common Ground model is not a method in itself that suggests a particular way to use it. Instead, it provides a network of lenses or perspectives through which one can think about and look at research design. This means that researchers in different roles and contexts can use it in different ways, and this chapter certainly encourages the reader to do so. Overall, the chapter explores and discusses the “strategy elements” of the model, including their visual representation, and includes examples so that the concepts offered here become more tangible. The three elements in this layer of the model are: collection, structure, and time. The final layer, or element, in the Common Ground model is *emergence*. Emergence provides an opening for the unexpected, for what “comes up” during the research process. This layer is arguably the most complex one and also the most difficult (if not impossible) to design.

When we look at preparation as a layer that happens in advance – that “sets the stage”, so to speak – and leave emergence aside for a moment (it will be covered in detail in Chapter Five), there are three core elements left: collection, structure, and time (see Figure 4.1). For a better understanding of

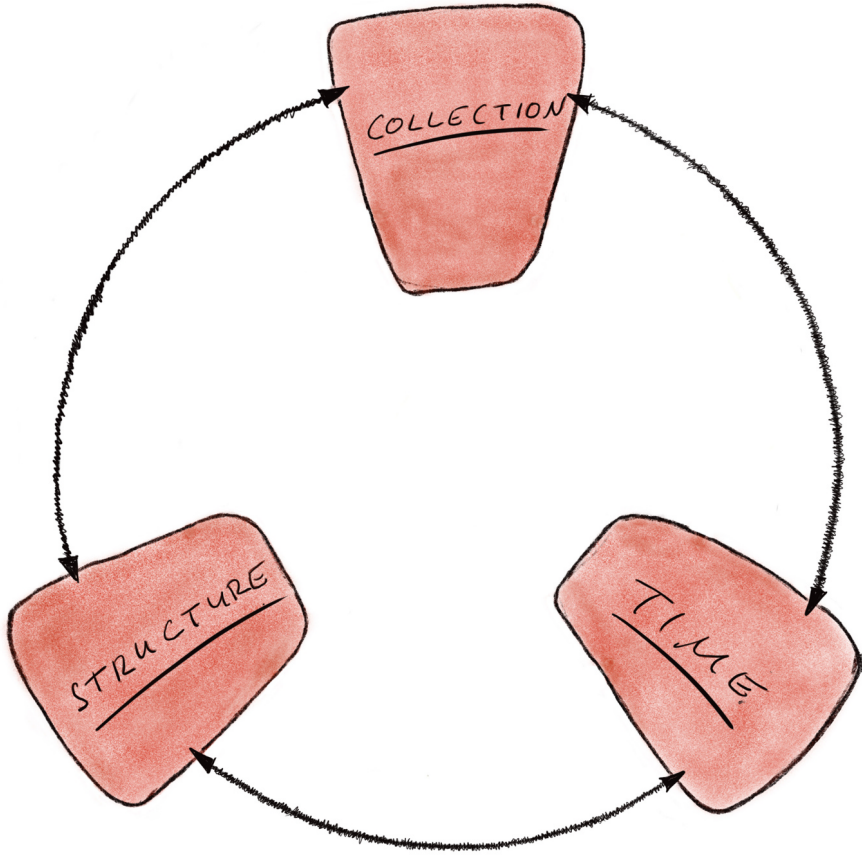


FIGURE 4.1 The basic structure of the Common Ground model.

what is meant with these terms, one might put an imaginary “... of methods” behind these terms: a collection of methods, a structure of methods, the time assigned to individual methods. It is important not to understand these elements as hierarchical or as three subsequent steps to be worked through in a “one-follows-the-other” fashion. The elements themselves might suggest an order such as 1) collection, 2) structure, and 3) time; after all, it is difficult to structure and assign time to what is not yet collected. However, it is still critical to see the three elements as nodes in a flexible network that can constantly shift and within which different conditions can react to other conditions. For example, by structuring or giving time to method in a collection or to methods that are envisioned for use in a research project, the collection itself might change. Philosopher Henk Oosterling has repeatedly argued against the use of triadic structures in the understanding of societal structures and their related connections, such as “top-down” or “bottom-up”. He replaces these with the concept of networks,¹ drawing on Bruno Latour’s work on

Actor Network Theory. In so doing, he favours interrelatedness and emergent processes between elements (or nodes in a network) above strict hierarchies, a paradigm which resonates with the view on research design processes that I offer here.

Collection means, quite literally, a collection of methods, not yet in any order or hierarchy. *Structure* aims at some degree of ordering of a collection into what I call a “flow of data”: how information runs through a research process, which methods are carried out first before continuing to the next. This also includes the different kinds of arrangements that might characterise the flow between methods, such as single threaded, parallel, or feedback loops. The layer *time* goes beyond scheduling and planning and is instead motivated by content and by the notion of *spending time* with something, including how much time we want to or are ready to give. Figure 4.2 shows

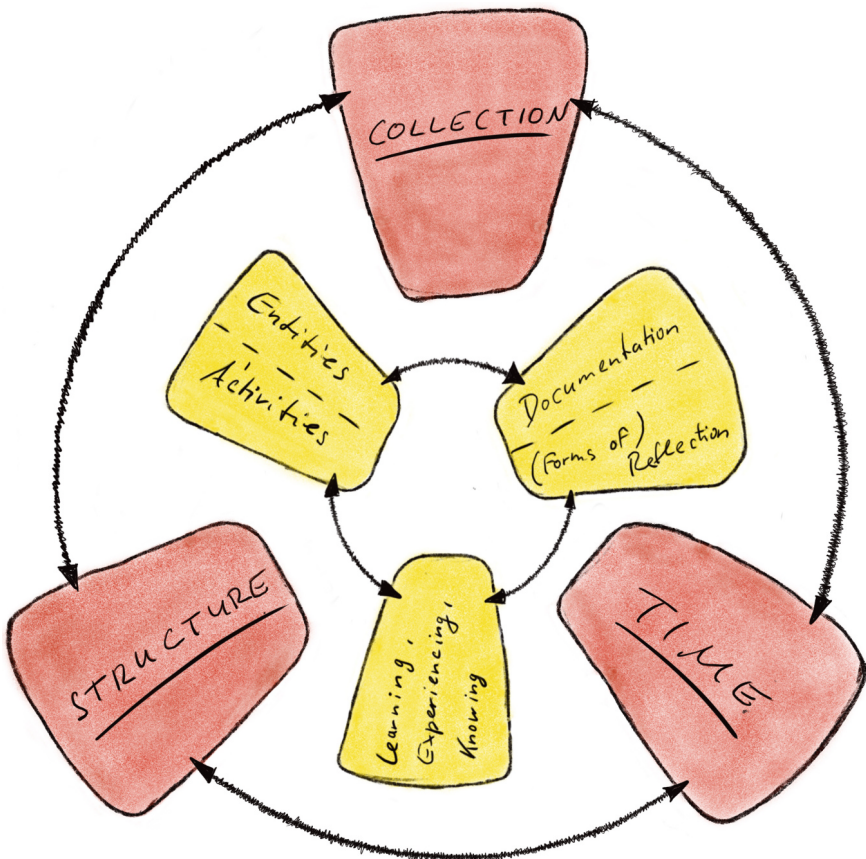


FIGURE 4.2 Visual representation of the two spheres of method and strategy, inserted in between each other, thus forming the largest portion of the Common Ground model.

how the five elements of the Crafting Methods framework are situated in the overall Common Ground model.

The visual representation and its relation to the actual design process will be discussed in more detail towards the end of the chapter. This concerns the fluidity and flexibility not only of the inner and outer layers within themselves but also of the interaction between inner and outer layers. The elements that are conceived of through crafting methods (in yellow) can also play an important role within the overall level of design (in red).

Collection

Collection, as mentioned before, refers to a collection of research methods: different activities, non-hierarchical in principle and based on the research subject and questions as framed during preparation (see Figure 4.3). Collection might take the form of a sketch board, for example, a place where all kinds of methods can be “dropped”. The process of collecting certainly overlaps with activities such as brainstorming or storyboarding.² It is worth mentioning that, during a brainstorm phase of collecting methods, these methods will most likely not emerge fully formed or articulated, depending on whether they are more standard methods or devised from scratch. This does not mean that one should refrain from “collecting” them. Even when there is uncertainty, collecting is an important process of bringing all research activities, possible entities, and ideas for intermediate research results together – putting them on

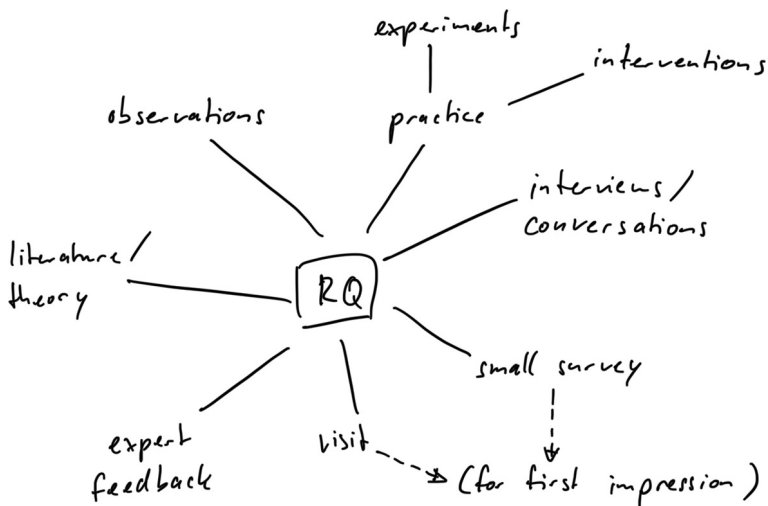


FIGURE 4.3 An example of how a collection might be sketched. The research question (RQ) is positioned in the middle, and a series of initial ideas for methods and research activities is collected around it.

the table – so that the researcher can easily access and play with them, shuffle them around, and see where potential connections might emerge.

I have already elaborated on the understanding of “method” in the previous chapter and would like to note here that it is essential to view every method as an *activity*, something that is literally *done* rather than as an abstract or strictly defined part of what is traditionally called “data collection”. A method is typically carried out by the practitioner-researcher, but also includes others, and can be viewed integrally as a flexible network consisting of entities, activities, documentation, forms of reflection, and learning/experiencing/knowing.

Looking at it schematically, a collection of methods, in which each method is represented by a small letter, might look as in Figure 4.4.

While the idea of “collecting methods” might sound strange at first, it is meant to be thought of in the context of the *activity of designing* a research project. Collecting methods could, for example, begin with collecting broader *ideas* for how to work on one’s research questions, such as “working with interventions” or “having conversations with a range of different professionals”. The collection does not yet have a defined shape, but all methods can be viewed as literally “on the table”, whether fully developed or in a developmental, prototype-like stage (see Figure 4.5a and b). Methods are collected without examining their relationships to one another (yet). Even if the various methods need to be articulated and accounted for at some future point, one’s initial collection should be given time to develop and take form. Items can be grouped and examined, using sticky notes or other means, to generate new ideas. It is evident that collecting methods, itself, can be a creative and generative activity.

Two aspects must not be forgotten when making an initial collection. First, the close and articulated relation between each method and the research subject, area, and question(s) needs to be clear both to the researcher and (later) to an outsider for understanding why each method is part of the collection and what its value and potential can be in the process of inquiry. Second, the collection should be seen as non-hierarchical, thus diverging, in essence,

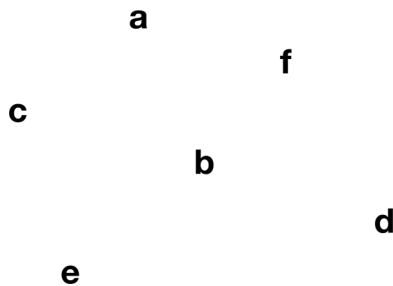


FIGURE 4.4 A collection of methods, represented by letters. While six methods are displayed here, research projects can obviously include more or fewer methods. Quantity is not a criterion here.

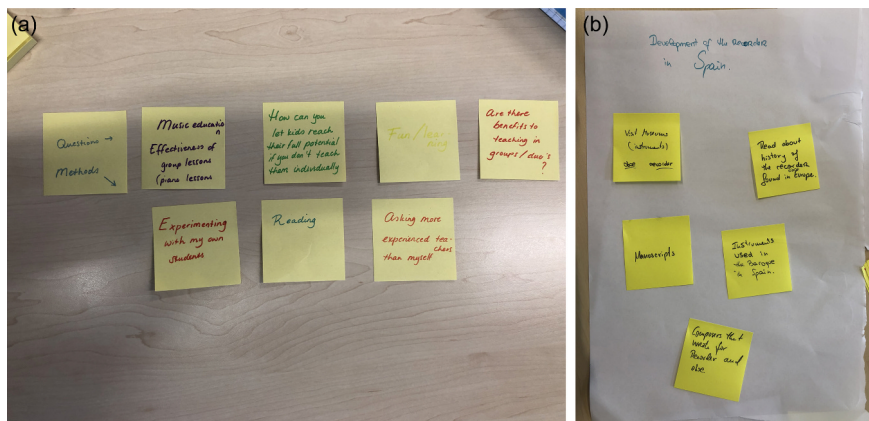


FIGURE 4.5 (a and b) Documentation of brainstorming collections of methods, coming from two distinct student projects for research in music. The first project inquired into different forms of group teaching, while the second one aimed to explore the historical development of the recorder in Spain.

Sources: Photographs by the author.

from traditional research paradigms. Literature research, for example, can be a natural part of a research design but is by no means more important *by definition* than a conversation with peers, an observation of a rehearsal, mapping activities, or experiments through practice.

Structure

Structure leads towards a certain ordering of the collection into what I call a “flow of data”: how information, ideas, or materials travel through a research process; which methods are carried out in which order; and the different kinds of structures that this flow can have, such as single threaded, parallel, or feedback loops (see Figure 4.6). In other words: What comes first, a practical experiment in a chosen location or conversations with other practitioners who also work in a similar context? Which steps come (i.e., which methods need to be carried out) before or after other steps? Do the various activities have a linear flow, one after the other? Are there any parallel strands or parallel methods that need to be tried out before taking a subsequent step to synthesise them? Are there any iterations or feedback loops involved?

The visual representation of a research trajectory, above, is meant to be an invitation, not only to think about research design, but also to become comfortable with playing with it while brainstorming, creating quick sketches or prototypes. This kind of sketching and prototyping can be done in a relatively light manner with great effect. For example, utilising index cards or a small

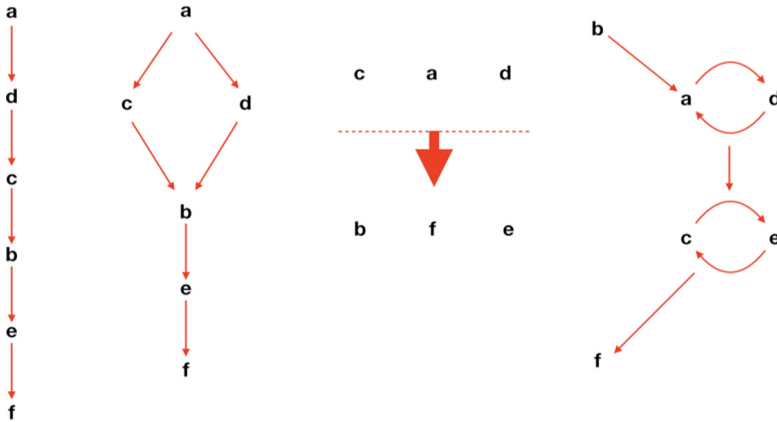


FIGURE 4.6 Different types of structures. The letters here are variables for methods or other research activities, for example: *a* could be “study of book X”, *b* “practical experiment”, *c* “interview with Y” and *d* “observation of performance Z”, and so on.

notebook, one can quickly write down or draw (and thus collect) the various research actions and activities to be carried out, as proposed in the previous section on collecting. One can then playfully develop different structures: placing notes on a table (or virtual notes on a screen), shuffling these around, and imagining or visualising how different versions of structures on the table *might work*. Such visual representations can work particularly well in the early stages of the design process, as they provide direct and more tangible access to what are often complex and longer processes. As visual representations, such diagrams can provide a more immediate entrance into designing, particularly with the modes of sketching or prototyping, than what can be achieved through text alone (see Gates 2018). Therefore, the process of mentally visualising this flow can be helpful in designing a principal research investigation.

For artists and artist-researchers, the potential variety of research design structures might not be surprising. After all, creative processes, or processes of making artistic work, are also very diverse and personal (for each artist and often for each individual artwork). However, this diversity is not necessarily as common in other research disciplines. Uwe Flick illustrates this in his comparison between linear and circular research processes (see Figure 4.7). His circular model is an approach for doing Grounded Theory,³ here compared to more traditional processes of quantitative and qualitative research.

Obviously, schemes of research design structures, even in more traditional forms of research, rarely play out in practice like they are conceived on paper. All structures laid out in diagram form are simplifications of actual practice. However, that being said, the striking difference in possible structures for

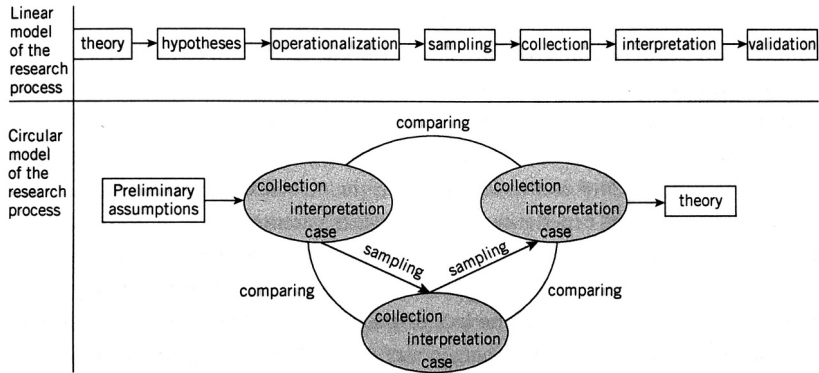


FIGURE 4.7 Comparison of research design structures (Flick 2018b, 21).

artistic research is that there is no *preconceived* structure, model, or hierarchy of different steps. In essence, any structure is possible, for example: a linear structure such as Flick’s “traditional linear process” or the more circular process Flick proposes for Grounded Theory or even a combination of both. Again, I assume that such combinations might occur in more established research disciplines as well, but there they are deviations from preconceived structures. In the Common Ground model, the point is precisely that there is no preconceived structure and that the *kind* of structure that is eventually implemented will emerge entirely from the design process, creating a form that by definition has not been described before. There is no deviation from the norm, as there is no norm.

Time

In most contexts in which research is carried out, time plays a crucial role, most obviously manifested by deadlines or by the number of hours one can assign to a research project, often next to actual practice.⁴ The nature of time as a limited resource is a natural part of contemporary practice and research and should be acknowledged in some way in the preparatory phase of a project. Regarding its visualisation, time in research processes is typically represented in tables, Gantt charts, or certain kinds of diagrams (see Figure 4.8) that typically deal with time *planning*, scheduling, or a timeline. Such a timeline is certainly important and can provide insight into how the different phases and activities relate to each other. This adds to structure.

In most cases, different claims on time are at play during a research trajectory: structures that an institution might impose on either researchers or students (they need to finish their studies and thus their research on time) or funding bodies that need to be informed about the progress, conclusion, and reporting on a project. There are elements in a research project that might

LAYOUT RESEARCH

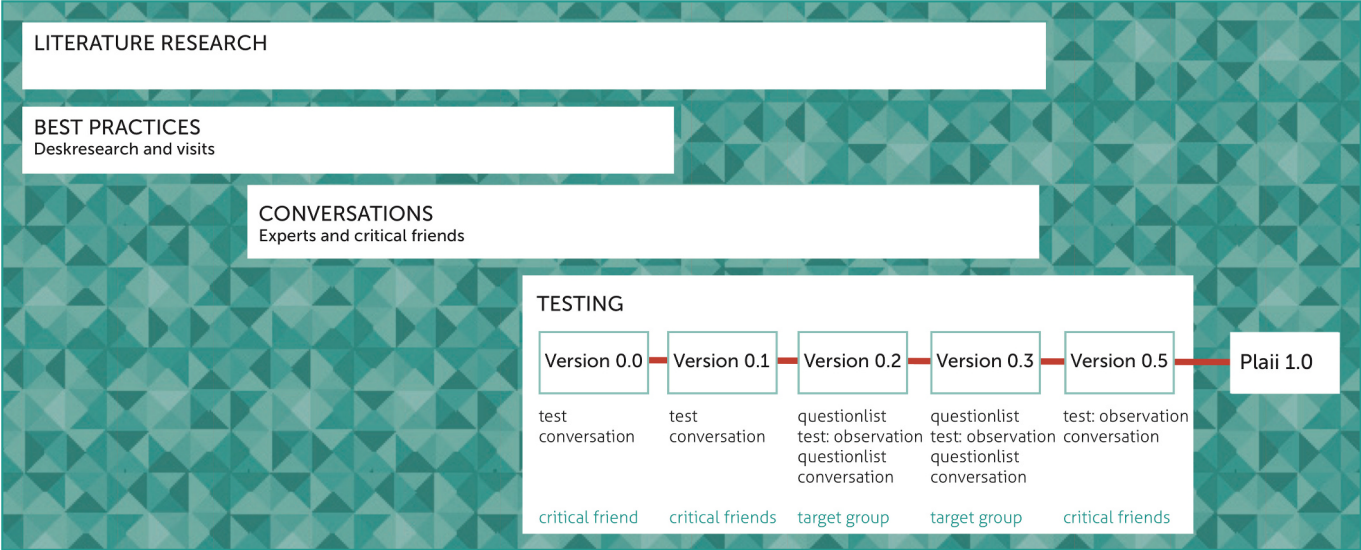


FIGURE 4.8 A more timeline-oriented way of visually representing time (Geerling 2015, 11).

take a lot of time – such as developing theory, an artistic experiment, or an entire artistic production – including the time one needs to reflect on what has been done or created. All of the above have consequences for the element of time. This is often not as straightforward as one might like, as a doctoral student suggested during a workshop on methodology in Helsinki, because one often starts with planning before understanding how much one can actually do.⁵

However, in the Common Ground model the layer of *Time* refers less to scheduling, planning, and practicalities than it does to content. The category of time emphasises thinking about not only how much time something costs but also about which activities, methods, people, or other entities the researcher-practitioner actually wants or needs to *spend* their time with and in what way, something I refer to as *quality* of time. Which methods, amongst all possible options in the collection, are the most important, necessary, or promising? How much time do we want or need to spend with a person or a group of people in a particular space or surrounding and for what reasons?⁶ These can be critical questions to explore and answer during the design process. As soon as more qualitative questions are answered, one can “go back” and relate these answers to the more pragmatic perspective on time. Certain parts of the design might be made shorter or longer or be skipped entirely, obviously with an awareness of the consequences of these decisions in relation to the initial research questions. Naturally, this can have an effect on the elements of both collection and structure and might involve reconsiderations and readjustments of these elements as well. This process should establish a truly significant relationship between the categories of collection and time. To make this slightly more tangible, I offer three short examples below:

As a first example, a performing artist and researcher wants to carry out two series of experiments through which she can explore a certain approach to rehearsing processes with a group of performers. The first series of rehearsals might work as an introduction to a whole range of techniques (say, five) that are expeditiously explored in sessions of three hours each to try them out, so to speak. This first series is followed by feedback and reflection before the second series is initiated. In the second series, however, the researcher decides to go into greater depth with only two of the five initially-chosen approaches, those that proved to be the most inspiring, challenging, or promising during the first series. As the researcher is keen to explore these two approaches in greater depth, each of them is explored for three full days. Thus, two methods that would both probably be called “(practical) experiments” in a first sketch of a research design prove to be actually quite different with regard to time. Accordingly, this difference has other consequences, too, such as different amounts of artistic depth, differences in the actual function of the techniques and experiments within the overall research design, and differences in what the actual outcome might be.

The second example, different in nature, is concerned with the notion of different “kinds,” “uses”, or “classifications” of time. How can an action be embedded, in terms of time, over the course of a day? Does it work as a dedicated block of three hours in which one carries out a research action? Or does it function as something more regular or recurring, such as: “over the next three weeks I will think about this question in some way, at some dedicated moment during the day, while sitting in the local library or in a café.” Or, a third possibility (and there are many more) could be that one is working through writing as the central method in a certain period of a research project, but every day includes a half-hour walk that is methodically understood as important for the writing process. This is a different *kind* of time, or different mode of time-spending, when compared with a one-time interview at a dedicated moment on a particular day that will last for two hours.

The third example comes from Helen Kara. In her argument for a more process-based understanding of ethical consent, she points out the importance of taking time, as consent-related issues or questions can emerge at any stage of the research process. “Truly ethical consent, in any paradigm, may or may not include a written element but will always be based in authentic and respectful dialogue. This isn’t always easy to achieve, as it requires good interpersonal skills and time” (Kara 2018, 104). Such a truly respectful dialogue is more than a basic attitude; it needs to be acknowledged – from the perspective of the time it needs – in some way in a research design.

Naturally, all this needs to be accounted for in the grand scheme of the research investigation, including being aware of the limits imposed on the investigation (☞ Preparation, p. 101). It might not be possible to avoid tension between the notion of “quality of time” and a more pragmatic interpretation of the time layer.⁷ The point here is that the *category* of time is what actually makes this tension tangible, so that the researcher can work with this tension, relate to it, and develop an intentional position towards it. Without this category (or a perspective from which one can think about it and work with it), there is a good chance that the pragmatic perspective will predominate.

This perspective is closely related to discourses on temporality and slowness in particular. For example, philosopher Paul Cilliers notes the importance of delay and iteration “against the alignment of speed” and its accompanying notions, such as “efficiency, success, quality and importance” (Cilliers 2006, 2). In this sense, time as a category within the design model is not just a “neutral” category but also includes a critical and ethical position. As writer Wendy Parkins (2004) suggests, the actual issue is probably not one of fast versus slow but is rather about “care” as a central value⁸ in what she calls an “ethics of time”. This understanding of time is related to various “movements” concerned with notions of sustainability, responsibility for mankind and the environment.⁹

EXAMPLE: ARIANE TRÜMPER ON TIME

Scenographer and PhD researcher Ariane Trümper was struck by a discussion on the element of time during a workshop, which led her to create a “table of intensities” for her research, mapping the quantity and intensity of different phases and activities of her research design with regard to time (see Figure 4.9). This made it possible for her to think more deeply about the time relations between parallel activities in her research design and, as a result, organise them differently.

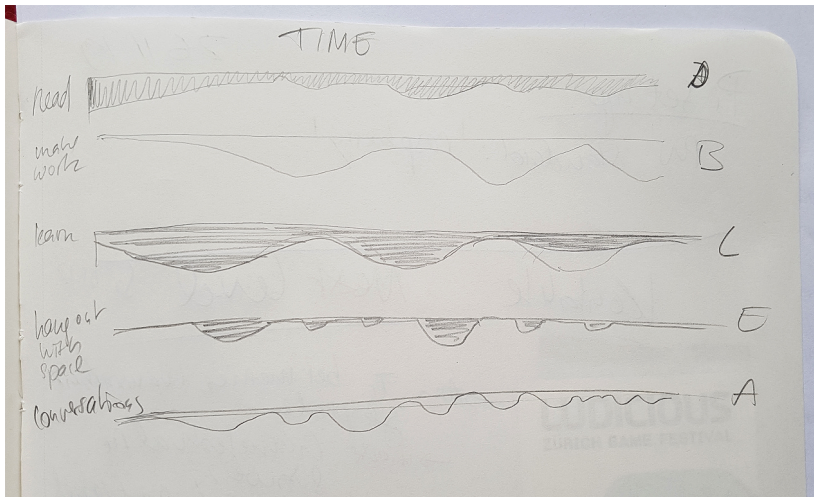


FIGURE 4.9 Ariane Trümper’s “table of intensities” in which she sketches the different amounts of time necessary for the parallel or integrated activities of reading, making work, learning, “hanging out” with space, and conversations.

The entanglement of the three perspectives

Now that the three elements of the strategy-level of the Common Ground model have been discussed, I will briefly elaborate on the relation between the levels of method and strategy. On the one hand, one can understand the three “strategy-parts” of the model – collection, structure, and time – as different elements, steps, or relatively distinct perspectives within the design process. However, in the greater scheme of the design process, they are obviously not separated or independent of each other. On the contrary, they are inseparable and deeply entangled with each other with regard to both approach and pacing.

In the analyses of a research design or strategy, searching for a distinction between the three perspectives can become quite a theoretical exercise. Obviously, this is possible to some degree: time might be the easiest of the three, given the understanding of simple phasing or timing (what happens when and for how long). However, the considerations underlying this phasing, such as the reasoning behind how long a certain experiment takes place or with what kind of regularity sketching is done, are absolutely entangled with the other elements and difficult to view in isolation. This is enhanced when certain choices within time have an influence on either collection or structure, or both.

Collection is a non-hierarchical set of various kinds of methods and research actions that become structured. The two perspectives, collection and structure, merge in the researcher's design process. Even if one might say "Researcher X uses sketching and literature in their research", this is not how a collection is understood here – because collection is situated, here, in the design process, not necessarily in the final outcomes of a research project. During a research design process, a collection will likely have been present, but then it becomes formed, structured, and disappears in its original sense. This is because collecting is a stage in the research process rather than part of the outcome. The collection is still present as the entire body of methods and research activities that have been applied; at the same time, however, this non-hierarchical collection has already been transformed into the more specific and directed *structure* of the research design.

Another way of looking at this would be to see a collection as a *repertoire* of research activities. This could look like the sketch in Figure 4.3 or might take the form of a quick list:

- read literature
- experiment in/with practice
- interviews
- making pitches
- listen
- write
- dissemination (as method)
- logbook/field notes

However, this repertoire in itself is not yet specific enough to be carried out. It is a non-hierarchical collection of methods (or activities that are not yet methods), a first step in mapping out and giving shape to the actual research process. What this list needs is to become more specified through the addition of the elements of time and structure. Second, each method needs to be worked out in itself, as has been covered in the previous chapter. The collection can be understood as individual lumps of clay which, through modelling

and sculpting, are transformed into a more defined sculpture. After the collection is structured, the same activities are still on the table, but they have a more concrete shape and can provide more of a “feel” for how the research process will actually take place. The same goes for time. Adding it to the equation will provide an even more concrete and defined idea of how a given research trajectory will unfold.

Between the inner and outer orbits – How strategy and method relate

As briefly indicated in the previous paragraph, alongside the entanglement of the three elements in the strategy layer comes the close relation and interdependency of the spheres of method and strategy. At first sight, the Crafting Methods framework might be understood as only loosely connected to the strategy layer, remaining essentially separate from it. Methods are designed (i.e., crafted) first, then collected, and third, brought into a meaningful structure, with an integrated idea of how time will work in the process, to answer the research question(s). This view also broadly resonates with much of the literature on qualitative research, where various methods are more or less predefined and then implemented to fulfil their function within a larger research strategy.

The Common Ground model does not reject such linear approaches to designing research per se but seeks to acknowledge that in actual research practice (and arguably even more so in artistic research), this process does not unfold in such a linear fashion. In the view offered here, the design of methods is intensely entangled with the overall research strategy, and both are interdependent. To illustrate this, the following visualisation offers one more step towards the completion of the model (see Figure 4.10) by connecting the two orbits.

The difference with the version presented in Figure 4.2 (p. 107) might seem minor but is crucial nonetheless. Not only are the elements of the two distinct orbits connected and interdependent, but the inner and outer orbits and all their elements are as well. Elements of method and strategy naturally influence each other. This may happen in a variety of ways, for example:

- The documentation within one specific method might become a method of making in itself (☞ “Documentation”, p. 74).
- During the phase of carrying out the research project, unexpected outcomes in one method might have a strong influence on the overall aspect of time.
- Choices on the level of entities and/or activities may affect the overall collection, which might result in a renegotiation of the entire structure.
- In the case of an iteration (carrying out the same method several times) the researcher decides to either end the cycles of iteration earlier or add one or more cycles due to the outcomes of the previous cycles, which has an effect on the overall timing of the project.

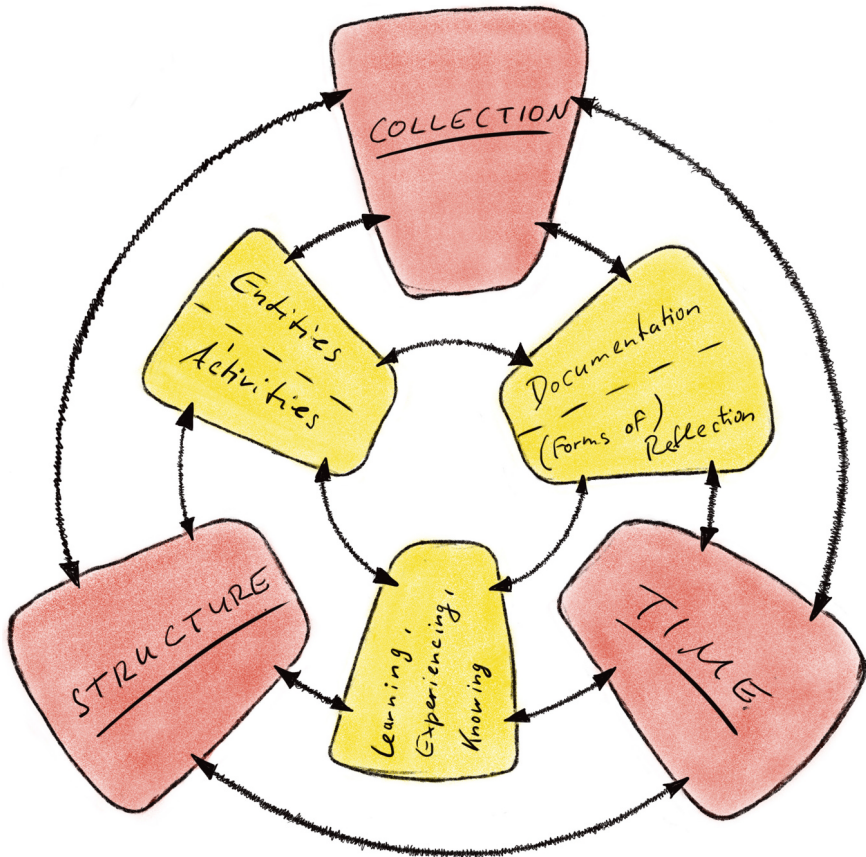


FIGURE 4.10 The entanglement of the inner (method) and outer (strategy) orbit in the Common Ground model.

As mentioned earlier, working on the research design does not necessarily stop at a specific moment. As soon as researchers start carrying out research activities, they can be confronted with unexpected developments, unforeseen outcomes, or new ideas based on what they have learned or whom they have met during the project. This leads to the last element of the model and to the question of how to give such unexpected elements a place in the entire research design process: emergence. Figure 4.11 shows the entire model, with the Crafting Methods framework nested within the three main elements of collection, structure, and time and the multiple connections represented by three “orbits”. All of the elements surround an empty centre.¹⁰ Emergence does not have a designated space, colour, or line around it; all of the elements float in a “sea of emergence”.¹¹ I developed this visualisation to take into account the many unforeseen possibilities and shapes of emergence and, especially, the certainty that in most cases *some* form of emergence will

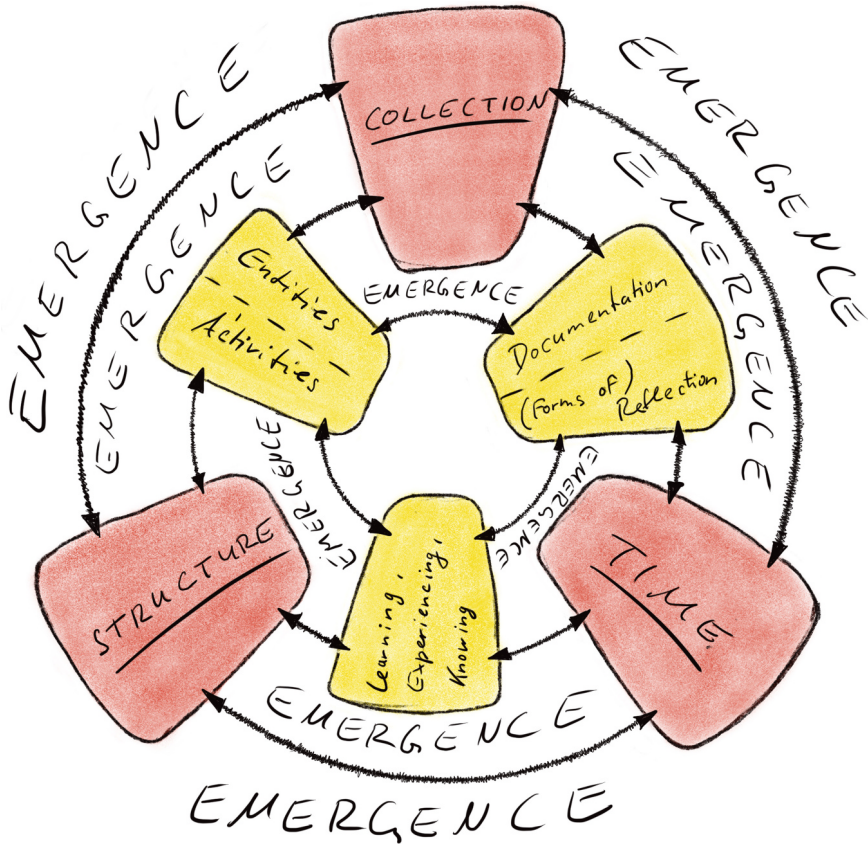


FIGURE 4.11 The complete Common Ground model, with the Crafting Methods framework in its interior, all floating in a “sea of emergence”.

happen. This includes emergent developments or ideas that lead to potential “sidetracks”, as artist and researcher Annette Arlander calls them.¹² Emergence will be covered in depth in the next chapter.

Notes

- 1 See Henk Oosterling’s 2013 lecture (in Dutch) at the symposium Cultuur in Beeld. De kracht van cultuur (Culture in the spotlight. The power of culture). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vsTSasp8noE>, 21 October 2019. See also Oosterling 2013b.
- 2 For more on storyboarding research, see Dunleavy 2014, for example.
- 3 Grounded Theory is a research approach in which particular phenomena or processes are studied with the aim of generating new theory. A key component of Grounded Theory is that such new theory is then based on data generated through the research project itself rather than through studying other research that has already been carried out or through reading literature on a given topic.

- 4 For a nurse, for example, the “primary task” is looking after patients in a hospital. Here research into a specific aspect of her practice is most likely seen as a part of her work, and instances in which she might be able to spend the totality of her working hours on research are relatively rare.
- 5 The visualisation of the Common Ground model consciously leaves out one aspect of research design: the timeline of the design process itself. The reason I do this is grounded in my vision on research design. Every researcher gives shape, themselves, to the design of their research project, through different kinds of processes or orders. The Common Ground model aims for an inclusive approach and thus supports the many different ways that a researcher can arrive at their final research strategy. This includes how one connects the layer of crafting one’s methods and bringing them into the overall design.
- 6 Figure 4.10, a sketch by scenographer and researcher Ariane Trümper, shows one possible way to visualise different intensities of time.
- 7 This might be especially true in the case of students, who are typically working according to a strict timeline: a maximum of two years in the case of a master’s degree, for example, which is quite limited for carrying out a full research project (depending on the nature of the project, obviously). But the idea of spending time – as opposed to working towards deadlines – might also be understood as a kind of intervention, and as an invitation or provocation, to think in terms of achieving the greatest depth or reflection: how to re-read, re-iterate, and so on. In short: one might think about the depth one wants to achieve first and only afterwards think about, and relate to, deadlines.
- 8 See also Lizzie Muller’s (2021) chapter “Appreciative Systems in Doing and Supervising Curatorial Practice-Based Research”, in which she positions care as a central value in the context of curatorial practice: “curatorial care”. Her case study of curator-researcher Bec Bean – who Muller says is beginning “to articulate her appreciative system [within her curatorial practice] in the context of ‘care’” – is particularly insightful.
- 9 While Cilliers refers mainly to the Italy-based slow food movement, there are other movements related to slowness, each with overlapping agendas, but also individual perspectives on the notion of slowness. For example, the slow fashion movement accentuates sustainability, more respect and responsibility for humanity and the environment, and a changed consciousness towards the product and consumer behaviour (see <http://slowfashionblog.de/slow-fashion/>, retrieved on 11 January 2023). Slow science argues for a “non-real-time/offline, integrative and sustainable culture of thinking” and that science needs time without the constant pressure to publish at an unsustainable pace, for example (<http://slow-science.org/slow-science-manifesto.pdf>, retrieved on 11 January 2023).
- 10 The empty centre represents the starting point in “from scratch” situations, the point where everything is still open to inquiry. In the vision offered here, this is also the common ground from which every artist researcher begins their research.
- 11 I want to thank Judi Marshall for offering this phrase in her feedback on the visualisation of the model.
- 12 Arlander, during an audience conversation at the CARPA6 (Colloquium on Artistic Research in Performing Arts) conference, Helsinki, 30 August 2019: “How can you still sort of do what you promise to do [in a research or grant proposal] but not abandon the sidetrack?” Arlander’s comment indicates that this “sidetrack” is not considered part of the original research design, and this is one of the crucial facets of the process of doing carrying out practice-based research – or any research, for that matter. Generated by the original research project, a sidetrack might become a parallel thread to this original trajectory or an entirely new research project on its own.

5

EMERGENCE EMERGING

At this point, it is time to face the most challenging aspect of research design, which is also ubiquitous when it comes to research *practice*: emergence. My fascination for emergence derives from everyday research and supervision experience, where I have witnessed both the fundamental nature of this phenomenon as well as how it is complex and puzzling and makes the research process feel hard to control or guide. This chapter takes an important step towards gaining a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of emergence and its nature as an essential element in the research process and design. As mentioned at the end of the previous chapter, the two layers of the Common Ground model – strategy and method – and the three orbits that connect them are surrounded by a “sea of emergence”. Unlike the method and strategy elements, emergence does not have a designated and distinct place in the model; it surrounds and connects the model’s elements as an amorphous field.

I like to begin by reiterating what was said about emergence in the Introduction. The three initial thoughts concerning the place of emergence in this model are that it:

- is about what comes up, the unexpected
- works against a (too) strict delineation of what research outcomes will be *in advance*
- is strongly based on numerous experiences of how complex practices and processes (including research) tend to take shape and the desire to give this element a place in research design

These thoughts or observations are derived not just from my own experiences but have also been documented and articulated by a wide variety of



FIGURE 5.1 Notes and traces of research sessions – left on the wall of a research space at HKU University of the Arts Utrecht – framed as an “emergent system”.

Photograph by the author.

researchers. Human geographer Kate Swanson shares from her experience: “once I saw the field, my research plans changed. The core substance of my research remained the same; what differed were the specifics” (Swanson in Ward 2020, 61). Anthropologist Harry Wolcott mentions the “consideration of serendipity in research. Pursuing the case study led in directions I would never have anticipated” (Wolcott 2002, 155).¹ In the course of this chapter, I elaborate on these basic ideas, based on lived experience, and unpack them, drawing on the work of Johnson 2001, Goldstein 2005, Corning 2002, and Dalsgaard et al. 2014, among others.

The most important step I aim to take is to transition from theories of emergence and complexity towards the practice of designing research and examining the design decisions necessary for giving emergence a place in research practice. Emergence is “there”; it definitely happens, and it is fascinating, but what can one *do* with it, actually? I argue that *through* thorough design choices and the carrying out of these choices during the research process, emergence can be experienced as a generous, yet potentially challenging, contributor. With stronger elements in the design (that also need to be considered context-sensitive and flexible to a certain degree) – such as a clear (set of) research question(s), demarcated methods, and overall structure – emergence and the unexpected also become stronger and can be worked with more intentionally. This paradox of unexpected elements actually coming up *through thorough planning* resonates with theories of emergence as “the unforeseeable experimental dynamics that bring the intentional and unintentional inextricably together” (Bippus 2013, 122). Emergence in research methodology needs a strong and solid (yet flexible) design, as otherwise there is no network of low-level interactions from which emergence can arise. The core argument of the chapter is that it is precisely the productive tension and well-considered balance between a thoroughly-crafted design and emerging elements that lies at the heart of a research process. The chapter will close with a few suggestions for readers regarding working with emergence or, rather, on how to let emergence do its work. One of these suggestions will be to let go of the idea of developing a specific technique to work with emergence – or even to evoke it – and develop, instead, a habit and attitude of being open, accepting, and welcoming towards emergence, while remaining rigorous and thorough in one’s design decisions.

General notions of emergence in practice

Many practitioners will, often casually, share a few basic observations and general ideas concerning emergence. When not mentioned explicitly, emergence is often referred to as “what comes up unexpectedly”. Virtually all of the professional research projects that I have been involved in or have seen from close by have generated inspiring, yet entirely unexpected outcomes; in light of this, I argue that it is important to give emergence a voice in research design.

In creative processes, and in the creation of artistic works, we are only too aware of emergence through materials (whether visual, sonic, performative, or other kinds or modes) that offer new experiences, impressions, and possibilities for new ideas. For most artists I know, this happens almost constantly, and one could even state that this process of receiving new ideas and working with unexpected or unintended ideas is at the core of artistic practice. It is very common in the arts to informally discuss emergence with regard to either research or artistic and creative processes, as in: "This or that emerged from" Overall, there appears to be a shared understanding of what is meant by such sentences or statements. Often, the idea of "something emerging" describes how ideas come up in the artistic process or how conversation or collective action lead to new discoveries, or it is used to describe processes connected to notions such as intuition or improvisation. However, what emergence *exactly* refers to is often not made explicit or clear nor precisely framed.

Moreover, with regard to research, suggesting that emergence happens is not a new insight. Even though this is the case, emergence is not usually explicitly taken into account nor does it play a specific role in research *design*. Implicitly, researchers know that unexpected events and insights will occur (especially *after* funding has been awarded), but this is typically not considered and articulated in the research strategy up front. This situation inspired my desire to give emergence a voice in the process of design-research: "as a description for the way creative ideas, images, and insights can arise unexpectedly and radically distinct from whatever inputs that may have served as a groundwork for the created product" (Goldstein 2005, 4). But how can one actually give voice to something which is, as yet, unknown?

My fascination for emergence also finds its origins in the practice of doing and supervising research processes and observing the puzzlement these experiences have generated. I observed an inherent tension in research processes, between what can be designed, prepared, and thoroughly thought through in advance, on the one hand, and that which escapes the pre-devised, which is impossible to plan or design beforehand, the unexpected that emerges and develops during research, on the other hand. Sometimes, discoveries or unexpected developments have startling consequences that can turn an entire research project upside down. From these experiences and observations, I learned that neither of these two poles (design and preparation on the one hand, emergence and the unexpected and unprepared on the other) can exist without the other. Both need to be present and play a part in the process and activity of doing research. This idea, initially based only on my experience, observations, and intuition, was the point of departure towards what has become this chapter, towards what I call the "basic tension of research design".

A SHORT EXERCISE

Before the chapter continues, I like to invite you, the reader, to pause for a moment for a short and simple exercise: If you think about emergence – that is, your own personal or general associations in light of what you have read so far – how do you relate to it? Can you recall two or three life experiences in which emergence has been apparent, such as the emergent unfolding of events, emerging behaviour of yourself, friends, or family? During which ideas, behaviour of your own or of others emerged from a series of events? Try to track how these events unfolded: What happened? Can you trace any specific cause-and-effect relationships?

Make a note of some of these experiences and relationships, as concretely and precisely as possible, and reflect on how these relate to what is written on these pages – and what emerges from the encounter between your retelling of these experiences and the account here.

Can you share such an experience with someone else, maybe even do this exercise together, listening and sharing in exchange? This is about “mapping the ground”: the idea is to look at these experiences without judgment – whether good or bad, productive or unproductive – they simply add to the conversation and discussion about emergence.

Especially in the arts and creative practices, there is the risk of “hiding behind” what emerges, of letting everything come up and develop through the process without using the potential of a thoroughly-crafted research design. Typically, in most artistic practice, as soon as one starts working and exploring, something interesting and/or unexpected will appear as potential material to develop. Improvisation, simple trials with colour, physical materials, spatial arrangements, technical setups, experiments with sound effects, or observations and experiments in public spaces generate material and ideas. We will almost certainly get *something* to work with, even when we are simply trying out our initial, un(in)formed ideas. However, this is not what the notion of emergence in research is about, at least not in the sense that I am offering here. I argue that, as researchers, we should not be satisfied with building a research trajectory through simply trying out and working with whatever materialises during such a process or activity. In a research context, a thorough design needs to be in place and use its voice to make sure that that which emerges is productive. When design is not taken seriously, there is always the risk of developing a project where “anything goes”. And as tempting as this might sound, the disadvantages are obvious:

- One might not know, or even have any idea of, how long a project will take.

- The outcome is highly uncertain and undirected (again, for artistic practice this is not necessarily a problem, but it can become problematic in the context of doing research).
- There is the real risk that the outcome is little more than arbitrary.
- Chances are high that one will end up with outcomes that primarily reflect one's own practices and represent what one already knows – the expected.

The point here is that, through the process of designing and carrying out one's design in research practice, a complex system of various interactions is set in motion that allows emergence to unfold in a way that relates more productively to the journey of inquiry at hand. In the coming sections, following a short exercise, I turn towards theories of emergence to get a more precise and workable understanding of the concept. Afterwards, I will return to what this all might mean for research (design) practice.



FIGURE 5.2 An emergent path in Capelle aan den IJssel, The Netherlands (photo: Falk Hübner). Emergence is observable in many parts of everyday life, one example being “desire paths” in public spaces – such as parks or campuses – where people leave the given path to move in a desired direction or arrive at their destination more quickly, creating visible shortcuts. See Bramley, Ellie Violet (2018). “Desire paths: the illicit trails that defy the urban planners.” Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2018/oct/05/desire-paths-the-illicit-trails-that-defy-the-urban-planners>, 26 April 2021.

Making sense of emergence – Mapping of theory

In the following sections, I offer a number of theoretical stances and perspectives on emergence, drawing on authors from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds. The idea behind this theoretical framing is not to achieve a final definition or present a closed concept of emergence but, rather, to “map the terrain”, to arrive at a frame of reference that will form the basis for further explorations in this chapter.

The phenomenon of emergence is widely described and discussed in complexity theory and relates to other scientific disciplines as well, such as physics, chemistry, biology, management studies, psychology, and evolutionary theory. The common denominator in all these disciplines is that emergence, as a concept, is concerned with the relationship between wholes and parts, with complex wholes emerging from parts through relatively simple interactions.² Sociologist Jeffrey Goldstein offers the definition of emergence as “the arising of novel and coherent structures, patterns and properties during the process of self-organization in complex systems” (Goldstein 1999, quoted in Corning 2002, 21). In *Emergence*, author Stephen Johnson (2001) describes a wide variety of phenomena and contexts in which emergence occurs, as diverse as slime mould, ant colonies, cities, the human brain, and software. He describes emergence as a form of higher-level knowledge and behaviour, emerging from low- or local-level interaction in complex systems, based on “swarm logic, with no central office in command” (Johnson 2001, 233). Its fundamental elements are “tools of feedback, neighbour interaction, and pattern recognition” (Johnson 2001, 231).³ Management and complexity theorist Esko Kilpi adds that “emergent interaction [is] based on transparency, interdependence and responsiveness” (Kilpi 2015, n.p.).

An emergent process is generally more complex and nuanced than a simple cause-and-effect relationship: “I did this, made this choice, and therefore that particular thing happened.” Kilpi points this out as the “if-then model of management. In organisations, a familiar explanation for success is that a particular manager or a particular culture caused it” (Kilpi 2015, n.p.). He immediately continues with the warning “that this view of the relationship between cause and effect is much too simplistic and leads to a very limited or even faulty understanding of what is really going on” (Kilpi 2015, n.p.).

Both Johnson’s and Kilpi’s contributions resonate with Peter Cariani (2008), who states that “much of our current understanding of emergence revolves around the concept of new macro patterns arising from micro-processes” (Cariani 2008, 1). He notes that “the full gamut of emergence encompasses new forms, new material structures, new organizations, new functions, new perspectives, and new aspects of being” (Cariani 2008, 2). This includes new techniques or even paradigms – which is in line with what Johnson proposes, as a paradigm is usually of a higher order than techniques or separate functions. The radically new that Cariani refers to is also described by Johnson in

the context of scientific and academic developments: At times, changes and larger developments seem to “hang in the air”. A body of knowledge emerges through “traces” left at conferences, publications, or discussions, which might ultimately lead to a paradigm shift.⁴ Yet, and this is crucial for my argument here, the striking relation between whole and parts is that, while higher-level structures (and findings) do emerge from their parts, they are still *unpredictable* and more than just the sum of those parts. Johnson emphasises that

it is both the promise and the peril of swarm logic that the higher-level behaviour is almost impossible to predict in advance. You never really know what lies on the other end of a phase transition until you press play and find out.

(Johnson 2001, 233)

In addition to these elements of higher order and unpredictability, Goldstein makes an explicit connection to creativity, noting “how both emergence and creative processes are *creative*, that is, how they enable the coming into being of the radically novel” (Goldstein 2005, 8). Cariani’s work links with creativity theory as well when he (partly) locates emergence in the logic of divergence and convergence, drawing on earlier work by Feyerabend and Popper:

This evolutionary process involves an expansive phase in which many possibilities are generated (variation + proliferation) and a contractive phase in which critical selection of “adequate” or “best” possibilities is made. The expansive phase is the reign of the imagination, of free and open creation, while the contractive phase is the realm of sober clarity and rigor. In science, hypothesis creation is such an expansive phase, where arguably, “anything goes” (Feyerabend, 1973), whereas empirical testing and falsification is the contractive phase where hopes and visions are separated from “reality”, i.e. consistency with observations (Popper, 1959). One conceives of many possibilities that are then narrowed down by “what works”.

(Cariani 2008, 6)

Finally, activist, feminist, and author Adrienne Maree Brown brings this conceptual exploration closer to concrete behaviour and practice. Brown’s work clearly relates to previous framings while bringing the theoretical discourse closer to human practice and behaviour by defining emergence (and emergent strategy, a term she uses in the context of activism and community work) as “building complex patterns and systems of change through relatively small interactions” (Brown 2017, 2). However, she also includes a more poetic or spiritual perspective: “It is another way of speaking about the connective tissue of all that exists – the way, the Tao, the force, change, God/ess, life. Birds flocking, cells splitting, fungi whispering underground” (Brown 2017, 3). Furthermore, Brown emphasises a strong sense of “listening [...] with all the

senses of the body and the mind” (Brown 2017, 3). Brown’s most straightforward description, in relation to concrete practice, is that of being “adaptive but also intentional” (Brown 2017, 21). To illustrate this, she uses the metaphor of travelling birds, pushed off course by a storm, who are still able to continue travelling towards the desired location.

I would say emergent strategy is learning [...] how to be adaptive in right relationship to change, but also with intention: because if you just change all the time, you’re just changing all the time, you’re a mess, you’re just a leaf blowing in the wind. But changing with the idea: “Oh, I’m a bird, I’m trying to get to Mexico for my migration. A storm came. How do I still get myself to Mexico?”

(Brown 2017, retrieved from <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=lyN76oTt67M>, 19 April 2023)

Why design anyway?

One might wonder: Why design at all? If emergence is so important and so needed, why even make the effort to design a strategy? Or, as a participant in a workshop on methodology asked: “How can you possibly want to design so much while at the same time wanting to hold on to what you cannot know?”⁵ This seeming paradox has been mentioned several times already as the “essential tension” that lies in research, between thorough planning and unexpected novelty and uncertainty. The previous sections and this chapter in its entirety serve to make this general stance more tangible and create a clearer sense of a “map” in which the notion of this essential tension is situated. Kilpi highlights this tension as well:

What emerges is, paradoxically, predictable and unpredictable, knowable and unknowable at the same time. This does not mean dismissing planning, or management, as pointless, but means that the future always contains surprises that the managers cannot control. The future cannot be predicted just by looking at the plans.

(Kilpi 2015, n.p.)

At the same time, Kilpi emphasises that both sides need to be present: planning and the unforeseeable future. Emergence is not about completely letting go:

Emergence is often understood as things which just happen and there is nothing we can do about it. But emergence means the exact opposite. The patterns that emerge do so precisely because of what everybody is doing, and not doing. It is what many, many local interactions produce. This is what self-organization means.

(Kilpi 2015, n.p.)

These two quotes bring us closer to working with the articulated tension. Unexpected developments always arise, yet in a research context these developments need to be worked with in a way that still moves the overall inquiry further. Brown regards this “intentional adaptation” to be at “the heart of emergent strategy” (Brown 2017, 69). One always needs to adapt, but without intention, there is no direction in which to adapt, no purpose that guides such adaptation. And finally, this resonates with management scholar and consultant Barry Camson’s idea that networks “must balance planfulness and emergence. Planfulness requires some degree of governance or coordination [...]. This then allows for new ideas to emerge or fortuitous accidents to take place” (Camson 2013, n.p.). Both sides need to have a strong position assigned to them (by the researcher), and it is exactly *some* degree of planfulness that creates the necessary space for meaningful ideas to emerge: Emergence expresses itself in a fruitful and sometimes (often?) challenging way *through* thorough design choices and the carrying out these choices during the research process. Without a solid yet flexible design, there would be no network of low-level interactions from which emergence arises.

What? So what? Now what? From theory to design practice

Understanding emergence has always been about giving up control, letting the system govern itself as much as possible, letting it learn from the footprints.

(Johnson 2001, 234)

When we think further about the collection of theories in the preceding section, some questions need to be considered to make this relevant and productive for research (design) *practice*. Are we looking for, or interested in, an environment that facilitates emergence, reaches out into the unexpected *at all times*? Or do we want to keep our research environment controlled to some degree, for reasons of time, budget, clarity, transparency, or otherwise? Obviously, the answers to these questions are different for each project, researcher, environment, or context. A personal artistic research project that inquires into certain techniques or aesthetic prospects of one’s own, individual artistic work will likely be much more open to unfolding emerging events than a study that is tightly controlled or even owned by a technical university looking for certain applications for technology.

Including emergence in research design means giving up the illusion of control (which, in the case of artists, may be an issue for some but not others). What might arise as we engage with emergence – as a higher-level order or higher-level intelligence – is that we will begin to notice elements that not only appear unexpectedly but that also lie outside of our limited (if any) capacity to truly understand. This leaves us with the options of following,

paying attention to, or being faithful to emergent elements. The other alternative is to cut them out and ignore them, a decision which remains with the researcher, according to their research questions and objectives.⁶

Where for some artist-researchers the challenge might lie in giving space to emergent aspects that might disrupt their precise and thoughtful design – as a powerful “counter-force” to the more solid layers in a research project (see Figure 5.3) – others might find it hard *not* to follow every new idea that comes up and find the dedication and focus to remain faithful to their design.⁷ It can be a challenge to find a balance and fruitful middle ground. A research design is always both precise and speculative, to some degree or another, and this balance creates the productive tension between planfulness and emergence.

Summarising, the element of emergence in the Common Ground model can provide a critical view on the difference between the productive voice of emergence and things that “just happen” randomly on the basis of “ad hoc” decision-making. Underneath an intuitive understanding of the term, one discovers that emergence has little to do with accidental findings. It can be very hard, however, to articulate the causality behind what has emerged. As Johnson attests, emergence as a form of higher-level logic happens in relation to and because of a complex network of decisions and activities that are designed and carried out, initially, “as planned”. Emergence in research design needs a strong and solid (yet still flexible) design to be in place, as otherwise there are no low-level interactions from which emergence can arise, no elements for emergence to work with, to literally do its work. Only then can it act as a possible counter-force to that which is already designed. There is a thin line between engaging with emergence and simply working in an ad hoc manner, reacting to each issue as it arises. At the same time, I do not want to suggest that working in an ad hoc manner is always negative: I have

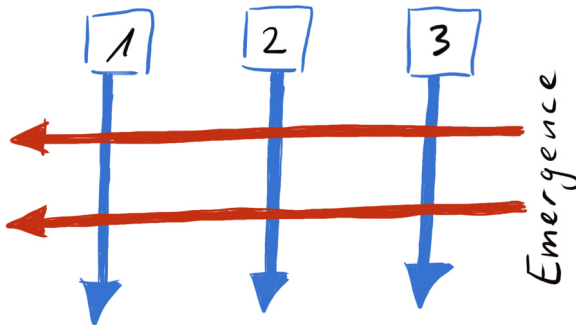


FIGURE 5.3 The “counter-force” of emergence, derived from an early iteration of the Common Ground model visualisation. 1, 2, and 3 refer to what I frame as collection, structure, and time in Chapter 4.

worked on a number of research projects that, in hindsight, were strongly ad hoc but achieved wonderful insights and results. However, I do believe that outcomes and impact can be significantly improved by paying attention to, and achieving a productive tension between, the planned and designed elements and the emerging aspects of research.

What to do with it

At this point, we have at least some idea about how emergence might make its voice heard and how it “does its work”. However, what might be less clear is what one can actually *engage* with emergence: how one can make choices in research design based on this knowledge about emergence and its workings. Does this mean creating an environment for emergence? And then what? How can we work with it? Is this only about awareness: being ready and awake? I do not aim to provide definitive answers to these questions; I am concerned, rather, with providing suggestions and ideas on how to engage with emergence during one’s actual research practice. How to work with, for, or towards emergence – how to take a walk with emergence while not getting lost in or with it.

When designing a research trajectory, one can think about what kinds of interactions one wants to actively facilitate, for what reason and in what way, as every element can potentially interact with every other element. The question then becomes: what local agents are interacting in ways that point to potential higher-level patterns? Local agents could be the elements of the Crafting Methods framework – Entities, Activities, Documentation, Reflection, or Learning/Experiencing/Knowing – but could also be the different methods themselves or their tangible outcomes, such as recordings, objects, or performances. To offer an example from Chapter 3, the extensive way of documenting the experimental performance and workshop *Thresholds of Touch* (📖 “Thresholds of Touch”, pp. 77) is one way of facilitating interaction both between participants and the various materials provided as well as between the participants and our team of researchers.

In the following sections, I offer a series of thoughts and suggestions, starting with a few general ideas and then going into a number of more specific examples. Naturally, the ideas I have collected here do not provide an exhaustive range of possibilities but can be expanded with personal experiences as one moves forward. Most of the ideas posited here sound straightforward and possibly too self-explanatory or obvious, yet, in practice, tend to result in outcomes that are more complex and unpredictable. To offer an even stronger proposal, allow me to remind you of a central idea from the book: Work with it. Don’t just think about these ideas, but start trying them out in your own research, research design practice, and teaching; explore where they lead you and in what ways they might be useful.

Some ideas to start with

The first idea is related to time and, at first sight, looks very simple indeed: provide time and space in the *planning* of a research project for the unexpected and emergent. For example, one might start by planning and designing, say, the first three months of a six-month research project and then leave months 4–6 open (or at least leave the details open) for further refinement, to be specified soon after the experiences of the first three months. One just needs to be aware that leaving (certain) details to be worked out in a later research phase is in itself a design decision, even if this is just a practical, convenient choice (which, in my experience, happens quite regularly).

The aspect of temporality is particularly intriguing in relation to emergence, especially in the context of research design: Kilpi points out that emergence is not only the relationship between a whole and its parts but that an emergent body – such as an organisation (in the context of management theory) – is “an emergent pattern *in time* that is formed in [...] local interactions” (Kilpi 2015, n.p., my italics). Kilpi’s point is that “we need to move towards temporality, to understand what is happening in time” (Kilpi 2015, n.p.). In practice, this could also mean leaving slightly more time than strictly necessary between research activities or assigning more time to reflective activities. It could also mean taking care that there is regular time, daily or weekly, for incubation or types of “mind wandering” (see below, or the list in Chapter 3, ↗ “Activities”, p. 73), in the form of walks, for example. One might also call this “hanging around in the swamp”:

I think one of the most difficult things is to hang in there in “the swamp” long enough and not to try and “sort it all out” too early ... so there’s this balance between revealing knowledge (feeling like you have achieved something tangible) but also unknowing (being prepared to sit in a zone of uncertainty where all the knowledge actually operates) ...

(student quoted in Haseman and Mafe 2010, 221)

The second idea concerns overall planning and suggests leaving more “unplanned/un-designed” space towards the latter stages of a research project, thus providing space for *methods to emerge* during the process. This means actively acknowledging that a design is, in principle, unfinished and remains open to what is necessary and what emerges along the way. Not all methods and activities might be clear at the beginning of a project. As should be clear from previous points in this chapter, this is not to propose that one should passively leave everything open and see what happens but that one can take a more active approach of being open for emerging methods during the process of a project – which also needs to be acknowledged in the design and planning stages.

The third idea is to facilitate emergence through the specific design of methods. Within the Crafting Methods framework, this can be done by paying attention to documentation and reflection (☞ Chapter 3, “Documentation” and “(Forms of) Reflection”, p. 74 and p. 83) and designing both of these elements in such a way that they can become “biotopes” for emergence: for example, by involving feedback from other people or planning reflective conversations (☞ Chapter 3, the example of the project *Thresholds of Touch*, p. 77). Such collective approaches can work well to facilitate emergence, as can be heard in the comment of a participant during a lecture and workshop on research design and emergence: “As a theatre maker, for me, ‘reviewing notes’ could also mean ‘going back to the same people I have worked with’. Things emerge in trusted company!” (Hübner 2020b). The aspect of trust (with safety connected to it) is important here, as the participant chose to connect with collaborators she knew well and with whom she shared a creative history of making theatre performances. Returning to theory, as discussed earlier, low-level network actors can also be humans, in the form of people who work together on a research project or participants in an experiment, for example.

An “emergence-cycle”?

Barry Camson suggests creating a “conductive environment”, which “involves *creating and holding the container in which the many interactions take place*. It involves provoking what goes on in the container and supporting movement towards attractive directions” (Camson 2013, n.p., my italics). According to Camson, the “planned and unplanned interaction and collaboration in a network environment” (Camson 2013, n.p.) is where innovation can take place. Again, it is the balance between planfulness and emergence that is important, and it is a certain degree of organisation and governance that allows for ideas to emerge. From the perspective of change management in organisations, Camson offers the following example of senior staff members who decided to act in a certain way:

Members of a network can support these conducive conditions. In one network, senior staff members [...] created unstructured time in meetings to allow for digressions – going off topic and off of the agenda. They were out and about listening to conversations. They would mingle with folks at different member institution gatherings rather than just seeing them at network meetings. In both formal and informal gatherings, they identified and supported ‘what if’ conversations. ‘What if we took a joint approach?’ ‘What if we combined our resources?’ They kept their ears to the ground and listened to other voices. They looked for trends and fed them back at the meetings. They might say, ‘did you know that other people are talking about this?’

(Camson 2013, n.p.)

In this example, Camson mentions the following ideas:

- creating unstructured time
- listening to seemingly random conversations and (external) voices
- supporting divergence (e.g., “What if ...?” questions)
- feeding back anything that might be of use into the more formal work situations (e.g., meetings)

All four of these ideas can be integrated into an artistic research process. While these points might look obvious to some, they can provide meaningful openings. For example, asking “What if ...?” (in words or through actions) comes very close to the imaginative, playful, and experimental way in which many artists work. In theories of creativity, divergence is one of the central aspects. At the same time, these four points could serve as a cycle to fruitfully engage with emergence: 1) the conscious creation of unstructured time in a research process⁸ (e.g., daily individual or collective walks during rehearsal periods, an end-of-the-day coffee in a local café equipped with a notebook, or simply “hanging around with space”⁹), which facilitates 2) listening to all kinds of external and internal voices and collecting them in order to 3) ask questions, which are captured, documented, or annotated in order to be 4) fed back into the further process of the research project. Again, in relation to the aforementioned “basic tension”, in order for such a cycle, whether applied precisely or loosely, to function productively, it should have an embedded function within the overall research process. It is not only unstructured time and divergent aspects that are important, but also the feeding back into what is already there, what has happened that same day or what will happen in the further course of a project.

One of the most common and obvious approaches to facilitating emergence in artistic research is through (artistic) experiments. I elaborate on this approach in the following section, thus transitioning from the general ideas offered above towards a number of more elaborate strategies: experiments, “wild collecting”, reviewing notes, and mind wandering.

Three strategies for emergence

On emergence and/in experiments

Experiments are a common way of provoking emergence, as they tend to provoke resistance, the unexpected, what literally emerges through the act of experimenting. Visual arts historian and theorist Elke Bippus argues that an “artistic experiment is not just open to resistances and its potentials; it actively seeks them out.” She refers to philosopher and scientist Francis Bacon and his idea of experimenting, “which implies a planned set of observations only

feasible at a specified time and under controlled conditions” (Bippus 2013, 123). Experimentation as approach resonates closely with theories of emergence, especially because unexpected elements and results are actively sought: “Thus, as the new emerges from the experimental system, the researcher captures it, without any possibility of anticipation or construction whatsoever” (Bippus 2013, 128). Drawing on Rheinberger, Bippus further claims that the unknown is necessary, that “an experimental system must be open to uncertain searches, hesitations, and moments in which ‘the course has not yet been set, and action may take place in the unknown’” (Bippus 2013, 128, quoting Rheinberger 2005, 79).

Studio art practice can potentially be understood as relating to experimental situations, as described above, especially when artists experiment with specific parameters within certain settings. Think, for example, of experiments with different shades of colour or paint or with different parameter settings in electronic music instruments and effects (👉 see also the section on Assis’ experimental systems, p. 13). Closely connected to the carrying out of an experiment is – again – documentation and the reflection linked to it that leads to a process of “laying tracks”, “trails”, or “traces”, which, particularly in the longer term, can pave the way towards larger discoveries, trends, or emerging developments that reach further than an individual research project:

Plug more minds into the system and give their work a longer, more durable trail – by publishing their ideas in best-selling books, or founding research centers to explore those ideas – and before long the system arrives at a phase transition: isolated hunches and private obsessions coalesce into a new way of looking at the world, shared by thousands of individuals.

(Johnson 2001, 64)

Wild collecting

The second strategy for actively engaging with emergence is one of facilitating making connections through processing different kinds of materials and different ways of *creating* new materials (such as writing, sketching, objects, movement, or sound). I encountered the idea for this approach in my supervision work. During a conversation with a postgraduate student, we realised that she applied two quite different strategies in her research, which, combined, could work fruitfully as a two-fold strategy.

In our conversations, we started calling the first strategy “wild collecting” (see Figure 5.4): essentially a rather unorganised way of collecting whatever she would come across on her path that resonated more or less with her project, process, or questions. Collecting can happen in a variety of ways: making notes during conversations, recording images or videos during a walk

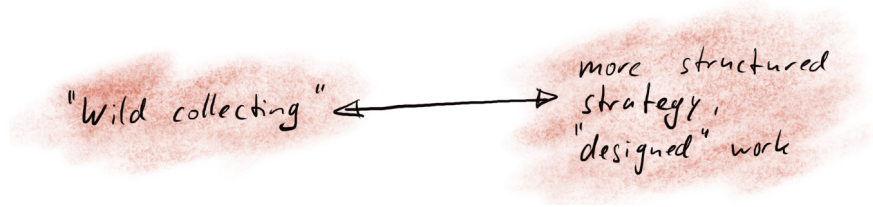


FIGURE 5.4 Personal note from a conversation with a student on her work strategy (2019).

or in the studio, or assembling materials while browsing the internet. This process of wild collecting happens in parallel with a more structured strategy of collecting sources and ideas that are more precisely connected to the research questions and topics at hand.

When properly/consciously combined, and when both sides are taken seriously, these two interconnected approaches form a process in which a relatively clear (and more or less predictable) working structure is continuously challenged, extended, questioned, and enriched by the “wildly” collected materials. At the same time, the latter becomes contextualised within a more structured framework, preventing the research topic from veering entirely off course. Again, it is the conscious connection *between* these two strategies that engenders the productive tension between planfulness and emergence – the strategy is almost a direct translation of this tension into practice.

Emergence, as presented here, can only arise in between the two poles. Obviously, it has a place on the side of wild collecting, as more or less unanticipated material is brought in here. However, it is through processing the materials and confronting the two strategies with each other that unexpected connections can be discovered, which allows new ideas to emerge. Emergence wanders in between the two phases: in the more structured work, unexpected things come up – emerge – but it is not always possible to immediately deal with those, so they may meander over to the wild collection, to be processed later. On the other hand, material in the wild collection might become so apparent and important – through emergence – that it needs to be given a voice in the more structured part of the overall strategy.

Reviewing notes

Reviewing notes is a fairly straightforward but effective approach to facilitate emergence and is simply about reviewing one’s notes, regularly. The idea, as simple as it is, was inspired by the working methods of Leonardo da Vinci, who is well known for going back to earlier notes and sketches, editing them, adding other notes to them, or making connections to other notes and

sketches.¹⁰ To go through one's notes and materials regularly, re-view and re-think what is included in the materials, and add new material that comes up while reviewing is essential work that can be undertaken quite lightly. Haseman and Mafe present this as "repurposing" in relation to working with journaling: "Repurposing in this case may include regularly and formally reviewing and re-reading the journal to identify key markers of the creative journey as it shifts over time" (Haseman and Mafe 2010, 215).

This process can work through asking fairly simple questions: What comes to mind? What does this remind me of? Are there any thoughts, connections, or sketches to add? Are there connections to other notes or works? This is an exploratory activity that is both focused and light: wandering through material and exploring what emerges, leaving notes untouched if nothing specific comes up while reading them, being alert but not too intent on being quickly "finished" or "done with it". This process asks for a worry-free timespace to let thoughts and associations flow, to really give space to "what comes up". In this sense, this notion of reviewing notes runs contrary to a more focused – "getting things done" – strategy of taking notes. Here we are encouraging slow development, an iterative process that allows for emerging materials and ideas.

What such a technique or approach does need, however, is some kind of regularity or routine, a sense of ongoingness (I will return to this in the final chapter). This might take shape – perhaps as an element in the research design – by simply making sure that there is regular daily or weekly time to review notes in the context of one's research project.

Mind wandering

One last idea, or approach, to stimulate or facilitate emergent thought processes is to engage in activities that facilitate incubation and "mind wandering". Cognitive psychologists and scholars Benjamin Baird et al. (2012) explore mind wandering through what they call "undemanding tasks". They argue that, "compared with engaging in a demanding task, rest, or no break, engaging in an undemanding task during an incubation period [leads] to substantial improvements in performance on previously encountered problems" (Baird et al. 2012, 1117). An undemanding task can be many things, such as simple handcrafting, walking, or going for a run. However, in order for the undemanding task to have a positive effect on creativity, it needs to be a task that is not specifically related to the actual issue or topic one is working with or thinking about; the task thus needs to be "simple [and] external" (Baird et al. 2012, 1117). According to Baird et al., it is precisely the *undemanding task* – rather than a demanding task or no task at all (such as lying on a sofa and/or watching series on streaming services, for example) – which provokes and maximises mind wandering.

Obviously, this is not new: for decades, and even centuries, thinkers, artists, scientists, and other practitioners have practiced *walking* as a deliberate strategy to enhance reflection, creativity, and divergent thinking (see e.g., Oppezzo and Schwartz 2014). Albert Einstein, Virginia Woolf, Charles Darwin, and Ludwig van Beethoven (carrying paper and pen at hand for jotting down inspirations!) are just a few of the most famous examples.

Research shows that carrying out undemanding tasks does not work in every situation, however. Walking, for example, tends to facilitate emergent thinking, and “boosts creative ideation in real time and shortly after” (Oppezzo and Schwartz 2014, 1142) but does not necessarily generate the thinking one needs to solve a specific question in a focused manner (such as solving a technical issue or specific questions in final stages of text editing, for example).

Could mind wandering work as a research method? I would not say so, as mind wandering itself is not the actual activity but is the term for what the human mind unconsciously does, activated through a particular activity. In this sense, mind wandering can be considered a process that is provoked through an activity, which might be considered as an element in one’s research strategy, such as: include a late morning or afternoon walk of an hour in one’s daily routine in order to both reflect and generate new thoughts, new ideas. This also relates to what I have coined as “kinds of time” earlier, as such a recurrent activity is obviously a different way of using time than in a one-off interview. Personally, I always opt to carry a pen and notebook with me (rather than taking notes on a mobile device, which immediately offers the risk of distraction through email or social media) and the capability of making voice recordings or images.

Example: The “Informal Conversation” – An emergent method

The final example illustrates how the design of a particular method can emerge from having group discussions: sitting with others and discussing one’s ideas and questions, from which the elements and form of a method eventually emerge. Esther Gerritsen is a teacher and researcher at the School of Arts and Economics at the HKU University of the Arts Utrecht, The Netherlands. She has a background in arts education and is interested in exploring the distinct and pronounced value of the arts in society with questions such as: What kind of language and vocabulary do both artists and audiences use to talk about the arts, their experiences of and in art, and the value of these experiences, and how might this vocabulary be connected to the person’s view on the world or the role that art plays in it?¹¹ This interest is rooted in Gerritsen’s role as a teacher. She works with students in a module called “the impact of art” and wishes to specifically address the rather difficult notion of “impact”.

Next to other methods and sources (e.g., analysis of the language used in documents describing curricula), Gerritsen is particularly interested in having conversations with people and is interested in how people think and talk in rather *informal settings* – in their everyday lives, so to speak. She has been looking for a methodical approach to explore this kind of language and was not sure what kinds of conversation, conducted in what way, and with what kinds of questions might form a suitable approach to gain access to that language. Simply *asking* about people's vocabulary and its relation to value systems would not produce the information Gerritsen is looking for. In our sessions, she wondered: "What kinds of questions could you actually ask, in what kind of way and in what kind of surrounding or context?"

During our discussions, the idea emerged that the method of conversation needs a certain *informal character*: namely, if it is informal language one is seeking to inquire into, then the form for evoking such language also needs to some extent to be informal. The "informal design" is an important characteristic for the conversation, which means that this informality needs to be facilitated in a relaxed way as well.¹² Two additional ideas came up during the workshop: to design these conversations to take place during a walk together, surrounded by the more or less "natural surroundings" of parks in an otherwise urban environment. The work form or method of an "informal conversation", including the ambience of walking in parks, became a key element in the final form of the method Gerritsen developed.

The idea of the informal conversation emerged from conversational interactions and through material – based on her ideas and research plan – that Gerritsen used in a workshop situation. The idea of the informal conversation and its worth as a research method would probably not have occurred if Gerritsen had not discussed her ideas and had, instead, simply decided to invite respondents to carry out one-on-one interviews by phone or live – which likely would have resulted in more formal and traditional conversation structures. I include the final outline of the crafted method below:

- 1 Two people (participants) take a walk together through a public space, often a park.
- 2 The walk is mapped out in the shape of a circle of about twenty minutes, with a defined start-and-end point.
- 3 Gerritsen is present at the starting point of the walk. She asks a question to the two walkers that they discuss and freely elaborate on while they walk.
- 4 The conversation is recorded by microphones attached to the participants' clothes so that they can walk and speak with their hands free.
- 5 As soon as the two participants return to the starting point (where Gerritsen awaits them), they are offered a second question that they discuss during another twenty-minute walk. They then receive a third question and do a final round of walking conversation.

After the walk, the recordings are transcribed and coded and reflected on together with the participants. It appears that this design does indeed result in informal conversations that evolve freely and in exploratory ways. In hindsight one could say that the choice for an informal conversation was a straightforward and obvious one. However, in my observations of design practice, an innovative and workable method does not often simply “offer itself” as the only obvious choice. The collective conversation that took place during our methodology workshop needed the different aspects, questions, and challenges Gerritsen was interested in for the final idea for this method to be able to emerge.

Leaving the chapter

I started this chapter by exploring a few basic and general notions of what emergence is. Then I spent some time with a more thorough conceptual development of the concept, to give it a more explicit and pronounced voice in research strategy and in the Common Ground model. Hopefully, with the framing offered in this chapter, it should be slightly clearer what it means when we talk about emergence or when we say that “something emerges”. This does not simply mean *that* something comes up, more or less unexpectedly. Emergence also says something about the *process* and circumstances in which something comes up; a research design can, at least to some degree, actually facilitate processes that open up space for emergence as well as guide fruitful directions for using what emerges. This is what I called the “basic tension” of research design: balancing between strictness and flexibility.

These theoretical considerations were followed by a number of ideas and examples, exploring how emergence might work in research (design) practice or how the researcher can facilitate and guide emergence in order to “let it do its work”. The aim of this section was to offer a balance between the potentially more abstract framework of ideas and the more practical questions regarding how to utilise emergence in everyday artistic or research practice. Again, the idea is that the examples and strategies offered will inspire the reader to engage with them – to try them in practice and change or edit them where necessary – and to experiment with their own ideas and approaches to work with – to provoke or facilitate – emergence.

The suggested strategies, techniques, or approaches are meant to help to “manage emergence” to some degree and to support the researcher in letting emergence work in a meaningful way, in ways that are unexpected and unforeseeable yet that carry the research forward. To employ Adrienne Marree Brown’s metaphor of the travelling bird: letting the flying bird yield to the storms and discover beautiful places on its way to Mexico, which it would not have discovered if it had flown the most direct route.

The second half of the chapter has also set the last gesture of this book in motion, which I characterise as a process of opening up even further. This will continue in the final chapter. The second half of this chapter offers a range of possibilities and examples to try out and explore for you, the reader-researcher, with no particular or imposed structure to follow. During these final steps, leading towards the conclusion, I hope to open up an understanding of methodology and research strategy from the perspective of continuity and ongoingness.

Notes

- 1 The term emergence is often used rather interchangeably with *serendipity*, which the Oxford English Dictionary defines as “the occurrence and development of events by chance in a happy or beneficial way”. Writer and researcher Rebecca Lyle Skains describes serendipity as “a process of *making a mental connection*, [...] *taking actions to exploit* the connection, leading to a *valuable outcome*” (Skains 2018, 90, quoting Bakri and Blandford 2012, italics in original). Skains explicitly relates serendipity to practice-based research, where she credits essential outcomes to serendipity rather than to the research design: “Thus, the initial research question is often vague and typically open-ended, to permit flexibility in the practice and space for such serendipitous discoveries to occur” (Skains 2018, 93).
- 2 It should be noted that the discussion on the relation between wholes and their parts is far from a recent one, as biologist Peter Corning points out: “an argument that Aristotle had made more than 2000 years earlier in [...] *Metaphysics*, about the significance of ‘wholes’ in the natural world. Aristotle wrote: ‘The whole is something over and above its parts, and not just the sum of them all ...’” (Corning 2002, 19).
- 3 An inspiring example of an emergent system with a very basic set of rules for neighbour interaction is the Game of Life by mathematician John Conway. For an introduction, see <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=ouipbDkwHWA>.
For an impressive demonstration of the kind of behaviour that can emerge from the basic rules of the Game of Life see <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=C2vgICfQawE>.
- 4 The emergence of artistic research itself serves as an outstanding example of such a shift.
- 5 In the original Dutch: “Hoe kun je nou zo veel willen ontwerpen, terwijl je op hetzelfde moment wilt vasthouden aan wat je niet kunt weten?”
- 6 To some degree, it is the *preparation* that should enable the researcher to make and evaluate choices in order to either follow emergent developments or not. Decision-making here depends on the limits of a research project, framed by research question and other elements specified in the preparation layer. So, the researcher can fall back on what she has defined earlier in order to somewhat “manage emergence”.
- 7 Jennifer Seevinck’s “Making Reflection-in-Action Happen: Methods for Perceptual Emergence” (2022) offers an in-depth view on one specific kind of emergence: perceptual emergence. This kind of emergence happens *within* an artist, or artist-researcher, in situations of feedback and reflection, in moments when situations “talk back” and the artist-researcher interacts with a situation, changes this situation, or is changed by this situation. Seevinck’s and my own views on emergence differ slightly in terms of perspective: her chapter offers strategies for how to work with aspects of emergence, mainly from the perspective or position of the

researcher, whereas I look at emergence more broadly, as a force that takes all kinds of agencies and interactions in a research project-as-complex-system into account. I locate agency towards emergence within the researcher *to some degree*, while also maintaining that a space, object, animal, or set of behaviours can just as well be at the inception of emergent aspects or behaviours.

- 8 Even if this means repeating myself, I need to stress that this “conscious creation” can happen early on in the design process, when preparing the entire research process, and not only while the project is running. It is important not to fall into the trap of working in an ad hoc manner and acting only on the basis of what the moment seems to require – this is exactly the point of the “basic tension”.
- 9 Scenographer and artist-researcher Ariane Trümper used this phrase in a workshop on methodology. In her work this means spending unstructured time not only being *in* a space but being *with* it, to establish a kind of partnership with the location and surrounding she works with.
- 10 The Internet Archive offers a brilliant collection of Da Vinci’s notebooks, see <https://archive.org/details/noteboo00leon/page/n7/mode/2up>, retrieved 13 February 2023.
- 11 Obviously, a number of other questions have also played a role in the development of this research project:

What kind of people, from which cultures and population groups, are taking part in the study; to what extent has the target group been exposed to art and whether this has taken place exclusively in a Western European context, and so on. For the sake of my focus on method here, I have chosen not to go into these questions and concentrate, rather, on the method design of carrying out conversations.

- 12 This type of informality does not apply to the entire research project; there is the use of linguistic analysis, for example, which is clearly not carried out on an informal level. The informal character concerns the way in which these conversations are conducted, as a crucial aspect of her research method. Gerritsen needs informal conversations to access the kind of language she is interested in, which she aims to explore and analyse.

6

TOWARDS A CONCLUSION? OPENING UP METHODOLOGY (EVEN MORE)*

When thinking about what the vision on research methodology presented in this book entails, it seems quite difficult to come to a conclusion that offers a summary of the key points spread throughout the book or provides conclusive reflections on how or how not to design a research project in and through the arts. I have developed and presented the ideas and elements of the Common Ground model as a network (with no hierarchy of key points from the outset) for a variety of readers coming from different professional contexts and with different purposes. For me, extracting key points here feels rather authoritarian and would work against the intended openness. Additionally, and essentially, the concepts of this book need practice, need to be applied in the process of designing and carrying out artistic research rather than to be used as material solely for discussion and discourse. In short, I argue that the ideas presented in this book do not need a summary and final reflection, rather they need application through research (design) practice by the reader, where they can be embraced, adopted, worked out, and developed further.

Consequently, this final chapter does not function as a traditional conclusion. Instead, it presents a few more thoughts with the intention of expanding current paradigms regarding what research design can be and do. These thoughts do still build on the framework and elements offered by the Common Ground model, using the material of the previous chapters. But I also look for additional potentiality in the realm of research design and more *continuous* (or

* This chapter includes reworked portions of an earlier article of mine:

Hübner, Falk (2019), "From Feedback to Investigative Practice." Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/43553249/From_Feedback_to_Investigative_Practice, 28 March 2022.

daily) practices of research and inquiry. The goal of this additional potentiality is to open up the concept of a distinct research design, tailored for a specific research project, towards a broader notion of research as an *integrative practice*: doing research as a behaviour, a habit, an overall state of mind and “state of doing”, entangled with (a continual part of) daily (artistic) practice.

This chapter draws strongly on Judi Marshall’s concept of “living life as inquiry” (Marshall 1999, 2011, 2016), which offers a number of resonances with the notion of artistic research as an integrative practice. As Marshall brings “together into one place so much aspiration for living an inquiring life” (Marshall 2016, 192), I aim to put forward here how knowledge on research design and methodology can be of value not only for the researcher who is designing distinct research projects but also for the hybrid art professional who aims to pursue daily practice with a sense of curiosity, inquiry, and open-mindedness.¹ I aim to do this by offering a collection of approaches or ideas on how to move one’s practice toward a more integrated way of working through continuous inquiry.

I will first share a few ideas on what I mean, in general, by artistic research as integrative practice. The short sections that follow briefly elaborate on what kind of opening up might happen during questioning, documentation, sharing, and reflecting on research outcomes. These are not exhaustive, of course, but offer ideas on how the notion of integration can work in certain areas of doing research. After a slightly more extended elaboration on writing as inquiry, this final chapter, and with it this book, will close with a short reflection on what this could mean for a vision on methodology.

Artistic research as integrative practice

Essentially, the notion of artistic research as an integrative practice puts everything that one does in the context of designing a concrete research project into a paradigm of continuity, of ongoingness (as compared to thinking in projects, one after another, for example). It is strongly connected to process and concerns the continuous process of asking questions and identifying issues, challenges, fascinations, and themes for inquiry, based on one’s interests and curiosities, in an iterative fashion of articulating, reviewing, and reframing. This often takes shape as an emergent process, “with tantalising glimpses of what might be interesting and have energy that then take time to form a shape we can work with” (Marshall 2016, 43). Such a process can produce material to discuss with colleagues and critical friends and which can be put into practice. Themes can (and typically do) arise organically and connect to other issues in a web of continuous learning. However, in order to actually be able to work with what emerges in ongoing process and with the outcomes they offer, one must continuously be awake – able to “pay attention as things unfold” (Marshall 2016, 13) and treat these things as potential objects of inquiry.

If the designing, carrying out, and supervising of research is understood as a *craft*, or a set of skills, then one shift that the idea of artistic research as integrative practice adds is that this craft is “adopted as *continuous learning*” (Marshall 2016, 25, my italics) rather than realised through more project-oriented, isolated, or fragmented approaches. The mindset and habit of continuous learning – just like Marshall’s notion of living life as inquiry – is exactly the shift and opening that I propose in this final chapter. The understanding of one’s artistic practice as continuous learning, as a continuous process of research, may sound obvious to artists of all disciplines, especially in light of the still-too-common notion that “everything in artistic practice is research”. And indeed, it might initially sound commonplace, as an attitude of inquiry and experiment is certainly ubiquitous in many artistic practices. However, I believe that the paradigm of research as a discipline or craft and the approach to design research as outlined in this book provide a number of perspectives, tools, and practical ideas with which artists and artist-researchers can think and work, which can potentially enrich and reshape this process of ongoing inquiry and learning. It is in the doing, the working with, that the potential power of these ideas and approaches will be revealed.

It should be noted that the “basic tension” between thoughtful design and openness to emergence – which I propose to be at the core of doing and designing research – is present here as well, albeit integrated and ongoing. Marshall’s term of “devising processes”, in that it moves away from the notion of designing distinct research projects, might be more appropriate here:

Devising processes of inquiry is akin to research design in other methodologies. Finding suitable forms to align appropriate ways of exploring with searching inquiry questions is a process of discovery and creation. Inquiry requires disciplines of some congruent kind, it is not a matter of “anything goes”.

(Marshall 2016: 39)

In general, I believe that employing the notion of doing research as an integrative practice is a kind of habit that one gets better at through – obviously – practice. This learning process can take time, as it potentially touches on many different dimensions of one’s professional life. It is not only methods and concrete research actions that can be experimented with, tried out, and developed through the lens of such an integrative perspective. For example, when working with literature and sources, such an approach would emphasise developing a network of sources and not restricting oneself to one’s own individual thinking and experiences. The habit of contextualising and situating would be developed with the perspective of ongoingness, of continuously building larger “thought collectives” (Stengers 2018, 100).

The same goes for the idea of continuity and ongoingness in approaches to learning and how to facilitate this in daily practice. In my experience, documentation, reflection, taking notes, sharing, and looking for feedback are some of the essential elements here, driving ongoing inquiry. Each artist-researcher needs to find their own forms and styles for this. This means that even one's *way of approaching* inquiry remains open to review, making one's own "style" potentially more sustainably flexible towards what one encounters in the long term. In the following section I will elaborate on three aspects related to the topics mentioned above: documentation, sharing and feedback, and writing as inquiry.

Extending documentation – As a habit

From the perspective of an integrative approach, documentation can best be understood as *tracking ongoing inquiry*, or "tracking inquiry processes" (Marshall 2016, 57). This means to develop approaches for continuous documentation of thinking/thought processes, as well as artistic developments, and tracking such courses of inquiry in order to weave them into further thinking and reflecting. This can involve a variety of approaches, comparable to the ones described in Chapter 3 (☞ "Documentation", p. 74), such as journaling and note-taking; writing descriptions; making sketches; saving email exchanges, voice memos, and any recorded conversations, work sessions, and/or improvisations with artistic materials; and so on. Documentation can facilitate what Marshall calls "finding resonant phrasing" (Marshall 2016, 49): to recognise questions, issues, fascinations that repeatedly come up and to follow and inquire into these with an attitude of continual openness and curiosity. "Whatever then happens is potentially interesting 'data'" (Marshall 2016, 50). One might also call this an approach "to document one's becoming" (Richardson and St. Pierre 2018, 1422).

Just as documentation in a distinct research project needs to have a place, in order to offer followability, the same applies to ongoing documentation. One difference might be that (at least some of) the documentation of a project needs to become publicly shared, while ongoing documentation is likely focussed more on the development of the artist-researcher themselves and not necessarily widely shared. However, this reduced necessity for public sharing does not mean that this documentation is necessarily less structured or less carefully saved and stored. On the contrary, it can be of enormous help to be able to track one's artistic and thought processes in ways that are efficient to access. I do not want to suggest that efficiency is the core value here, but one does not want to be spending hours or days looking for notes or images – documentation should be accessible to the extent that it can support the development of one's thinking and doing and facilitate a certain flow. Too much looking for notes and documentation will severely block and disturb such a flow and thus disturb the artistic and thinking process that it is meant to support.

From a practical point of view, then, what is especially important is to develop a way to process, save, and structure one's documentation, in such a way that, as mentioned above, supports one's reflection, thinking, and creation processes. Each artist-researcher needs to think about this and "design" this in a way that works best for themselves. This will be different for each artist-researcher. At the same time, as this involves a much larger timescale than the length of a project, the approaches to documentation-as-habit are, themselves, subject to this continuous learning and will change and develop throughout years of practice, taking more explicit forms as one progresses and works with them. I have included a schematic example of my own note-taking and documentation process below, as an example of an open and emergent, yet structured, system that has grown and been refined over a number of years.

Example: My own practice of documentation-as-habit (and processing this)

In my own continuous process of documenting and reflecting, I aim for an approach that is as inclusive as possible in terms of input and processes the materials in such a way that they are all eventually stored in the same digital system – for retrieval, exploring resonances, and continuous review and elaboration. Overall, the process is designed to foreground iterative thought processes, evolutionary developments, and emergence rather than to quickly arrive at finished and polished results.

In terms of creating and collecting raw material, I use a variety of analogue and digital techniques. I have a strong preference for writing and sketching on physical paper, using text snippets, bullet points, arrows, annotations, and a small variety of colours. Creating hand-written ideas and notes, when compared to digital means, feels the most immediate to me. Next to this, I aim to always be ready to take photos, record video material, or make audio recordings (including voice memos).²

The processing of all these materials takes place almost exclusively digitally, in a note-taking software and digital system. At some point, everything goes into the same digital system.³ From there, materials can connect or grow towards larger entities or future projects. I particularly love typing up hand-written notes and adding thoughts and associations as I go. This activity might seem absurd and inefficient for some, yet it provides me with important additional processing: playing with the ideas in my mind and imagination, giving them more time to become present, to develop, and to connect to other ideas.

The software I use holds many different kinds of notes:

- written text, either typed up or photos of hand-written notes (such as loose ideas or field notes)
- documentation in a variety of media (audio, still, or moving image)
- hand-written sketches (used for the Common Ground model, for example)

- schedules and ideas for planning and organising (in the form of tables or to-do lists, for example)
- documents and online articles to read as well as collections of notes and quotes coming from academic literature
- compiled email conversations
- clipped websites

From there, the different materials can evolve and develop, for example, into lectures, articles, blog posts, new projects, or materials for books or chapters.

Once collected, my general approach for working further with the notes and materials is inspired and informed by rather different sources: research done on the note-taking and sketching practice of Leonardo da Vinci (👉 “Reviewing Notes” in the previous chapter, p. 138), Niklas Luhmann’s Zettelkasten,⁴ and a variety of online sources on note-taking and organising. However, regarding the richness, intensity, and potential heaviness of working in such a way, I find it important to also mention here Judi Marshall’s notion of holding this work lightly – “offering a counter-movement” – as she calls it (Marshall 2016, 192). A key point is that the simple practice of reviewing notes regularly – returning to one’s notes and adding any thoughts that come up – and working (further) with and from them will enrich them, bring them in resonance with other notes, and allow new ideas to emerge.

Opening up sharing and feedback

Just as with other elements of designing a research strategy, the main difference between working with feedback in distinct research projects and with research as an integrative practice involves ongoingness and, thus, a (much) larger timeframe. Opening up your research to sharing and feedback naturally involves the continuous exchange with others as a method of inquiry. As Marshall mentions, “deciding who to invite to give feedback [...] are, of course, acts of inquiry. Do I look to supportive readers, critical friends, or outsiders” (Marshall 2016, 56)?

Longer timeframes make it possible to get back to someone every second year, for example, in order to review larger developments and journeys of inquiry. Long-term feedback or *intervision* (a form of peer consultation) relationships can be established with the explicit idea of organising exchanges and reviewing each other’s work, and this can extend to larger circles of people or peer groups, in which all of the members engage in ongoing inquiry and share their trajectories with each other as well as engage on a more reflective or methodological level regarding this approach to inquiry. As Marshall phrases it: “Some feedback is about the ongoing inquiry, to be taken into account as this develops. Some is about the *depiction of inquiry*” (Marshall 2016, 107, my italics).

Alongside a long-term perspective, sharing work and asking for feedback can be explored in terms of *work forms*. From the perspective of artistic research, many different activities and processual outcomes of work in progress can be combined with feedback activities, which will likely involve asking different people to provide feedback on various aspects of the research – such as writing, artistic work and process, or collaborations – depending on their area of specialisation.

A work form that fits particularly well in this context, although not exclusively in a long-term perspective, is the Critical Response Process (CRP), developed by choreographer Liz Lerman. In short, CRP is a form for providing and receiving feedback on work in progress, “on anything you make, from dance to dessert” (Lerman and Borstel 2003). Guided by a facilitator, CRP consists of four steps. After the “artist” (as Lerman calls the role of the one who receives feedback) has shared or presented their work, the responders (the group of people providing feedback) offer “statements of meaning”: they “state what was exciting, compelling, meaningful, memorable, evocative” (Lerman and Borstel 2003, 41). In step 2, the artist asks questions to the responders; in step 3, the responders ask questions to the artist. In both steps the questions asked need to be open and neutral, non-judgmental. The fourth and final step includes “opinions” by the responders, phrased in this way: “I have an opinion about [a specific aspect of the work], would you like to hear it?” The artist is free to choose if she wants to hear this opinion or not.

In my experience of working a number of years with CRP in varying situations and roles (artist, responder, or facilitator), I have found the process to be an incredibly valuable tool, not only as a method for feedback, but also as a tool in research contexts, not least because it provides a structure for placing oneself in the position of someone else and thinking with them, along their lines of thought. On a deeper level, the process includes not only the defined four steps but a few “internal mechanisms” that are at play while moving through the form. One example of such an internal mechanism is the opening up of the artist’s mind towards receiving feedback during the first three steps, which enables them to receive and welcome opinions in the fourth step. From what I have seen/witnessed in CRP sessions, the artist experiences the first step as appreciation of the work’s qualities and richness; the second step offers space for “the artist’s voice” in the sense that there is time for their questions to be addressed by the responders; the third step is where, in my view, most of the learning takes place: for the artist – through responding they also reflect on their own choices – and for the responders – through formulating questions and listening, they discover more about specific details, motivations, or choices. It is this sphere of appreciation, elaboration, and learning to which the fourth step, the utterance of opinions, is finally added.

Especially in light of an inquiring approach, the second and third steps of the Critical Response Process are crucial; here questions are asked, which in

most cases result in unexpected findings, discoveries, and new ideas. In my daily practice the habit of asking open and neutral questions (to others and to myself) happens far more frequently than explicitly “giving feedback” to someone. Additionally, practicing asking neutral questions (in both the role of artist and responder at the same time) can make it possible for me to take a position that I might not be able to take otherwise or that would at least be more difficult to take. I can mentally and emotionally step back and critically respond to the work that I have been doing. This can be applied to anything: an artistic work, a piece of text, a slide show for a presentation, and so on. Judgment is always close, ready to “kick in” and potentially disturb or close down the creative process.⁵ Asking *non-judgmental* questions simply helps one postpone this judgment and maintain a more open perspective. In my experience, asking questions in this way can become a habit that will very likely become part of the creative process itself. A common judgment about a section of a performance work might be: “This does not work.” I could then ask: “What is it that I want to bring forward in this particular section?” This question can lead me to a more productive process, such as brainstorming on what is needed for this specific section to work and an improvisation that answers this question in a fresh way, *through practice*.

In this sense, “feedback” can be understood quite literally – a “feedback loop” between my own work and me as responder to it – feeding back questions and sometimes opinions into the work and its process. Visualising this also reveals the difference between one-directional judgment and a bi-directional, conversational approach of asking questions:

The nature of open questions turns engaging with my own work into a process of inquiry itself, which resonates with the integrative approach in these sections: I can allow myself to move away from a predefined goal or purpose of a work in order to honestly and sincerely question the work and, by doing this, give the work and its inner or implicit possibilities a voice.

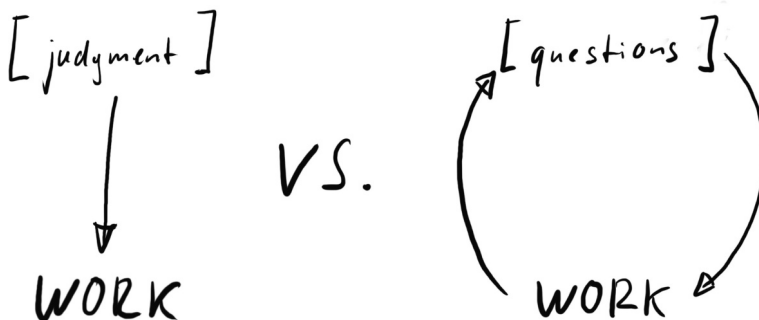


FIGURE 6.1 The one-directional nature of judgment vs. the circular feedback loop of asking questions.


This enables me to benefit from the investigative – rather than get locked into the judgmental or negative – aspects of a feedback process: it opens up the creative process rather than closing it.

Writing as a tool for ongoing inquiry

Another approach that Marshall regards as key to living life as inquiry is *writing as inquiry*, as a “process of discovery, in which the writer learns as they seek to articulate what they want to say to themselves and to others” (Marshall 2016, 97). Writing is here regarded as a process of ongoing thinking brought onto the page or the screen rather than as a direct means towards a product. It is not only integral to the final stage of a project, in which everything needs to be “written up”, but forms an integral part of the entire process as it unfolds. The following quote exemplifies how Marshall works with this approach herself:

I often write to explore inquiry that is currently in process. [...] In living life as inquiry I mainly want to work with what is currently happening, when it is raw and undigested. Writing experimentally about present time issues and experiences – the meeting I just left, the one I am preparing for tomorrow – I am seeking to learn more about how I am thinking, feeling and acting, and so gain perspective and potential to adjust or experiment with any of these in the service of living with integrity in ongoing inquiry.

(Marshall 2016, 104)

Every kind of issue can be explored in writing: This might be writing as an exploration of (artistic) choices, but also of issues in current collaborations or questions of situatedness regarding one’s professional identity, and so on. Through writing, unexpected things might come up: “A key principle of writing as inquiry is to learn from what you say, and to see where this takes you” (Marshall 2016, 101). Obviously, writing in the narrow sense of producing letters on paper (or screen) is not necessarily the only form of achieving this; drawing, sketching, or working with voice memos or other forms of recording can all be approaches and techniques to use. Additionally, other more performative or collective forms might work, such as walking or engaging in conversations as inquiry (going back to the  Introduction, it can be an interesting exercise to go through the research practices by Badura et al. 2015, p. 6, and explore these as forms of “writing”). The central point is to treat the activity in question as a form of continuous exploration, questioning, and inquiring.

Throughout the years, I have discovered that it is necessary to experiment with a variety of approaches in order to find out what works and what works best for oneself. This concerns the kinds of activities (such as journaling, sketching, visual, or oral/aural), the medium/tools (such as physical pen or

pencil on paper, drawing boards, computers, different forms of touch screens, cameras, or microphones) and the process/system one works with.⁶ All three, but especially the last one, can ask for a considerable amount of time for experimentation in order to explore, find, and develop what works best. I usually encourage everyone to experiment with non-digital forms. Working with screens has become so ubiquitous that it can seem self-evident to use them, providing a quasi-obvious familiarity or comfort. Yet, writing by hand on paper has a certain immediacy, especially when making quick notes or jotting down ideas, with no need to think of apps, folders, tags and without even the necessity of turning on a device and starting up a software application. And – because it is a physical/tactile-intellectual act – our mind can recall such notes much easier and is thus able to create creative connections to other materials and ideas more easily and naturally.

Marshall proposes several concrete approaches as well (Marshall 2016, 58):

- writing morning pages, respecting arising images and thoughts (Goldberg 1986)
- writing and leaving some blank pages on which later reflections can be developed
- having a practice for going through journals and notes (monthly perhaps), reviewing them and adding reflective and analytic comments
- developing note-taking as a discipline, finding ways to write speedily, take down key phrases verbatim rather than translate them, and include ancillary detail to give nuance and help with recall
- incorporating a commentary stream for arising sense-making and questions
- circulating selected notes or accounts around to others: for feedback; as a contribution to collaborative, second-person inquiry and its research cycling; or to promote inquiry in a wider institution or community as a form of third-person action research

From the perspective of a larger, ongoing process, I see this kind of initial or exploratory writing as a way to generate raw material of whatever kind that can potentially lead to a variety of other kinds of writings:

The essential point here is that writing (understood broadly) is a way to continuously generate a variety of materials to potentially work with, either immediately or at a later moment. The raw material does not necessarily need to be “good writing”, as one might not know in which ways, or at which point in time and to whatever end, this writing will find its way into the ongoing inquiry – be it reflection, questioning and further developing, or otherwise. During these processes the quality of the writing will develop naturally.

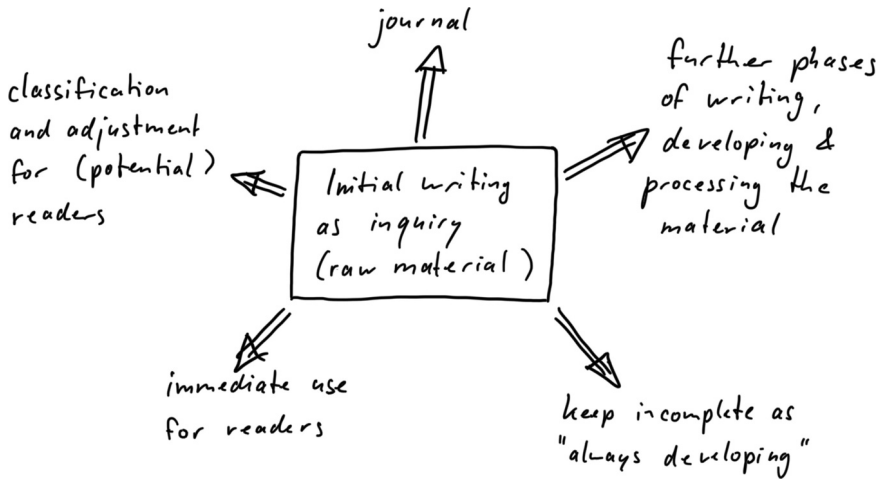


FIGURE 6.2 Ideas for developing raw writing into different directions.

Writer Julia Cameron offers a number of interesting tools to work with from the perspectives of writing as inquiry and artistic research as integrative practice. Her context is not artistic research, specifically, but that of personal creative development in general, or, as she calls it, “recovery” – nurturing one’s creative self, whether or not one considers oneself an artist. This approach resonates with the notion of ongoingness, the idea of creative openness and questioning becoming integrated within one’s work and life. One of Cameron’s tools is the morning pages, mentioned by Marshall as well, a daily act of “three pages of longhand writing, strictly stream-of-consciousness” (Cameron 2016, 10). These writings can have a number of functions, starting with the simple idea of a “brain drain”, up to bypassing one’s internal critic or getting subliminal ideas on the page that might evolve or develop later on. As simple as this tool is, as powerful it may become if one continuously practices it.

Another of Cameron’s tools, potentially combined with the morning pages, is the weekly *check-in*. As a tool for ongoing reflective practice and inquiry (which might also be called *review*), the check-in includes a number of smaller exercises for looking back reflectively at the past week. Questions can include, for example: “Have I written my morning pages or late-night reflections every day?” or “When I go through my notes of this week, what are the questions, themes, issues that need to be addressed in a more engaged/serious/systematic fashion? What stays with me from this week: what was the most inspiring/challenging/impactful experience?”⁷

Cameron offers a variety of other possible exercises throughout her book, of which I choose just a few here in order to make Cameron’s approach and tone more tangible:

Time Travel: Describe yourself at eighty. What did you do after fifty that you enjoyed? Be very specific. Now, write a letter from you at eighty to you at your current age. What would you tell yourself? What interests would you urge yourself to pursue? What dreams would you encourage? (Cameron 2016, 89)

Time Travel: Remember yourself at eight. What did you like to do? What were your favorite things? Now, write a letter from you at eight to you at your current age. What would you tell yourself? (Cameron 2016, 89)

Starting an Image File: If I had either faith or money I would try ... List five desires. For the next week, be alert for images of these desires. When you spot them, clip them, buy them, photograph them, draw them, *collect them somehow*. With these images, begin a file of dreams that speak to you. Add to it continually [...]. (Cameron 2016, 103)

If I were twenty and had money ... List five adventures. Again, add images of these to your visual image file. (Cameron 2016, 193)

If I were sixty-five and had money ... List five postponed pleasures. And again, collect these images. This is a very potent tool. I now live in a house that I *imagined* for ten years. (Cameron 2016, 103)

Although some of these tasks might sound quasi-spiritual (she actually calls art-making a spiritual practice) and not necessarily “precise” enough for an artistic research context, they all do playfully introduce a speculative or imaginary potential, which can lead to potentially hidden or unknown challenges, questions, wishes, or dreams – a powerful source of inspiration for new areas to explore professionally and artistically.

Final words

In the preceding sections I have offered a few examples in which distinct research projects – and designs – can be expanded and opened towards a more integrated approach to practice and explained how applying these ideas might work through a perspective of ongoingness. In relation (maybe comparison) to researching by means of more or less clearly demarcated research projects, the notion of artistic research as integrative practice is characterised by two important paradigm shifts. The first, more obvious one, is a temporal expansion, as one’s inquiry is not demarcated by a clear beginning or end. The second shift has to do with output or outcome: when a research trajectory is temporally expanded towards becoming ongoing inquiry, the tendency to view an outcome as a source for new questions and new inquiry also becomes stronger.⁸ An important nuance when we think of research as an ongoing habit and stance from which to work is that it is not about making different or new products or “about giving priority to trying to make something happen. It is holding an *attitude of curiosity* as I go about trying to make things

happen“ (Marshall 2016, 44–45, my italics). Maintaining an attitude of curiosity, continuing to ask questions and keep wondering about what we *don't know*, is key. As Marshall points out, the nature of “outcome“ when living life as inquiry becomes more connected to an overall change of the work or a change “in someone’s sense of self, rather than some ‘achievement’ in terms of action“ (Marshall 2016, 44).

Taking these shifts into account, I argue that in ongoing processes as well, a certain “habit“ of thinking through research design can support artist-researchers on their emergent and continuous path of inquiry. Essentially one can think of methodology and research strategy as areas in which one can develop potential approaches to the question: *Once inquiry has been initiated, how do we then shape it?* I argue that the basic tension between planfulness and emergence is present here, too: if the overall aim of inquiry is, as Marshall puts it, “a greater capacity to operate“ (Marshall 2016: 67), then it is still important to maintain a sense of direction rather than being “blown here and there as a leaf in the wind“.

In this sense, one can rethink the notion of project-bound research strategy towards giving shape to continuous/continuing inquiry, towards engaging in continuous cycles of asking questions, acting, and reflecting. I propose that the Common Ground model can support this shift, as the elements and lenses it provides are open enough and not devised to be used only in linear and somewhat closed research processes. On the contrary: just as the perspectives and associated questions collected throughout the chapters can provide support in a clearly demarcated research project, they can also work in ongoing inquiry processes.

Notes

- 1 During a lecture at the University of the Arts Utrecht in 2021, Marshall elaborated on the origin of her work on living life as inquiry: During the early stages of her career, she was involved in a market research programme when she realised that she was continuously paying attention to the research’s process itself and decided that it was worth tracking this pattern of paying attention. She started reflecting about choices she made during the research process and carried on with this in her (later) academic work, engaging with things that mattered to her and paying attention to processes as they unfold.
- 2 I think that this attitude of “being ready to document“, or being awake, is extremely important in order not to miss important moments or ideas that are otherwise lost. With my students I tend to put this into the slogan: “Documentation is everything.“
- 3 The specific software is not so important, outside of the fact that it must conform to your privacy requirements. What is helpful, in my experience, is that the software can support a variety of media within your notes (images, videos, audio files, and documents). Next to this, I find the three most important aspects of optimally organising and connecting notes to be:
 - folders/notebooks
 - tags/keywords (which could also work as folders)
 - hyperlinks (to other notes and to external sources or references)

158 Towards a conclusion? Opening up methodology (even more)

- 4 For more information on how Luhmann's Zettelkasten works – its organisational, scientific and historical significance – see, for example, <https://niklas-luhmann-archiv.de/nachlass/zettelkasten>, retrieved 15 February 2023.
- 5 The goal is not to eliminate judgment altogether but just postponing it for a little while and using this "little while" as a process in which understanding this particular judgment can take place, which often eventually changes or eliminates a specific opinion.
- 6 It has taken me a few years to develop and elaborate upon my own approach, which I also never find easy to quickly explain to students, as all these elements *sound* relatively simple but require considerable practice and time to bring into a form that actually works in day-to-day practice and for the long term.
- 7 These questions are my interpretations of Cameron's suggestions.
- 8 This quality of outcomes as a source for new inquiry is obviously well-known in any research tradition and discipline. However, at least in publications, but also for funding bodies, a project can have, and often has, an end point, which is disseminated and shared, regardless of new elements that need new and future research.

APPENDIX

Designing Through Questions

As mentioned several times throughout this book, the Common Ground model has been conceived and developed to serve as a flexible tool for the researcher and research at hand. The various perspectives and elements can be “accessed” not only through contemplating their characteristics and guidelines as nouns but also through activating them by asking questions.

As with the other elements aspects of the model, these questions can be used in both research practice and education. However, I think they work best as a flexible tool in supervision or peer feedback contexts. The biggest strength here – in my perspective – is that the supervisor or peer can ask questions to the student, group of students, researcher, or colleague without them needing to know the Common Ground model and its layers or how the model is conceived and works: the model as such does not need to be the topic of discussion; instead, it can be used as a framework or lens to look at the work, to navigate towards what the research project might need in a particular situation or phase, or to shed light on overlooked aspects of a research design.

I have compiled several lists of questions, which are grouped by topic and element of the Common Ground model. As most of the material offered in this book, they are meant to be worked and played with. Some questions do relate very explicitly to the elements of the Common Ground model, while others are more associative and exploratory. The reader is encouraged to use what is most helpful for their research project and the process of designing it. If some questions are too basic or irrelevant, simply leave them aside.

In general, I have avoided repeating questions that are already included in the chapters. So, please don’t consider this appendix as exhaustive, but feel invited to flip back and forth between the chapters’ contents and this appendix.

Supervising students and providing feedback to fellow researchers have led to this collection of questions. Some of these questions are edited versions, derived from several sources, literature, and various notes I made throughout the years. Where applicable, I have indicated (in parentheses) the sources the questions are based on, which are referenced at the end of this appendix.

Please keep in mind that these lists of questions are in ongoing process and development. I am editing and extending these series of questions as I continue using the questions and gain more experience and feedback from others. For the most recent version of these lists, see <https://hubnerfalk.com/commonground/>.

Questions related to ethics

Have you thought about ethics in general? (2)

Would you consider your research as being conducted ethical? How can you ensure it is? (2)

To what extent are you responsibly fulfilling your role and obligations to participants, the topic, and all relations between them? (3)

Does your organisation or professional body have a code of ethics? Have you compared this to codes or guidelines for research ethics? (2)

Do your values conflict or resonate with your workplace or organisation? (2)

Are there any political, personal, or policy-related ethical issues at play? (2)

Are there any conflicts of interest? (2)

Can you mitigate possible harm? (2)

How can you explore your own position in and your impact on the environment? (2)

What might be the possible negative consequences for anyone participating in your research project?

In how far and to what degree do participants actually have the capacity to oversee all possible consequences and give fully informed consent?

Are you experienced (enough) in working with the kinds of participants you are planning to work with? (3)

Is the act of asking a question of a participant going to have an impact on that person? (2)

Regarding colleagues and/or other people, what can you do to make sure that you don't use them – what's in it for them?

Have you considered the "ethics of impact"? (2)

How might your research and its activities impact those involved, both humans and non-humans (objects, places, materials, and networks)? (2)

Regarding self-care and self-support

Are there any situations, contexts, or surroundings in which you might want or need to work in pairs rather than alone? (3)

If you are working in socially vulnerable contexts or surroundings or in participants' homes, are colleagues or supervisors aware of where you are, and can you contact them easily? (3)

Regarding ethical reading and exploration of sources

Do you always read background material attentively? Why? (3)

Do you draw on a narrow or a wide range of sources? Why? (3)

Is there anything you could do to make your reading practices more ethical? (3)

Can you think of any sources of information that should not be used to contextualise research? If so, what are they, and why shouldn't they be used? (3)

Questions for ethical reflexivity

What do you think about a certain situation? Why do you think that? (3)

How do you feel about this situation? Why do you feel that way? (3)

Have you taken into account your thoughts and feelings about all relevant theoretical, methodological, disciplinary, personal, or practical issues affecting the situation?

What impact could your thoughts and feelings have on your decision-making in this situation?

Who else is implicated in this situation? What might they think? How might they feel?

What impact could your decision-making have on them?

Should you make this decision alone or consult other people? If others, then whom? Why?

What kinds of biases might be in operation here? What impact could these have on your decision-making? What can you do to eventually minimise that impact? (3)

Questions regarding preparation

What is the goal of the research project?

To whom is this goal important and in which way? What will you get out of it? What will others take away from it? (1)

In which artistic and academic/theoretical/philosophical contexts is your research situated? Who are the artists, designers, educators, theorists, philosophers, thinkers, or others you feel drawn to or who inspire/inform your research project?

How are these contexts connected or related to each other?

Are you part of these contexts, or do you feel outside of them in one or another way?

What limitations do these contexts impose, and what opportunities do they offer? (2)

Has someone already worked on similar issues elsewhere? (2)

Can you find some insights from fields other than your own? (2)

Which limits and opportunities are there for the research project? Think in terms of time, means, ethics, or safety.

Concerning research results and outcomes

What do you want to create during/with/through this research project? What constitutes findings?

What do you envision as outcomes and outputs of the research project? What will be left when the project itself is finished? (1)

What kind of change do you eventually want to realise during the research project?

What is not happening that you think should be happening? (2)

On what evidence do you base the need for change? (2)

How does it look/feel when the research project is successful?

Concerning dissemination and audience

How will you share, make visible, and circulate the outcomes?

For whom are these relevant? (1) Who is/are your intended audience(s)? (2)

What should your research project offer to them – (what kind of) information, inspiration, knowledge, etc.?

What will convince them? What constitutes evidence? Will this evidence work differently for different audiences? (2)

What is your argument/evidence?

How do you ensure your research questions, process, practice, and outcomes are followable?

On conceptualising one's own existing practice and the practices of the field

What is (the core of) your (artistic/design/educational) practice?

How have you explained this practice to someone else? (2)

Which opportunities are there to develop your or others' practice(s)?

How could mapping out the complexity of your practice (including in which contexts it is situated) help you? (2)

How do your values relate to the context(s) in which you work (most likely a workplace and/or organisation)? (2)

Questions regarding crafting methods

Entities

Who needs to be involved and in what role(s)? Be specific and provide names rather than types of people. (1)

What other resources can help you? In which way? (1)

What functions might other-than-human entities have? Think of animals, plants, non-living objects or materials, spaces, surroundings.

On what basis do you choose the sources you look at/listen to (as you cannot include everything)? (2)

What kinds of sources are you going to use – literature, other practitioners, documentation (still images, audio, video, transcripts, texts, live performances/improvisations, “here and now” situations, and so on)?

Can you get access to all the sources you need or would like to consult? (2)

Activities

What do you intend to do with the entities that you have identified? (2)

Which role does your own practice play? How do you incorporate your own practice in your method(s)? How does your own practice relate to the other activities?

In which way is your practice informed by other activities and sources, and in which way does it inform these? How might you want or need to change your practice and associated habits?

What are possible activities that people other than yourself might be carrying out in relation to your research? Are you the only one acting?

Documentation

What are the processes you like to document?

When do these processes happen? How do you make sure you will be able to capture these?

Which kinds of media or means (analogue as well as digital) are most suitable or effective for your documentation?

What kind of results or works do you imagine at the end of the entire research project? How might these be made transparent and followable by means of documentation?

Reflection

How will you evaluate the process and the outcomes of a distinct method?

What procedures or techniques of analysis (and/or reflection) will you use?
Which modes, or forms of reflection, come to mind/might be appropriate?
What methods of analysis or reflection are most appropriate or inspiring (you might use more than one, and experiment with them)?

How might reflecting on what happened affect your ideas, questions, or assumptions? In which way might you need to adjust what you thought you know?

Are you reflecting (mainly) on your own, or do you include others in the reflection on a particular activity?

Learning, experiencing, knowing

What kind of information or data are you looking for?

What kinds/modes of knowledge do you seek to find or generate?

Do your ideas for the outcomes of a method align with your envisioned set of entities, activities, documentation, and reflection? If not, what are possible adjustments (hint: experiment)?

On collection

Which persons and materials (and their functions, identities) come to mind when you think about your research project in general and your research questions in particular?

What kind of information, data, or experiences are you looking for? What kinds/modes of knowledge do you seek to find or generate?

Who needs to be involved and in what role(s)? Be specific and provide names rather than types of people. This is also material to be used when you start crafting your methods. (1)

What other resources can help you? In which way? (1)

Which research methods or activities can be used that would help to build respectful relationships between you as artist-researcher and eventual research participants? (3)

What kinds of sources are you going to use – literature, other practitioners, artistic works, documentation (still images, audio, video, transcripts, texts, live performances/improvisation, “here and now” situations, and so on)?

On structure

How is the “flow of data” or “flow of knowledge” progressing throughout your project? What comes first, what next? Which steps, activities, or methods need to take place in order to proceed?

Which pieces of information or experience do you need in order to proceed? Think about different types of modes or data: for example, you might need to carry out a certain experiment in practice in order to frame your theoretical references or field.

Do you consider any of the methods you tend to employ more important than the others? Are there any priorities or hierarchies?

Which activity would you want to carry out more than once? Where would you like (or need) to return to again?

Through which form might the different activities be connected?

Are you including any (feedback) loops or iterations?

On time

Where and when can/will the research project and its activities take place? (1)

How much time do you want to spend with the various activities?

If there are activities or methods involved that occur more than once (think of iterations or cycles/series of experiments), do you want to give them the same amount of time (and attention) each instance, or is there a difference in terms of time (and attention)?

With whom or what (entities or activities) do you want to spend time in order to explore and inquire into your research questions?

What kind of a timeline results from your considerations about spending time when you take on a purely content-related perspective?

How does this timeline relate to how much time you actually and formally have for the research project?

On emergence

What are possible events or developments that you cannot foresee? Can you speculate?

Can you imagine anything that you might discover but cannot yet fully conceptualise?

How do you *provide space* for what emerges?

In which ways are you paying attention to what emerges?

Is this providing space a conscious (design) decision? Is there any part of your research design that facilitates lower-level interaction (e.g., discussion between participants or collaborators, feedback sessions, or experimentation series) in such a way that something unexpected can emerge?

Does this concern specific moments in your research or long-term processes?

When might you want to *provoke* emergence or anything that you cannot foresee or predict? When are you consciously looking for the unexpected?

In hindsight: How have you managed the unanticipated, and how will you prepare for the unexpected next time? (4) How can you rethink and rework your approach towards the unexpected?

Who are you asking for feedback, and what forms of feedback are you inviting? (4)

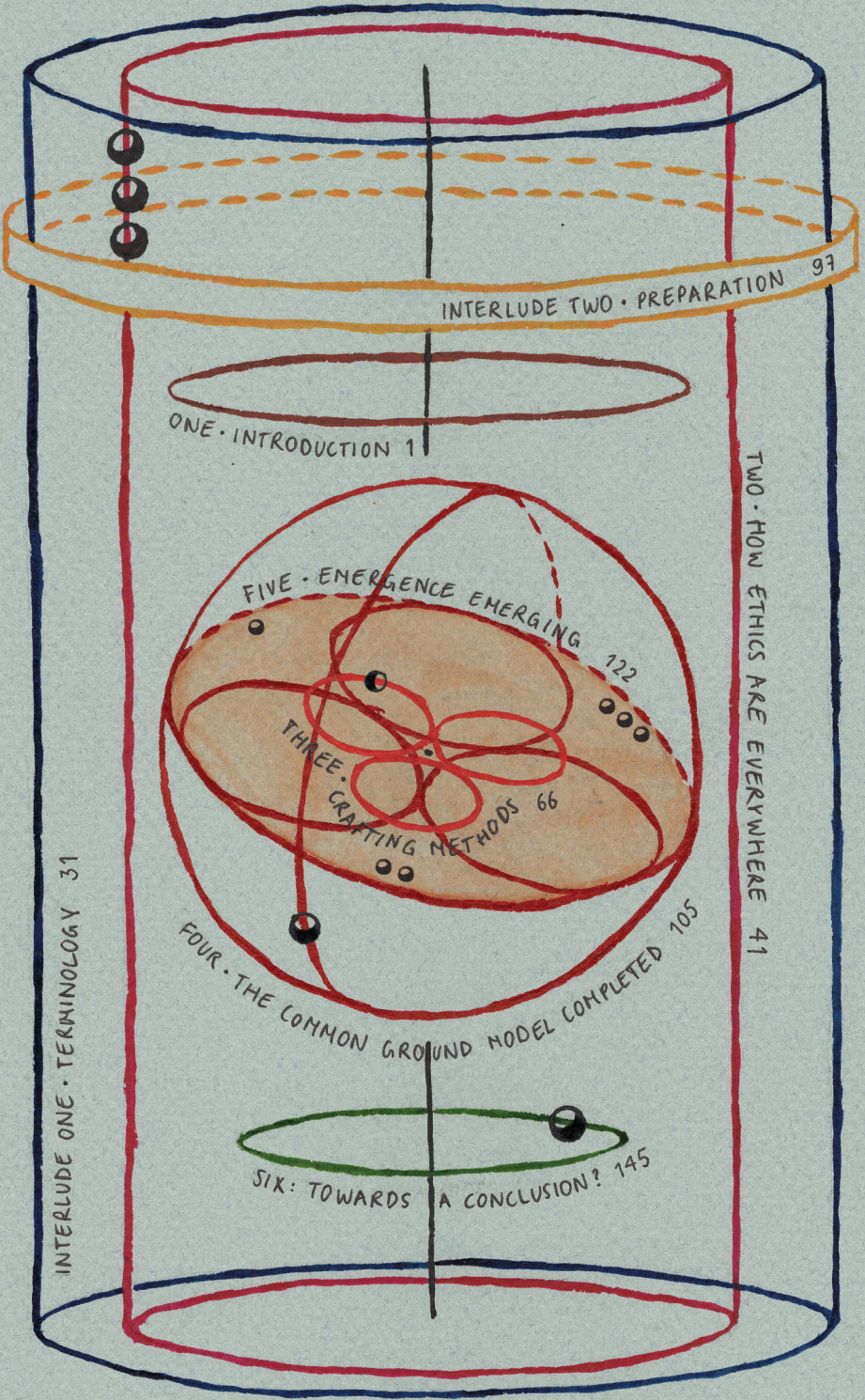
What is guiding the way you receive, process, and act on feedback? (4)

What connections can be drawn between causes and effects? (4)

What guidelines or larger principles can be drawn from particular instances of practice? (4)

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