Developing Dialogue through Participatory Design and Imaginative Graphic-Ethnography

Paul Wilson

Chapter Ten

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Introduction

> (T)he meaning of a given dialogical work is not centred in the physical condition of a single object or in the imaginative capacity of an individual viewer. Instead, the work is constituted as an ensemble of effects, operating at numerous points of discursive interaction (Kester 2013, p.189).

This essay looks to outline and discuss a novel method of participation that is centred around the development and application of a series of imaginative, reflexive visual tools for data collection. Through a case study, this chapter describes the unique characteristics of these visual tools and discusses their value in shaping participation, in particular their value in helping to identify significant features of community stories. Such insights emerge from participants' engagement and interaction with these bespoke participatory objects, which were designed to promote dialogue and interaction. Significantly, the tools utilised a selection of methods of visual communication and approaches from graphic design, made manifest as a series of analogue objects which looked to initiate and help shape forms of participation with the aim of generating a set of unique linguistic/textual narratives. The tools sought to capture the motivations, experiences and values of community members in the township of Samora Machel near Cape Town, South Africa, in relation to their attempts

to revitalise a community centre building, which had fallen into disrepair. Making use of methods that produced first-person narratives intended to explore how an act of telling (or re-telling) stories from the community can reflexively reinforce that story's value to participants. Taking such an approach also looked to explore practices of 'writing-as-process', which employ approaches of embodied and performative knowledge-making via the production of texts that could later become a means for the further co-creation of stories.

Underpinning the use of such tools was the opportunity for visual methods from graphic design to perform a relatively unexplored, yet potentially significant and valuable, function in shaping the nature of a particular type of participation — instead of its more traditional function within Participatory Design practices, where it might usually communicate outcomes or shape the form of results, for instance. Here the application of visual strategies from graphic design becomes an essential component within an imaginative method that allows for participation to take a distinct visual or graphic turn, and where design thinking is applied to the *form* of a type of ethnographic enquiry as a means of adding value. I suggest that making such methods explicit allows for a *designerly* instance of participation — one shaped by notional acts of reciprocal exchange or *correspondence* (Ingold 2013) marked by moments of a *disruptive* aesthetics (Markussen 2011) that act to gently motivate the process of participation through an embodied co-production of texts.

A key aim for the research lay in the development and exploration of the potential for such designerly instances of participation and how they might embody, or exemplify, notions of 'dialogical aesthetics' (Kester 2013, p.189) — a concept which, Grant Kester argues, allows for the recognition of a potential for change within communities that are

in some way in possession of a nascent desire for transformation. This idea is extended within the essay towards its application as a method for evaluation and, specifically, a critical framework that looks to identify a range of unique characteristics for the tools and the themes for stories that they produced. By means of the case study, this chapter maps the thematic 'story-threads' that emerged from a workshop we ran in April 2016 in Samora Machel. Within the workshop, the tools were employed with the aim to constitute a meaningful form of dialogical practice, looking to achieve a combination of both physicality and imagination, as determined by a participant or viewer's response. By situating a practice of dialogue as a distinct form of designerly participation, it is possible to locate an assemblage of opportunities for interactions between people and people, and people and things. Such interactions, as Kester suggests, create an 'ensemble' of participants which is further characterised by the nature of their 'entanglement' (via their use of each tool) (Kester 2013, p.189). The application of a design-led model of dialogical aesthetics seeks to amplify the 'ensemble of effects' that may already be visible within a community. Re-assembling them from the individuals' stories, and through their collation, it is possible to represent a totality of lives, experiences and impacts felt upon and within their own communities.

Design's wicked problems

> (T)he designer brings objects and systems into fruition with the intention of facilitating action in the world outside (themselves). (Crouch and Pearce 2012, p.13)

The practice of design is predominantly solution-oriented: designers are largely confronted by externally-determined problems and are educated and encouraged to approach them with the intention of finding, designing and delivering answers. These

problems tend to be defined by their having emerged from a particular context (social, cultural worlds or systems), by way of a range of instigators (clients, commissioners, competitions or briefs), with each being determined by a varied set of needs or challenges (instigating change, encouraging interaction, altering perception or transforming appearance, for example). The recognition that design operates within a cultural context is significant, in particular when any designed 'outcomes' (those objects and ideas that are owned or experienced socioculturally) can be used to communicate meaning to both individuals and groups. These communities can often be determined by their location or an engagement with, or within, a shared physical space — itself often an outcome of a practice of design — which works to help determine a sense of common identity. Such communities can vary in size and constitution but are generally connected by a sense of shared attitude and behaviour that is generated as a characteristic of belonging (to both people and place) and where objects and ways of living act to produce a culture of mutually-understood meanings and values.

The designer has a unique set of practical, intellectual and emotional attributes which are used to help shape the world and the way it is understood. However, since design cannot be simplistically defined as a fixed set of particular activities, some of these attributes might differ or be regarded differently across a range of sociocultural contexts. Design is not an unchanging set of practices, but one that is fluid and able to respond to different conditions. Designers design in response to — and in discussion with — the world into which they fit, and while they can be characterised by a degree of autonomy they should also be in constant dialogue with the social insights and expectations of others (Crouch and Pearce 2012:3).

Design that operates in a social mode is often aiming for some kind of activation or transformation of both people and ideas, in particular towards a pre-defined social good whose achievement drives the design response. Practices of participation allow for an engagement with, and responses to, so-called 'wicked problems' (Buchanan 1992), which are judged to be inherently 'ill-formulated, where the information is confusing, where there are many clients and decision-makers with conflicting values and where the ramifications of the whole system are thoroughly confusing' (Churchman 1967, p.141). Participatory Design, therefore, presents opportunities to transform our expectations and understandings of a range of design activities (through a use of participatory methods) towards an approach founded upon 'a reflexive engagement with concrete experience, based on the intrinsic relation between knowing and doing' (Ottoan and Smith 2015, p.10). Such an emphasis on doing or making seeks to develop a:

> focus on practice [which] recognises the role of everyday practical action in shaping the worlds we live in. Most importantly, practice is understood as a social activity; it is the community that defines a given domain of work and what it means to accomplish it successfully' (Robertson and Simonsen 2012, p.5).

Towards a Dialogical Method for Community Storytelling

Whilst collaborative or co-operative practices within art and design are not new phenomena, there has been a marked increase in their development and application since the mid-1990s, where ideas of partnership and a deliberate use of methods or approaches for 'working together' have become more evident (Lind 2007, p.16). Such collaboration has had a variety of intentions and involved a range of stakeholders but always tends to be marked by a turn towards ideas or ideals of 'community' (and its role in providing a context for relations, belonging or affiliation) and away from the individual or lone designer (Lind 2007, p.16). From such notions of collaboration-as-practice,

models of participation have emerged as a means to engage with the opportunities for impact afforded by a deep application of creative visual and communicative practices.

Within design and, in particular, design research, there has also been a noticeable recognition of the value of 'local knowledge' (Hunt 2011, p.34). From this has developed a practice of design, and design thinking, which is centred on ideas of the social and where methods and models of working with, or alongside, others (in particular non-designers) presents a chance to reflect upon the value (to design/design research) of such knowledge. An engagement with people's everyday lives — via the things that designers make and/or the places that they live — and the ways that intervention and transformation might occur as a consequence of the collaborative creativity that design fosters are seen to be strengths for a design-led anthropology (Otto and Smith 2013, p.3) and are especially significant to the research discussed here. From such a point of departure, design-led responses to change and, in particular social change, appear to be in possession of a potential for material and social impact by way of the benefits of designerly-thinking *and* making. New, hybrid approaches have emerged from these social modes of design practice, bringing with them opportunities for greater cultural sensitivity, specifically with regards to notions of cultural value, and developing the potential for models of practice which centre around anthropology's style of *doing* being changed by design's 'ways of *thinking* and *planning*' (Otto and Smith 2013, p.11 my emphasis). Most significant here is an idea of 'relationality' which offers a complex variety of modes of working with and for others, allowing for a means to consider 'relationships at different levels' (Otto and Smith 2013, p.18).

Participatory Design approaches and methods, therefore, have the potential to position design as an agent of change with the aim of a 'genuine and active participation [in

order to create] a principled design approach and practice […] for greater human good' (Simonson and Robertson 2012, xix). The tools through which such participation can take place, and through which relations might be built, have the potential to become spaces of, and for, a distinct kind of engagement. This can be explored specifically in terms of how they might both seek to be open to the needs of particular groups and how they can play a role in shaping the nature of any participation enacted as a consequence of their use. As Alastair Fuad-Luke has suggested, designed objects 'can assume an activist role [...] for demonstration, service or protest or to present a proposition [as] a vehicle for the exploration of theoretical ideas [or] an embodiment of the ideas' (2009, p.85). A development of 'design devices' (Ehn 2008), therefore, offers opportunities to help shape meaningful processes of participation, although such artefacts have traditionally been defined as belonging to categories of 'prototypes, mock ups, design games, models, sketches' (Manzini and Rizzo 2011, p.201). For Ezio Manzini, Participatory Design has shifted over time from being focused upon such clearly-defined outcomes which exist within predetermined disciplinary boundaries (as product or service, for instance) towards a range of activities which seek to realise 'hybrid assemblies' (Manzini and Rizzo 2011, p.200) of people, places and objects which occur beyond the boundaries of formally-structured organisations. Recalling Kester, such activities make manifest 'socio-material assemblies' (Ehn 2008) and are constituted by entangled processes through which meaning is made and where the objects (and objectives) of participation are regarded as being as important as any other element within the process (Manzini and Rizzo 2011, p.200)

A Case study in Participatory Graphic-Led Ethnographic Writing

The Tsoga Environmental Resources Centre is situated in Samora Machel in the township of Philippi, near Cape Town. Built in 2006, the Centre was developed to offer a physical resource to support a range of activities for the local community, including education and training. After a period of relative dereliction and lack of use, a small group of locals sought to regenerate the Centre and to re-establish it as a focal point for the community. Our research looked to work with key individuals within the group who were central to the Centre's regeneration, and aimed to develop opportunities for reflection and storytelling which might be useful in helping to create a renewed focus or shared vision among themselves and the wider community, where such reflection was regarded as useful in the process of regeneration that was taking place. These stories would become a means for identifying the centre's history and of documenting positive connections between people and place that were felt among the core group of activists who drove the redevelopment. Such activity was judged to be useful in helping to clarify and determine external perception among the wider communities of Samora Machel, the Philippi township and the broader stakeholders around Cape Town, including the city authorities. The aim for the research from the outset was one focused on community stories and the tools that could be used to tell them. In particular, there was to be a focus on the potential for the development of novel methods which embraced hybrid practices, combining an ethnographic focus on people's everyday lived experiences with the relatively unexplored potential for graphic design to be used in aiding modes of participation which would facilitate their identification and collection.

The tools developed within the research sought to capture aspects of the community's lived experience and thus to situate and facilitate a sense of participation and meaningful dialogue among the tropes of power and, specifically, of being in possession of a voice that is in the process of being heard. Metaphors of speech, vocalisation and

embodied narrative were regarded as appropriate points of departure and as visual concepts that would usefully frame the design of the objects/tools of participation. Further, such a focus on ideas of speech, along side the materiality of words, led to the use of words as the key means through which participants' experiences were recorded. Methodologically, Sensory Ethnography was used. In so doing, the participation was able to take into account (and represent) the broad 'multisensorality of experience, perception, knowing and practice' (Pink 2015, p.1). For Sarah Pink, a text can be regarded as one means of representation among many others, in that it can relate knowledge through experience and situates sensorial perception as being both embodied and reflexive (for both the researcher and participant) while also looking to extend knowledge beyond a purely 'visual mode of understanding' or of documentation that is particularly common in Participatory Design methods (Pink 2015, p.96).

Combining Kester's notions of dialogical aesthetics, the potential for linguistic/textual articulation together with Pink's focus upon embodied sensory experience creates the opportunity for a design-led participation which allows for the utilisation of methods of mediated and interconnected sensory perception, making use of text and typography as a means of writing-out experiences and how participants 'felt' about what they did. These methods are *bespoke visual tools*, designed to capture participants' responses or comments and utilise graphic and typographic design principles in their presentation and communication of a structure, or skeleton, of designed 'dialogical interactions' (2013, pp.14-5) which become trajectories through which the participation is structured and takes place.

Performing such participation through the creation of text — with or among others and within a shared and familiar space — looks to 'represent the [participants'] mind, [their]

emotions, sensations and knowledge and embodied activities' via a communal elicitation (Hockney 2006, p.184, cited in Pink 2015, p.97). The act of writing and forming words — of cursively 'drawing' them (not typing) — and adding them to a pre-existing model or template of action is also a sensorial method through which experiences can be framed both cognitively and typographically. The selection of an analogue approach — centring around the tools and the forms that written responses might take — allows for a distinct form of line-making to occur, requiring a particular mode of participation, with 'words as things-in-themselves […] words as entities, properties, intensities and extensities which emerge from the relations into which they enter or are entered' (Motamedi Fraser 2017, p.97).

The Subtle Unravelling of Everyday Hierarchies of Socialised Power

Within his discussion of approaches and overlaps between contemporary avant-garde and community-based arts practices, Kester outlines a series of six characteristics for what he identifies as a 'dialogical aesthetic' — an emergent approach determined by a sense of fluent or fluid communication between researchers, participants or stakeholders which seeks to develop 'connected knowledges' through empathetic understanding and determined by a range of 'dialogical interactions' (2013, pp.14-15). He goes on to define this kind of practice as one that has particular value for the quality and type of 'communicative interactions' that take place via the chosen participatory activities and which he discusses in terms of their potential to 'shoc[k] us out of [this] perceptual complacency […] to see the world anew. [I]n each case the result is a kind of epiphany that lifts viewers outside the familiar boundaries of a common language, existing modes of representation, and even their own sense of self' (2013, p.12). For Kester, there is an overriding aim in such interactions: that both participant and

researcher see (and perhaps understand) something *differently* both within and as a consequence of any participatory activity.

These interactions form the basis of a framework through which we might consider a particular type of participation focused around ideas of reflexive dialogical practice with a distinct set of characteristics of engaged community participation. Kester maps out a framework for 'dialogical aesthetics' by way of a set of six qualities, or characteristics, of interaction (within any participation), which are useful in helping to determine the traits of a given encounter. These qualities help to establish ideas of dialogue in or through the following contexts:

1. How communities (and their sense of self-identities) are defined or determined via a participation that fosters dialogue and a sense of relationality.

2. Where dialogue via participation can become a means of instigating or affecting opportunities for transformation within a community.

3. Arriving at a mutual understanding of the (beneficial) consequences of any dialogue.

4. A delegation that is the consequence of the process of participation, with the research coming to stand in place of the community.

5. The desire for a sense of empathy and identification between participants and researchers.

6. The recognition that a community was in possession of identity prior to any research participation (2013, pp.147-151).

Thus, the research presented an opportunity to apply and extend Kester's 'dialogical aesthetic', providing a means to evaluate the results of the tools' uses with the participants from the community of the Tsoga Centre and to identify stories, in particular, as a means to highlight power relations or where power might reside within

the community. Kester's framework of dialogical aesthetics became a useful method through which the results of the tools' uses could be framed and discussed.

Alongside the framework for 'dialogical aesthetics', discussed above, Kester also suggests methods and approaches used in other projects that might further inform the application of his ideas within a research context. The notion of 'extended conversations', for example, as an open-ended means for discovering or identifying collective identity (one emerging from the community's sense of self rather than one that is determined before arrival in the community) differs from the more formally situated interview in its acceptance of an informal, perhaps unfocused or floating, interchange out of which a sense of identity might materialise. Such an approach requires an empathetic openness to participants' 'specific histories and lived experience' (Kester 2013, p.164) as a means of encountering, collecting and collating narratives of place.

Working with the Tsoga Environmental Resources Centre

The research looked to develop and apply a method of participation that aimed to identify stories (or fragments of stories) which could then be aggregated and utilised as a means of revealing otherwise tacit knowledge about place and community — where there is perceived to be a benefit in such identification. As part of its development, a period of sensitisation was employed which involved the research team being present for small activities with the community and assisting other work that was taking place in or around the centre so that an initial impression could be gained and a vocabulary for participation could be established. Key to this was the identification of a value attributed to being within the space of the Centre and those that occupied land immediately

outside during the day. The significance of the Centre itself was apparent, as was the flow of individuals and groups who moved through it at any point in the day. From the insights gleaned during the sensitisation phase, a number of themed visual tools for participation and story collection were developed, with the aim of capturing and collating participants' experiences. The tools were a set of single-sided posters (printed to A1 and A2 size), which were both visually and conceptually) structured around a discussion of specific themes centring on ideas of place and community. They were designed to be artefacts around which conversation could take place, acting as 'a designerly way of intervening in people's lives' (Markussen 2013, p.38), where icons and visual motifs were utilised as a way to prompt reflection upon everyday experience. Such exercises were embedded into each tool and developed a visual vocabulary which sought to generate a 'softer', more ambiguous and sensually-engaged intervention with participants than might be experienced using more traditional methods. The use of empty speech and thought bubbles, for example, was a tactic to encourage their completion, and the visual structure of tasks across the page of each tool looked to visualise the process by which one set of answers might be useful for the next set of tasks or questions. Participants were actively encouraged to engage and interact with the visual tools although allowance had to be made for English not being their first language and so the interviewer made use of the tools as a form of ethnographic note-taking, with the tools largely operating as a means of stimulation and a focus for elicitation. The tools, therefore, formed the basis of a gently curated, open-ended 'extended conversation' which, rather than making use of drawn or found images more commonly employed in visual methods, were underpinned by a design-led, writerly (or linguistic) focus.

The first tool looked to locate one place that was of significance to participants and, as a consequence, to a particular community or communities. It aimed to map the participants' relationships, feelings and associations with their selected place using a range of visualisation tools and methods. In so doing, they were used to identify possible sources of power, association and resonance, which could be used to form a story of/for a community. The second tool shifted focus more explicitly towards ideas of community and ways in which communities might be described, again with an emphasis on the significance of place. Finally, the third tool was a deliberate attempt to shift the stories from being located in past experience towards an ideal of how a future might play out for the community's current activities. These tools are discussed in more detail below.

i. My Story to This Place

This tool is structured to reflect on, and identify, a place or places which possess some significance to the participants. By following a three-stage process (answering three questions) individuals were able to define their nominated place, consider their relationship to it and then place it in the context of the narrative of their own lives. The graphic device of the cloud signifies that these responses are thoughts determined by reflection and consideration and suggests that the focus of any aspect of the conversation was intended to make explicit possibilities for further discussion.

Central to these activities was the statement 'How I came to this place'. This statement is intended to place notions of physical and emotional connection at the centre of the tool's focus. In terms of participation, there is also an opportunity to represent the place via drawing alongside other requests for a written response. There are then, a series of

response opportunities which frame specifically the participant's relationship with their nominated place: the notion of a conceptual journey that they have taken to this place; its importance to the participant; how it acts to connect them to others; whether their relationship to it says anything about them (to others) and what it might represent to others. The elicitation of each response was a focused chance to define a network of literal and metaphorical relationships and associations: the connection of *my story to this place* as a signal of both a journey and a sense of attachment.

Fig. 10.1.Tool 1: 'My Story to this Place'

Tool 1 — *My story to this place*: *key questions addressed in response to tool use — story threads or themes which emerged*					
	Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 1	Theme 4	Theme 5
What / who?	*Naming* and *ownership* — a sense of belonging that is more than an emotional connection but one determined by a legal agreement	*Named ownership* implying status or significance and the importance of respecting this connection			
When?	*Autobiography* — of journeying and travel with a purpose	Over a period of time (over 8 — 15 years) and of a period of time together			
How?	*Association and influence*, of growth and the establishment of a community of like-minded members who sought to have impact in their own local area	Of *connection* and a network of stakeholders which included city authorities which looked to build a community centre	The challenges of vested interest and the problems of *contestation* (of the building itself)	How the function of such a building can be *determined* by local needs	The application of skills to (community) needs — through forms of creative expression and a determination to establish a voice for the community in spite of the challenges and in recognition of their potential
Significance and *importance*	A vision and dream — the concrete manifestation of a plan.	The significance of the place to the broad community, responsive and flexible or agile in terms of responding to their need	As a means of helping the community and the personal significance of this ('*moving with my name*')		
Self-in-place	To have an impact on the community and the social and economic benefits	To establish a sense of legacy	To self-determine and be active in the development of places such as this		

With others in and through place	A potential for change and for others to benefit through a 'community place'	A sense of connection and mutual benefit — the link to others through and out of the community			
Representation (to others)	Of a dream and vision	Of a voice for the community with impact and legacy (from both the founder and the community) through time			

Fig. 10.2. Tool 1: 'My Story to this Place': Key questions addressed in response to tool use — story threads or themes which emerged

ii. Communities of Place

The tools then shifted in their focus, from place to people. In the second tool there is an attempt to structure thoughts on community and the groups of people who might make use of a place through consideration of the particular characteristics of a given community. The tool asks participants to select one or more forms, or manifestations, of community (circumstance; position; practice; purpose; interest) and reflect on whether they consider them present in some way within their place. This list was used to illustrate the idea that it is possible to think of community in quite abstract terms, defining it in ways other than geography, together with the question of whether or not more than one 'type' of community can be active at any one time, and if the function of a place can change over time, depending on how people seek to make use of it.

The tool also asks participants to consider how communities can be defined by physical proximity to their nominated place — by being around, or adjacent to, it instead of being *in* it, together with whether this proximity has any significance to the place itself or

people defined by it. The tool visualised these ideas of community as being situated within a place (a collection of individuals within a circle), orbited by a number of distinct abstract conceptualisations of people — the thought bubble again seeking reflection on how such ideas might shape the activities taking place within their place.
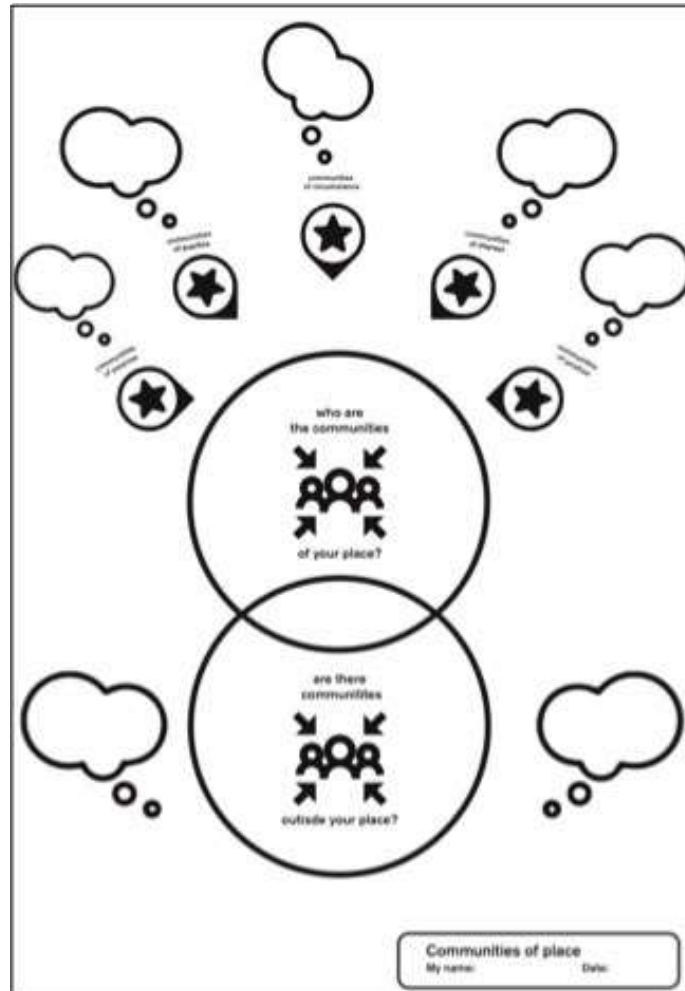

Fig. 10.3. Tool 2: 'Communities of Place'

Tool 1 — *My story to this place*: key questions addressed in response to tool use — story threads or themes which emerged					
	Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 1	Theme 4	Theme 5
What / who?	*Naming* and *ownership* — a sense of belonging that is more than an emotional connection but one determined by a legal agreement	*Named ownership* implying status or significance and the importance of respecting this connection			

When?	*Autobiography* — of journeying and travel with a purpose	Over a period of time (over 8 — 15 years) and of a period of time together			
How?	*Association and influence*, of growth and the establishment of a community of like-minded members who sought to have impact in their own local area	Of *connection* and a network of stakeholders which included city authorities which looked to build a community centre	The challenges of vested interest and the problems of *contestation* (of the building itself)	How the function of such a building can be *determined* by local needs	The application of skills to (community) needs — through forms of creative expression and a determination to establish a voice for the community in spite of the challenges and in recognition of their potential
Significance and *importance*	A vision and dream — the concrete manifestation of a plan.	The significance of the place to the broad community, responsive and flexible or agile in terms of responding to their need	As a means of helping the community and the personal significance of this ('*moving with my name*')		
Self-in-place	To have an impact on the community and the social and economic benefits	To establish a sense of legacy	To self-determine and be active in the development of places such as this		
With others in and through place	A potential for change and for others to benefit through a 'community place'	A sense of connection and mutual benefit — the link to others through and out of the community			
Representation (to others)	Of a dream and vision	Of a voice for the community with impact and legacy (from both the founder and the community) through time			

Fig. 10.4. Tool 2: 'Communities of Place': Identification of key users, stakeholders (both inside and out) and their relation to place

iii. Our Future Place

This tool makes use of the metaphor of a newspaper in order to visualise thoughts on 'stories' that might be written about changes which could, or might, take place within participants' nominated places. Such fictional reports frame the tool's forms of the participation in three specific ways. First, there is potential to write a story using the community's, rather than an individual's, voice ('we' / 'our'). Second, the design of a newspapers' story has an implicit narrative structure. It demands a sense of organisation into an arc with beginning, middle and end and which, in turn can be useful in framing any response. Third, it has the potential to imagine change via a particular (present or future) scenario. This is helpful in terms of potentially determining opportunities for development.

Fig. 10.5. Tool 3: 'Our Future News'

Tool 2 — *Communities of Place*: *identification of key users, stakeholders (both inside and out) and their relation to place*			
	People	Position in relation to place	Defined by place
Community of practice	Those engaged in creative activities and of making and performance	As a centre for skills and technology — a *resource*	
Community of circumstance	Those showing an interest who can be given the opportunity to be involved in some way	As a place which helps to find focus and inspiration — a *place of transformation*	
Community of position	Those young or old	As a place of intergenerational mixing, between and through generations — *a point of connection*	
Communities outside	Those who know what takes place but aren't engaged with activities as spaces adjacent to the Centre aren't connected but are used	As a viewer or audience to the activities	

Fig. 10.6. Tool 3: 'Our Future News': Hopes and desires

Reflection: Writing Out, and About

From the initial collection of results of participants' interactions with the three visual tools, it is possible to review how they were used and their distinct qualities. **'**My Story to This Place' was a powerful prompt for storytelling and was closely liked to the fact that the participatory workshop took place in the Tsoga Community Centre itself. This allowed for the clear personal and emotional investment of participants to emerge through their stories, in particular their autobiographical narratives of journeying to the Centre itself and the ways in which their engagement with the Centre came to represent a significant milestone in their personal lives. There was a strong recognition by participants of the importance of ideas of *naming* and *association* in framing their connections to the challenge of re-establishing the Centre within the community and how language acts to determine an individual's relationship to things and other people

alongside ideas of social status. Further, ideas of connection (to things, people and place) emerged from responses to tool use. The results from participation with the 'Communities of Place' tool had some overlap with those generated by 'My Story to this Place'. However, the latter created more explicit opportunities for discussion of the very idea of community. Finally, the tool 'Our Future Place' facilitated clear ideas of how change might generate a positive impact for the community, helping the community to create a vision for the Centre. There could be further reflection on the tool communicating to a particular audience — a newspaper's readership — and that the telling of the participants' story should be focused towards this group and their specific interests (city officials or non-governmental organisations, for example). However, perhaps the most significant insight to be gained from the tools' uses was a sense of how place was thoroughly embedded in every discussion of community. Using Kester's framework for dialogical aesthetics, it becomes possible to map the participants' responses to each tool in order to measure the extent to which the tools were able to help facilitate a particular model of dialogical practice, and whether a distinct form of dialogical aesthetic (of and from the participants' narratives) emerges.

i. Organisation / definitions of community — around action and power

> She's saying that it's changing, you know, the people — the community of Samora Machel — you know it's changing *the community of Samora Machel* … [B]ecause we don't find in Samora Machel a place like this … it's wonderful … seeing people of Samora Machel [are] benefitting from this place … if they [the community] have those meetings we give them a space, as a community, if they have anything for the community, if they have workshops for the community we give them a space — which is helping to this community, you know? If they have anything that is developing, this community — we give them a space. Look, the Tsoga it's available, look you can use it as a community of Samora Machel … [my emphasis].

> 'A' - local activist and community organiser, transcript of participation in the community storytelling workshop and engagement with 'My story to this place' tool ('what it says about me').

Ideals of connection and association became particularly apparent through the use of the 'My Story to This Place' tool, where participants had worked to overcome challenges from their own lives and in their attempts to make a success of the Centre. For one participant who had worked to establish the Centre, the tool presented the opportunity to reflect upon her initial vision, the work taken to achieve it and the importance of the place to the community, together with ideas of the Centre as a contested place when others had attempted to take control of it, preventing local activists from being able to access or use it. The 'Communities of Place' tool was designed specifically to help describe formations of community and instances of action. By focusing on ideas of *practice*, *circumstance*, *position* and *externality* (to the Centre), participants were presented with a range of models for reflecting upon their own position within, or relating to, these models. Participation identified that the Centre was seen as a resource in and of itself, and was described as somewhere that could facilitate the development of a range of skills and opportunities that could be shared by groups and individuals within the community. It was also seen as a place that, due to its location and position, could operate symbolically — as somewhere representing an ideal of transformation — and so could further draw in disparate individuals and groups. From this, a notion emerges that the Centre be viewed as a fixed point of connection for the range of distinct communities operating within and through Samora Machel. This includes those who might currently not engage with the Centre's functions or occupy one of the spaces adjacent to it. Through participation in, and some consideration of, the place of the Centre among various ideas of community within Samora, the Centre could begin to be conceptualised as a flexible space that could be put to a variety of possible uses.

ii. Transformation — of individual participants and the narrative itself

> And tell the story and move forward all over the world and make sure that I try and … I'm trying to talk to people, to fundraise … [T]his is the aim — to go out... And make sure that in Italy, I talk about the centre and talk about the projects … [Y]ou know and not only going to Italy but make sure that I'm getting more opportunity to go to different places. Maybe UK, maybe Canada. You know, in different places, maybe in France and move around and check and go there and have you know *and have that impact of what we are doing in South Africa* as people who were born from squatter camps and are trying to make a change in the … [my emphasis]

> 'Z' - local activist and community organiser, transcript of participation in the community storytelling workshop and engagement with 'My story to this place' tool ('how it connects me to others').

The tool 'Our Future News' focused the participants on ideas of transformation — largely through reflection on the Centre's previous successes. There was discussion through participation with 'My Story to this Place' that the building needed to meet a set of needs determined by locals and that, through an imaginative programme of new educational opportunities and new resources, renewal might occur. The focus on a possible better future that 'Our Future News' presented also allowed participants to consider ideas of audience, and an outward-facing association that such communications can foster — that there are opportunities to create new, positive associations with the wider communities, with city authorities and associated NGOs (both nationally and internationally).

iii. Delegation / transaction / articulation

> She was saying that she's old but she wants this place — she wants to see this place moving, she wants to see the equipment inside — she wants to see that there's progress: she's old and she wants to leave this place to me. Now she is training me better — I can hear and take decisions for the centre. She was saying that, you know, but I need to not only take decisions but also that I consult her — because she's the founder …

> 'A' - local activist and community organiser, transcript of participation in the community storytelling workshop and engagement with 'My story to this place' tool ('what is this place?').

A clear instance of delegation could be seen in the tool use, where a sense of duty and responsibility emerged at times when the management of the Centre's activities was in a process of being passed between the two participants. Alongside this, the tools, and their respective functions of structuring and documenting the form and experiences of participation, saw some responsibility being assigned to them: namely, to hold and express the words of participants during and after the participation had taken place. The graphic design principles that the tools employ to structure participants' responses allowed for a written record of their answers to be placed on, and among, the graphic elements — with the experience of participation being embedded upon the surface of the tool (the paper upon which they were printed) and into the same spaces that had been gently requesting an answer. The use of each tool, therefore, was ultimately founded upon a sense of transaction which is discussed by Kester both in terms of a process of mediation which takes place (2013, p.150) and, more specifically, as an action of delegation which establishes a sense of identity for the delegate, as it is required to stand in for the (now absent) community (2013, p.147). The responses to the tools — those marks upon their surfaces — act in this case as a particular type of delegation, where the words express and communicate the participants' experiences, from the participants to the object which stands between community and researcher.

iv. Representation / identification / empathy

> To me, why it's important — you know my name … which is when you translate that means, it says "I must look (after) the property of my father" — which is as a man, I always think about the creation, everyone is a creation of Lord, I need to help people. Every time that I will be up on that bed of mine, I always think "how can I help person, how can I help that very young girl is coming to me to say 'I'm hungry' or 'I need to go to school'? These are the things, that's why it's very important to me because when I'm doing things it's coming from my name as well

… I must look after people, you know. All over the world. This is my name. That's why, because I'm moving with my name.

'Z' - local activist and community organiser, transcript of participation in the community storytelling workshop and engagement with 'My story to this place' tool ('why it's important to me').

From the outset, the storytelling opportunities presented through the tools facilitated discussion around notions of identity and participants' own roles in their community and in relation to the Centre. Narratives of names and naming were an immediate response, in particular, to the 'My Story to this Place' tool, with an individual's own name becoming a means of affirming a sense of his own identity. Alongside this, discussion of names and naming implied both legal and emotional connection to place, together with the status that such connections might incur. Themes and threads of representation-to-others (what the Centre means to others) and of the self-in-place (how a connection to the centre takes upon a meaning for participants) were raised when participants speculated reflexively upon their own roles or place in time and how notions of legacy were seen as significant to the Centre's future successes. It was also clear that participants saw the Centre itself as a resource and as a place that facilitated opportunities to be with others.

v. Prior manifestations of identity and power

But what she noticed when she came, she noticed that people they don't do nothing, they sit in one place, sometimes otherwise they go to work but otherwise they sit in one place but she noticed that the dream would start because of the vision that she was having before … She worked from 1993, from Langa, moving to Samora. And she has done that (with) no school. She shows us as people who went to school that you can do it — and she moved from Langa and moving to Samora and she see gaps in Samora and she moved these gaps. And she started this. Imagine.

'A' - local activist and community organiser, transcript of participation in the community storytelling workshop and engagement with 'My story to this place' tool ('when did you find your way here?').

The participants spent some time outlining their autobiographies via the 'My Story to This Place' tool, with some focus on their own journeys to Samora Machel and how this led to an involvement with the Centre. Within these narratives were threads that expressed moments where power had been exercised by individual participants — seeing potential to re-establish the Centre, confronting instances of when the Centre's ownership had been contested, applying skills and a sense of responsibility towards the community's needs etc. — together with activities where the community itself had exercised its own sense of identity and power.

Conclusion: The mutual benefits of group effort

> The centrality of group effort to human life means that anything that changes the way groups function will have profound ramifications for everything from commerce and government to media and religion. One obvious lesson is that new technology enables new kinds of group-forming. [W]hen we change the ways we communicate, we change society (Shirky 2009, pp.16-17).

The application of a design-led model of dialogical aesthetics seeks to amplify the 'ensemble of effects' that may already be visible within a community, re-assembling them from the individuals' stories and, through their collation, to represent a totality of lives, experiences and impacts felt upon and within their own communities.

The application and testing of novel, imaginative and creative methods of participation allows for a reconsideration of the 'design devices' (Ehn 2008) through which such activities can take place. This essay has outlined one approach for the application of principles from graphic design to the challenges of gathering stories from marginalised communities. The appeal and practice of such 'live' methods follows Manzini and Rizzo's (2011) suggestion that the activity of participation is as vital as any other moment within the design process. For Culhane (2017, p.15), a performance or practice

of imagination is resolutely social, helping to bind people to people and to their environments. The tentative application of new methods outlined within this essay has attempted to unpick some of the 'entangled narratives' through which people make use of place as a means to reconstitute and transform their communities. A graphic visualisation of tactics for 'process-based writing' (Cvetkovich 2012 in Elliot 2017, p.33) created a template through which participants were able to begin to engage with concepts of ownership, naming and association and helps to present ideas of community with some nuance or complexity. For Kester, tools can become a locus for 'connected knowledges' and serve to facilitate — and mediate — a range of 'dialogical interactions' whose potential is represented visually within each tool used in the research (2013, pp.14-15). Of particular significance is the role of text and writerly production, as text is directly applied to the surface of the tool, and in the process creates the opportunity for an explicit articulation structured to steer reflection upon the Tsoga Centre's entanglement of narratives. Any contribution of such tools to stories and their telling, however, is also focused on how the nature of the participation is shaped to develop a distinct kind of 'process-based writing'. The research looked to develop tools which might capture stories from participants in a particular way and recognised the power of articulation and association — that the story itself has value and is worth telling and is framed by the potential it has both to be re-told or to form one element of a larger narrative.

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