ETHICS OF LISTENING:
EXAMINING METHODS AND PRAXES
TOWARD A COMMUNITY-CENTRED ART

by

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Abstract

This dissertation describes methods and practices that help define the making of a “community-centred art.” My thesis is guided by my primary concern with three overlapping theoretical areas: art as activism, listening studies and ethical research. This thesis asks the following questions:

What models of ethical research and collective cultural production are possible and suitable in that they make sense, and make change, for those people and communities involved in-situ?;

What practices of teaching and learning can generate and encourage practices of “co-creativity”?

My study locates contemporary praxes from the mid-1990s to the present within a historical continuum in relation to particular discourses and sites of practice in Canada, the United States, Ireland and the United Kingdom. It documents how what we consider “contemporary” extends back into the period I will bracket as the community arts movement in Britain (c. 1960s-1992) with deeper historical roots in much earlier examples of popular arts.

My move to situate “the contemporary” within a historical continuum diverges from recent writings by those visual arts critics and theorists who reformulated “public art” (Lacy 1995; Jacob 1995) through concepts of “connective aesthetics” (Gablik 1991, 1995a) and “dialogical” forms of practice (Kester 2000, 2004). Most known are the now popularised forms of “relational” practice, accelerated by the writing of the French Conceptual Art critic Nicolas Bourriaud (1998).

Within this study, the practice of attentiveness to one another is described through modes of listening, where listening is an oral and auditory practice, as much as it is linguistic and multi-sensorial. I argue that observations on listening – because listening must necessarily be situated within sociality – require an ethical framework. What I am calling an ethics of listening therefore seeks to understand listening in a first instance as a disposition that is ideologically bound by ethics.
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Statement of Originality

I hereby certify that all of the work described within this thesis is the original work of the author.

Any published (or unpublished) ideas and/or techniques from the work of others are fully acknowledged in accordance with the standard referencing practices.

Julie Marie Fiala

August, 2015
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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Research Problematic

This dissertation describes methods and practices that help define the making of a “community-centred art.” One such method involves practices of listening. The study suggests “an ethics of listening” as a theoretical approach and method. The motivating question is, what is the relationship between this listening and any contemporary and future community-centred art that has ambitions for social and political change?

Overall, my thesis is guided by my primary concern with three overlapping theoretical areas: art as activism, listening studies and ethical research. While the next two chapters situate the research in relation to chosen areas of literature and discourse, the last two chapters allow for a case description of the research and art (in) action (art action et art en action). It is this process of generative praxis that I am describing through distinct modes of listening in order to put forward “an ethics of listening” as a theoretical approach and tentative proposal.

This thesis asks the following questions: What models of ethical research and collective cultural production are possible and suitable in that they make sense, and make change, for those people and communities involved in-situ?; What practices of teaching and learning can generate and encourage practices of “co-creativity”?; How do such practices become transformative ones that generate qualitative measures of change at “micro-political” levels (where the micro-political is about people and personal interactions) and in other planes of the social?

Specifically, this study sets out to determine and discuss the methods used by practitioners of contemporary, community-centred art in practicing attentiveness towards one
another. Although the discursive tendency has been to ascertain the needs of community arts through “professional” opinion – namely that of administrators, curators and policymakers, as well as artists³ – instead, I insist on a more diverse population of practitioners. This is to highlight the expertise of people with specialisms that do not originate from art worlds. Herein, these are youth workers, young people and community leaders.

The shift to focus on what other people have to offer to art has epistemological implications in terms of what counts as knowledge and practice. The definition of “community arts,” where an artist leads a community group into artmaking and empowerment, will no longer suffice. I believe that community arts can be better understood as variegated praxes, unfixing the very roles and functions implicit in the common (divisive) definition of the phrase, which separates the artist (out) from the community. This “peoples’ praxis” comprises the production of art in itself; however, as I will exemplify, it can include, as well, the formulation of knowledge, which can also be a matter of community. In other words, a “peoples’ praxis” refers not just to making art, but to theorising art.

My study locates contemporary praxes from the mid-1990s to the present within a historical continuum in relation to particular discourses and sites of practice in Canada, the United States, Ireland and the United Kingdom. It documents how what we consider “contemporary” extends back into the period I will bracket as the community arts movement in Britain (c. 1960s-1992) with deeper historical roots in much earlier examples of popular arts. Based in Britain and Canada, the examples of popular arts (a synonym in the 1940s for “folk art”) that I will reference, are important for situating the chronology of the study. They become temporal markers in the wider dissertation project.⁵
My move to situate “the contemporary” within a historical continuum diverges from recent writings by those visual arts critics and theorists who reformulated “public art” (Lacy 1995; Jacob 1995) through concepts of “connective aesthetics” (Gablik 1991, 1995a) and “dialogical” forms of practice (Kester 2000, 2004). Most known are the now popularised forms of “relational” practice, accelerated by the writing of the French Conceptual Art critic Nicolas Bourriaud in the 1990s.6 Herein, I will relate these authors’ concerns about questions of aesthetics and ethics to the social intentions of earlier “community arts” practices.

While contributing to existing theoretical currents, my attention during the process of this research has been closely focussed on questions of “listening” and of “ethics.” Doing ethics within community-centred art has been primarily an internally-regulated method and process of self and community. More recently, over/doing ethics in general has become an institutional requirement for undergoing research with “human subjects” at a university. One concern of this dissertation is how a growing preoccupation with the regulation of ethical parameters impacts upon community-centred art both on the ground and in academia. Additionally, it has been my hypothesis that – through listening – practitioners of community arts are able to contribute to collective processes of artmaking that, at their best, respect all involved. Careful attentiveness, to others and to the self, allows for specific forms of representational politics to ensue. We encounter mutations of collective cultural praxis invested with varying degrees of ethical social-consciousness and micro-political responsibility.

Out of this praxis through art (de cette praxis par l’art), we witness the emergence and increased sustainability of communities of individuals whose ideological value systems resist or deviate from those maintained by the dominant social order. These are “micro-communities” in the sense that we will be dealing with small, self-regulated “formations” (Williams 1981, 57-86)
of individuals subsumed by pre-existing configurations of community that structure and maintain
the larger order of society. In relation to my Irish fieldwork in Belfast, this would be the
community of “Catholic/Nationalist/Republican” (C/N/R) belonging versus that of
“Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist” (P/U/L) belonging.\(^7\)

To be sure, there are always boundaries to studies that are tied to the pool of experiential
knowledge surveyed. The study does not represent the breadth of my actual lived practice of art
crossing over the many locations of my experience since 2001. The cases chosen are selected for
quality and consistency – not quantity – striving for a hermeneutic analysis to approach the core
of the art and social relations examined, rather than a statistical or quantitative measure of art and
social change. These are some of the acknowledged limits of this auto-ethnographic approach.

Furthermore, an important epistemological challenge of the study is linked to competing
definitions of the word “listening.” Listening is a mutable, interdisciplinary concept, carrying
with it discursive tensions. In a theological sense, the well-known Benedictine phrase, “listening
with the ear of your heart,” invokes a full-bodied listening. This interpretation of theological
listening offers very different possibilities than the psychoanalytic listening of a physician to his
or her patient. Let us not forget the experience of the confessional – the act of whispering into the
male ear of a Catholic priest. (The latter two examples of listening could be deemed monological,
theosophical and hierarchical.) Still, these instances of listening, as differing typologies of
practice, in combination influence this study of listening, which is primarily “dialogical.”

Herein, I would like to think of the listening ideal, in some ways, as “ecumenical,” by
which I mean that it is centred on an attitude of universal care for one another across disparity.
Etymologically, “ecumenical” was a secular word relating to the inhabited world and home
(Merriam-Webster online),\(^8\) yet I identify with the ecclesiastical definition of “[b]elonging to or
representing the whole (Christian) world” (OED online). The latter definition beckons the possibility of human compassion, unity across peoples, and non-denominational relatedness. As I finalise this manuscript, the value of inter-faith and cross-border praxes feels – and I mean feel in an embodied and visceral sense – ever important. The world is witnessing unbearable (sectarian) violence in the Gaza Strip, while there is relative peace at home in Canada. Our “inhabited world and home” is under serious danger, no matter how we place the blame.

This research adopts this attitude to listening as a practice of community. As I will show, there are “historical” examples of community-centred art that can be identified and deemed to approximate this listening model, that is, based on what we do know and our interpretation of secondary resources. Yet this study establishes its most important claims through fieldwork on a terrain of research and art that was constructed expressly to verify and challenge these claims. I will show that the “crafting” of an appropriate context for fieldwork research, like the crafting of listening, was necessary for yielding the kind of detailed evidence gathering and close analysis that is indispensable to understanding how we can work ethically in community through art. Specifically, I will argue that the development of a representational politics that is appropriate and equitable, and from which social change can ensue, requires our mindfulness (intention) for growing our senses of listening.

My dissertation discusses ethical challenges and offers examples of when this listening happens and how it evolves. I do so with an awareness of other models of fieldwork in this area of inquiry that have been contemporary to my on-going practices of research-creation (or recherche-création) within the practices of community-centred art, and emerging after Hal Foster’s (1996) formulation of “the artist as ethnographer.” In particular, I am referring to the cases described in Lacy (2008, 2010), Leeson (2009), Murphy (2010), Koh (2010a, 2010b), Chu
(2013), and Neumark (2013). These are rare examples of writing by artists where detail and reflexivity are achieved by scrutinising the art and social relations at play.

This thesis, therefore, not only recognises their art and writing as crucial models of scholarship, but also attempts to bring focus and to deepen particular areas, such as “ethics” and “listening,” in ways that, in my investigations, have few precedents. In so doing, I also acknowledge the differently focused and fairly limited number of examples of writing in this precise subject area, specifically, related studies by artist Jay Koh (2010a, 2010b) and critic Grant H. Kester (1999) that contribute to my examination at this thematic intersection. (This discussion takes place in Chapter Three.)

1.2 Theoretical Engagements:
For our purposes, the following larger categories of theoretical engagement are outlined below: representational politics and ethics; conflict studies; synaesthetics; interdisciplinarity; and research in action pedagogy.

1.2.1 Representational politics and ethics
I am engaged deeply with ideas and ideals of representations, which I measure against the practical realities and challenges of how to represent others, a practice of care and responsibility to others and to the self that is governed by relations of power. Representation and its politics (what counts, what matters, what works, what hurts) are never straightforward or self-evident.

This theme incorporates numerous more narrow areas of theoretical investment and concern, namely: ethical research and protocols; particular social anarchist and feminist concepts and formulations (learning through doing, situated knowledge, and social location); performance art (art in action, actuation or making actual, and notions of context and site-specificity); histories
of community arts (early popular arts and the later British community arts movement), and ongoing art criticism at the ethics/aesthetics junction, as previously mentioned.

1.2.2 Conflict Studies

This research is concerned with that of other qualitative researchers carrying out fieldwork within divided societies (for example, Schubotz 2005; Alldred 2003; Finlay 1999, 2001), especially in the north of Ireland. In preparation for my fieldwork, I consulted literature on the “biology of violence” (Niehoff 2002; also see Redekop 2002), the subtleties and differences in models of colonisation across time and space (such as, Miller 1998; Howe 2000), and sectarian living (Quinn 1994; Goldie and Ruddy 2010). Furthermore, this study is engaged with models of conflict mediation and peace-building through the historical and continuing work of unique and differing social justice organisations and institutions in Ireland, for example, the Corrymeela Community in the town of Ballycastle, in addition to the support group for political ex-prisoners, Tar Isteach (Shilow and McEvoy 2008), the Irish School of Ecumenics, where I was a visiting student (Trinity College Dublin at Belfast), the local group called Survivors of Trauma, and others based in Belfast, with whom I have had the privilege to live and work during my fieldwork.

The social scientist Dirk Schubotz’s (2005) “Beyond the Orange and the Green: The Diversification of the Qualitative Social Research Landscape in Northern Ireland” has discussed some of the challenges of research in this particular divided society. He emphasises the multiplication of methods for increased qualitative research enabled since the 1994 ceasefire, that permits moving beyond quantitative data and typical research foci (for example, the economical impact of the violent conflict known as the Troubles (c. 1968-1998), as a financial measure or the number of deaths).
Drawing primarily from interviews with professionals in the sector, Sarah Alldred’s (2003) doctoral study is a substantial study of community arts in Belfast, showing some of the ways that the arts have been linked to reconciliation in Northern Ireland after the Troubles. In my mind, here, it is perhaps not the interview as a qualitative methodology that is in itself novel, but rather the idea that art (and the opinions of its professionals) now mattered – that there was space for art in the processes of post-Trouble transformation.

1.2.3 Synaesthetics

Beyond theories of listening as a communicational or auditory tool, an articulation of the senses has been incredibly important to this study. However art historical, this dissertation incorporates sources in the areas of sound and audition (Cage 1961; Schafer 1977/1994; Erlmann 2004; Pugh10; Bull and Back 2003, which includes Paul Moore’s especially interesting study of sectarian sound); the sensory and the haptic (Rodaway 1994; Connor 2004); the sonorous body (Nancy 2002, 2007), as well as medical (Tomatis 1974, 1977, 1978) and disabled bodies (Michalko 2002; Goggin 2009). For one, this serves to render more complex those propositions about listening that have already been put forward in the fields of community-centred art. It also functions as background against which to build a hermeneutic analysis and to develop “ethics of listening” from practical examples.

1.2.4 Interdisciplinarity

An interdisciplinary project, this dissertation engages with a spectrum of critical cultural analysis, including definitions by Raymond Williams surrounding culture (1976, 1981), and, more recently in Québec, the grounded theories and operative frameworks of the aboriginal sociologist of art, Guy Sioui Durand (1997, 2008, 2011). Useful to my work are studies at the intersections of ethics and listening, proliferating from diverse disciplines such as Psychology (Gilligan 1982);

Very much, my desire to practice listening-as-research has been inspired by the writing of the British Sociologist Les Back (2007). Back’s aptly titled book, *The Art of Listening*, asks researchers, including activists and artists (ibid., 22), “how can we listen more carefully?” (ibid., 7). Back explains that such listening “involves artfulness precisely because it isn’t self-evident but a form of openness to others that needs to be crafted, a listening for the background and the half muted” (ibid., 8; emphasis added).

Transposing Back’s ideas of sociological listening to contexts of collective making, herein, listening is theorised as an artful, rather than an artistic praxis of co-creativity. It is understood as a life process, rather than a strictly art process, bringing artfulness into art through life. To be sure, listening is not art, but at the same time, it is full of art. This study links the “craft” of listening, implored by Back, to particular methods/tools/strategies/techniques. These are dialogic methods of evidence gathering and analyses, including techniques of dialogue, as well as of artmaking. I argue that it is precisely through these methods that we enable this attentiveness, which requires an attitude of openness to listening. This “attitudinal” argument is expanded in the third and fifth chapters of this study.

### 1.2.5 Research in action pedagogy

My chosen qualitative approach to research in Belfast was to develop a generative, “action-research” pedagogy through art in a community context. This sits well with what feminist art pedagogue Rita L. Irwin and colleagues have called “a/r/tography,” a fluid process of embedded research by artists who also function as researchers and teachers (hence “a/r/t”); it is a form of mapping on the ground, which recognises that “artistic processes are reminiscent of action
research enacted as living inquiry” (Irwin 2010; also see Irwin et al. 2009). I use the term “generative action-research” to mean that the actual methodologies for transferring/sharing knowledge (both ways) were, as much as possible, developed organically from the relationship, skills and negotiated desires of the community, which included my own skills and desires. Ideally, I aimed to encourage a “learner-learner” relationship, rather than a student-teacher relationship.

A further point of influence on these praxes of living art through action research has been the writing of the late British Art Historian Herbert Read (1893-1968). I read Herbert Read as a public intellectual, like Raymond Williams and Paulo Freire, who overlap with the chronology of my study. In books such as Education through Art (1969/1943) and The Redemption of the Robot (1970), it is the enfolding of ideals of an integral education through art that interest me as a working practice and goal. How, in practice, could this type of both manual-and-theoretical consciousness and learning be developed? At their origin, these pedagogies were being shaped out of theoretical models of social anarchism and anarchist education that have been useful as an ideal to work towards in this research.

Additionally, the better known action research models used first for the critical consciousness (or conscientização in Portuguese) of “oppressed” rural farmworkers by the Brazilian pedagogue Paolo Freire (1970) has powerfully impacted my research methodology. Freire, a Marxist, had quickly taught these workers to read. Like his theatre counterpart Augusto Boal, these examples have since been taken up by other teachers, such as the current pedagogy through art of Ney Wendell in Bahia, Brazil.
1.3 Methods:

1.3.1 Epistemological Issues

1.3.1.1 An ethics of listening

Throughout the dissertation, the practice of attentiveness to one another is described through modes of listening, where listening is an oral and auditory practice, as much as it is linguistic and multi-sensorial. I argue that observations on listening – because listening must necessarily be situated within sociality – require an ethical framework. What I am calling an ethics of listening therefore seeks to understand listening in a first instance as a disposition that is ideologically bound by ethics. An underlying consideration is that “ethics” is differentiated from morality and taken to infer the total relationships of power governing social relations. This formulation should serve to complicate the equation of ethics with morality that has dominated most of the theorising on the “ethnographic” (Foster 1996), “ethical” (Beech 2011) and “social” (Bishop 2009) turns by artists working with others towards collective cultural production.

More than ten years ago, through retracing citations I first read in the philosopher David Michael Levin’s book, The Listening-Self (1989), I encountered a similar sense of listening ethics in psychologist Carol Gilligan’s book, In a Different Voice (1982). Both of these authors have been cited extensively by the art critic Suzi Gablik (1991, 1995a).

“Ethics of listening” seek to describe an ethical framework for being attentive to others and to the self. This is a process and state of existence (perhaps better expressed in French as un processus et une forme de vie) that tends towards attentiveness. Although I maintain a couplet between “listening” and “attentiveness,” my choice of “ethics of listening” over “ethics of attentiveness/attention” is deliberate. As a dialogical concept, “listening” easily conjures reciprocal, back-and-forth fluidity, while “attentiveness” and “attention” are more unidirectional.
Listening is the promise of a conversation and I privilege this possibility; however, this couplet is valuable because “attentiveness,” as a broader concept, allows to open “listening” to a multiplicity of cerebral, sensory and bodily attentions beyond the strictly sonorous.

If we consider listening to be a multi-sensorial practice, it makes it possible to listen through the eye, the hand, the nose, the mouth, as well as the more “traditional” ear. Also, I will add “affect,” and, arguably, any other sense among a number of recognised human senses linked to pain, balance, time, movement and temperature, for instance. The profoundly deaf percussionist Evelyn Glennie (TED talks 2003) convincingly argues that the whole body can hear/feel sounds as vibrations, so that listening is possible “far more broadly than the ear.” In relation to community-centred art, ethics of listening attempt to describe a process and state of co-creativity that tends towards ethically-mindful representation. I will suggest that effective projects are those that advance and sustain, among others, the values of critical pedagogy, agency and equity in upholding cultural democracy.

Do these ethics of listening yield particular aesthetic concerns, which could be simultaneously constitutive of an aesthetics of listening?

1.3.1.2 Human Research within a Divided Society

Queen’s University, the PhD-granting institution, abides by an explicit policy for research with human subjects, as well as associated protocols for obtaining “ethics clearance” at appropriate levels to ensure that subjects choosing themselves to participate freely in the research are being respected and that any deemed risks are being minimised as much as possible by those guiding the processes of the research. Accordingly, before it started at the end of January 2011, the proposed research was reviewed (“full review”) by the General Research Ethics Board, known under the familiar acronym GREB. A sanctioning board at arms-length from the university,
GREB authorises, officialises and legitimises all research at Queen’s University that is deemed subject to ethical considerations, according to the Tri-Council Policy, to which Queen’s University adheres, like other state-funded universities in Canada that work with their respective Research Ethics Boards (REBs).16

Many departments at Queen’s University also have internal “ethics” screening processes, before research proposals go to GREB.17 The Department of Art History and Art Conservation does not. With the exception of interviews with artists and specialists, we are not as accustomed to supporting students’ research with “human subjects.” It is well recognised that Art History, as a discipline, has been concerned primarily with the work of deceased artists – not the practices of living artists who are our contemporaries, or the wider socio-political spheres where particular artworks, even historical ones, are still functioning today through audiences that are constantly being renewed. These “gaps” would require that we deal with real, living people, as do the variable practices of “social art” that involve and thrive within communities.

In the case of the fieldwork described and analysed in the latter two chapters of this dissertation, “ethics” requirements were multiplied because of the geographical context of the proposed research within a “divided society,” as I discuss in Chapter Four. Additionally, a second ethics review was carried out concomitantly by Trinity College Dublin, through supervision from their postgraduate programme in the area of conflict studies at the Irish School of Ecumenics at Belfast, which hosted and oversaw the fieldwork.18

1.4 Methodological Considerations: The specifics

1.4.1 History of the Current Research Interests
Since 2001, I have been interested in artistic collaboration, explored through both my writing and art practice with others. My first major project of this kind, TESTAMENTS, took the form of a
bookwork consisting of a revised edition of the King James New Testament, which cited oral contributions from more than sixty women across faiths, backgrounds and sexual persuasions under one book (Fiala 2001). In tandem, I wrote my first essay about artistic collaboration, titled *Collaborative Ethics*. The main shortcoming of this essay was that the research was based on secondary sources. Descriptions of artworks that I had not experienced first-hand could not serve to substantiate adequately the claims that I was making about ethics, or dialogue, which I later re-conceptualised as listening. Like these examples, a number of my other past projects allude to the complexities of collaborative practice and ethics. Begun in Canada, then Britain, and finally Ireland, the dissertation research follows my relocations and situated practice in these different places.

In 2004, I began to devise a visual and language system to evaluate my exchanges with others. This took the graphic form of an artwork consisting of an elaborate map containing words, graphs and grids. It is through this process that I began thinking critically about interpersonal exchanges through language, and evaluating the role of listening. The process of developing and testing the maps in life situations turned sociological questions into creative ones. Subsequently, I became curious about how derivative systems might function in the evaluation of community-centred art because of its basis on interpersonal exchange through forms of collaboration and co-creativity.

1.4.2 Rationale for the Approach to Sources and Fieldwork

In looking for similar examples of fieldwork, there are a limited number of relevant artists’ accounts within the accumulated practices of community-centred art. I value the work of Carole Condé and Karl Beveridge (1976, 1987, 1995), Allan Kaprow (1993), Loraine Leeson (2005, 2009), James Marriott (1996, 2008), and Ailbhe Murphy (2004, 2010). These artist-produced
texts reflect on art as activism or critical pedagogy, contributing to the spheres of art criticism, art history, and education.

Through my research and writing, I am attempting a style that enfolds a type of auto-ethnography of the artist-as-researcher without being about the artist or the researcher. Lorrie Anne Miller’s (2003) dissertation constitutes an interesting example of auto-ethnographic writing. Her analysis of Suzanne Lacy’s late 1990s Vancouver-based “community art performance” (called Under Construction) develops from proximal forms of participant-observation (ibid.), which are not dissimilar from those I am proposing here. Miller’s self-reflexive writing enables her to interweave personal narratives fluidly.

My fieldwork takes on many forms, including collective artmaking, observational research, research in action and interviews, in ways that integrate practice and theory, where neither can be separated out or disassociated. Through the fieldwork started in Belfast – as an artist and, also, a visiting student – the compilation of research was achieved in three primary ways: (1) by producing art in action with others; (2) by observing and participating in the processes that make up the course of particular community-centred art projects; and (3) by analysing evidence, including artworks derived from these processes, as indicative and symptomatic of modes of listening. The latter has called for (visual, oral and textual) hermeneutics based on evidence such as testimony, notes, remnants and artworks. To supplement the “primary source” information gathered from direct experience and engagement, an indirect, ancillary source has been the experiential knowledge of peers working in the community arts sector, ascertained through dialogue and by interview. (Additionally, the literature review developed in chapters Two and Three will be crucial in situating the research vis-à-vis the discourses of art history and activism.)
The feminist philosopher Sandra Harding’s (1987) “method” - “methodology” - “epistemology” trilogy has been useful in clarifying definitions and language for this dissertation. Refuting the proposition that there is “a distinctive feminist method of inquiry,” Harding (ibid.) proves that the conflation of “method” and “methodology” is a troubling one. She argues aptly that we should differentiate between (1) “method (techniques for gathering evidence)”; (2) “methodology (a theory and analysis of how research should proceed)”, and (3) “epistemological issues (issues about an adequate theory of knowledge or justification strategy)” (ibid., esp. 1-3).

Building on Harding’s concepts (ibid.), the “method” or “techniques for gathering evidence” employed in this research are largely derived from the areas of sociology and socio-psychology. During my time at Trinity College, I benefited from the support of my host supervisor, Dr. Gladys Ganiel, who is an expert in qualitative research methods. Centred on artmaking, the core of my fieldwork took the form of variations on observant-participation and participant-observation, where the practice of research developed as a (multi-sensorial) listening practice. The evidence was recorded by means of fieldnotes in different forms (direct notes, audio recordings and artworks). The immediacy of the note-taking, no matter the form, was crucial to careful reading and interpretation. Rather than to emphasise the artwork as product, I interpret the processes of the working together and of the artmaking, namely the dialogic facets, and those processes “embedded” within the signifying systems of documentary images and other “traces” (as the late Jacques Derrida (1967) might have designated them). I will show that the dialogic aspects are not limited to spoken and written languages.

From Harding (1987) we might understand that analysis itself is also a “method” for gathering evidence. In this study, the analysis of texts in several verbal and visual forms has involved the continuous reinterpretation of the “raw” notes and of the fieldwork using reflexive
journaling, visual analysis, and the application of generative codes as they developed from the field of art in action. This study has benefited from a variety of sociological and cultural/artistic modes of inquiry and interpretation influenced by Cultural Studies. Accordingly, I apply the following interdisciplinary methods for the analysis of the evidence: visual semiotics (Barthes 1972, 1977); coding and textual analysis as forms of qualitative analysis (Fairclough 2003; Cameron 1992, 2001; Ganiel24); and, where useful, strategies of conversation analysis (as per Thornborrow 2002).

Finally, I have been privileged to have had first-hand experience of conflict mediation, through the completion of a certification in “Dialogue for Peaceful Change” led by Colin and Rachel Craig.25 “Dialogue for Peaceful Change” is an internationally recognised training programme and methodology of “mediative dialogue,” which has been used widely in Northern Ireland (TIDES 2010).

1.5 Description of the Dissertation: Chapters

Chapter Two: Histories of Practice: (In)forming a Community-Centred Art

Chapter Two draws primarily from a sampling of literature published in Canada, Britain and Ireland. Culled from adjoining fields of praxis, the research presented attempts to puts forward a porous definition of “community-centred art” – porous, insofar that it is a leaky, rather than contained definition. The chapter is organised in such a way that “community-centred art” is described as an amalgamated practice, integrating characteristics that sit complexly within a historical continuum starting with the popular arts of the late 19th century, progressing into
community arts from the 1960s onwards, then into the political and cultural activisms of the 1970s and 1980s, and thenceforth, into the socially-engaged arts transpiring from 1993 into the present.26

Through this discussion a number of defining characteristics and historical trends are identified and foregrounded. The chapter’s main contribution is to propose and highlight three key themes forming and informing the “community-centred art” described in the subsequent chapters of this dissertation. Grounded within and proposed to help describe the historical practices themselves, these themes are identified as “the artful,” “the ethical,” and “the oppositional.”

In so doing, Chapter Two acts as both a historical and analytical backdrop for the thesis. The chapter is wider in scope than the more focused discussions in the subsequent chapters that deepen the issues of ethics introduced here, and interweave the questions of listening that contribute to this field of scholarship in ways that have few precedents.

**Chapter Three:**

**Mapping my Terrain: Existing Theoretical Frameworks and Listening as an Attitude**

Chapter Three discusses established critical frameworks in adjacent fields that can serve to theorise the praxis of community-centred art explained in Chapter Two. In particular, the chapter foregrounds the debates surrounding ethical questions (speaking for others and ethical representation) emerging within recent discourses. Moreover, the chapter considers how the emphasis on aestheticising theories of dialogue – where dialogue is primarily understood as speech communication – has provided a plausible and important theoretical entry point to discuss this collective cultural production. In particular, the chapter highlights the unusual reflexive
investigations by artists-researchers who value and integrate listening as a method within practice and research.

Against a backdrop of existing literature in the areas of art history and contemporary art criticism, Chapter Three goes on to suggest that there are other ways to do and to think “listening” with the body and in time/space. The chapter introduces a broader, interdisciplinary body of literature, from areas including listening studies, philosophy, experimental music, disability studies, which engages with different senses (meanings and the sensory) of listening. I do so to suggest an associative framework that is useful to reinforce our understanding of how the art works, as opposed to an explicative, theoretical framework that is imposed from above to theorise the art. By cross-reference, this interdisciplinary framework will serve to corroborate the analysis of the case examples presented in the subsequent chapters (in particular, Chapter Five). This framework will help affirm and validate knowledge that is grounded in the experiences of the community-centred art itself.

**Chapter Four: Them, Selves: Ethics of Self, Community and Ethical Research**

Chapter Four re-presents and re-analyses three cases of multi-modal, community-centred art drawn from my artistic practice with others since 2001, alongside an introduction to contextual aspects of the most recent, primary case study informing this dissertation. These are the collaborative bookwork entitled *TESTAMENTS* (Kingston and Ottawa, 2001); the urban intervention and participative project, *Red Coat Trail* (Leeds, 2004-2011), and the interdisciplinary arts and pedagogical workshop series subsequently titled *Where We Meet* (Belfast, 2011-2012).
With the former two examples, the discussion is focussed upon ethical concerns and questions emerging from my experiences of working with others in-community, and to create community. Through these cases, the first half of Chapter Four emphasises the positionality and reflexivity of the co-creators who, for the purposes of art and social relations, make a practice. How do these methods of self- and community “regulation” inform art practices governed by listening ethics? What and how were ethical concerns regulated internally? By “regulation,” I mean those anxiety-generating rules (both spoken and unspoken) surrounding human value, morality, representation, intersubjectivity – in short, how we value humans. As I nuance in this chapter, “regulation” will account not only for compliance to such rules, but also, for our hesitation and resistance, whether intentional or not. Beyond a primary concern with ethics, other praxical concepts slip into the descriptions in re-telling the stories of these early works of community-centred art, including the roles of mindfulness, co-creativity, empathy and dialogue.

This analysis is counterbalanced with the latter half of the chapter, which considers questions of research ethics through a discussion of the demands of institutional regulation in relation to Where We Meet. Having emphasised the perspectival subjectivity of “the artist” in the first half of the chapter, the second half re-orient the work to a reflexivity of the artist as researcher. I hope to show how the shift from “artist” to “researcher” may not be as fluid as the hyphenated “artist-research” would suggest.

This discussion is based largely upon my experience of fieldwork research and research-creation in Ireland, and primarily the north of Ireland. It reconsiders the process of institutionally sanctioned ethics review governing research involving “human subjects” that paralleled this study. The chapter employs an auto-ethnographic style to present the intricacies of the intersectional contexts (sectarian, locational, organisational) at play in the experience of
developing research through art with others within a divided society. The following themes are
developed in this discussion of co-creative praxes: research in a divided society; the challenges of
ethical protocols; and arts-based research in action. Concern for how to do research involving
“human subjects” is turned into learning to explore what counts as ethical research.

How does the focus on the regulation of the ethical relationship between the researcher
and the “human subjects” of her/his research eclipse the ethical questions inherent in the other
relationships at play in the collective processes of production? The chapter shows how these
processes also create blind-spots for the researcher interested in ethics and community-centred
art. How can relationships produced in action – of different durations – be ethically reviewed
when social “contracts” are being forged implicitly and gradually through moments of being
together?

Chapter Five: A Typology of Listening from Community-centred Art

Chapter Five interconnects “ethics” and “listening” by extending a discussion of the Belfast
fieldwork within Tar Isteach. A thick description of the art and social relations at play, this
analysis draws from a variety of sources, including collective cultural production, observational
research, interviews, and literature, connecting with the expanded concept of listening presented
in Chapter Three.

The analytical framework described in the chapter grows out of a desire for a more
metaphorical and multifocal formulation of listening to approximate what is artistic (artful) in the
art and social relations that are co-created. On practical terms, the chapter serves to reformulate
what can constitute practicing “attentiveness” through art in terms of practical ways, or modes, of
listening. Here, I repurpose listening as a holistic, multi-sensorial attitude and praxis by
grounding and growing an analysis from an intricate description of the series of workshops led by other artists and myself with the young people of Tar Isteach.
Chapter 2

Histories of Practice: (In)forming a Community-Centred Art

2.1 Overview

Chapter Two proposes working definitions for what I call “community-centred art” by tracing and interrelating particular histories of cultural practices and their literatures. However, the objective of this chapter is not so much to advance “community-centred art” as a substitute for existing terms – like community arts, socially-engaged art, dialogical art, participatory art, social practice. In this fluid field (un champ mouvant), the manners of naming practices have been multiplying. By identifying “defining characteristics” linked to particular histories of practice – “popular arts,” “community arts” and “socially-engaged art” – the chapter arrives at a set of qualities to discuss praxes continuing over time/space. I attempt to describe what qualities continue to develop while I trouble (fixed) “characteristics” themselves as sufficient means to an end. In positing a taxonomy re-centring upon “community,” I invite the reader to think about what it can mean to “build community” in different ways through art, recognising that building community is a shared project with those providing social and other educational services.27

This chapter presents a sampling of histories of practices – particularly from Canada (Ontario and Québec), England and the north of Ireland28 – that have a resonance beyond “the regional” and “the local.” By outlining certain geographies, the examples serve to document the policies and histories that can help inform an amalgamated praxis of making “community” specifically through shared cultural experiences. The chapter is sectioned through debates within and between well- and less-circulated texts.29 This allows me to propose community-centred arts
as being *inter* between media, chronologies, geographies, and political and cultural intentions. To be sure, this problem-space is one that interrogates notions of “defining characteristics.”

A useful, more recent study of community arts in Britain is Ann Gosse’s doctoral dissertation (2002), “Towards a New Understanding of Community Arts 1960-2000.” In this overview of the histories and policies of community arts in Britain, Gosse warns: “By 1988, the term community arts had lost currency. Its inability to define itself allowed anyone and anything vaguely involving people and art, to be called community art, resulting in a huge span of activity that varied in both quality and philosophy” (ibid., 154). In her attempt to trace “defining characteristics,” Gosse concludes that community arts has failed to define itself adequately, leading, she argues, to its ineffectiveness as a “subaltern” movement (ibid.). A similar *problématique* about definitions of collaborations between social movements and artistic tendencies driving my work is effectively raised by J. Keri Cronin and Kristy Robertson (2011) in their edited book *Imaging Resistance: Visual Culture and Activism in Canada*. The authors commence:

The porosity of overloaded categories such as art and activism tends to encourage highly contested discussions and arguments not only over the efficacy of artistic forms of resistance but also over the very nature of what defines art and what defines resistance. […] Although our original aim seems simple, it actually converged more than a century of rich deliberation and a highly complex history of production, performance, circulation, and scholarship that have not allowed for easy categorization of “activist art” within political movements or within the discipline of art history (or any other discipline for that matter). That is apparent even before one tries to disentangle the differences between political art, activist art, oppositional art, subversive art, resistance art, tactile media, interventionist art, and so on and so forth. (ibid., 1)
2.2 Recognising a Continuum

The breadth of the study recognises a continuum following specific lineages of praxis into the present. In ways that are interdisciplinary, these lineages link into the evolving spheres of policy, theory, history, as well as “culture” – in the dual sense ascribed by Raymond Williams (1976, 1981), where an analysis of culture can be conducted as anthropology and as art history. In his book *Culture*, Williams (1981, 204) explains how the reproducibility of culture depends on the interplay between “residual” and “emergent” practices. Williams writes:

> But then it is also the case that in cultural production both the residual – work made in earlier and often different societies and times, yet still available and significant – and the emergent – work of various new kinds – are often equally available as practices. Certainly the dominant can absorb or attempt to absorb both. But there is almost always older work kept available by certain groups as an extension of or alternative to dominant contemporary cultural production. And there is almost always new work which tries to move (and at times succeeds in moving) beyond the dominant forms and their socio-formal relations. (Ibid.)

This quotation can explain some challenges pertaining to the assemblage (*bricolage*) of the histories of practice informing “community-centred art” as a continuum, and likewise, challenges of making claims to newness. Williams’ quote can also serve to describe the push-pull between “alternative” and “dominant” forms of culture that underlies the histories of practice described in this chapter.

Notably, in his well-known book *Keywords*, Williams (1976) traces the evolution of the meanings of “culture” as a complex word mutating over time from the “process” of “tending of something.” If we hold onto this earlier meaning, we are closer to the idea of making culture *through* being attentive, like tending or caring for something – working it – as a process whereby
we render it significant. (This idea takes on more importance in chapters Three and Five of this dissertation, when being attentive is associated with practices of listening.)

By proposing “community-centred art,” this chapter traces the persistence of several building-blocks that I will identify as “the artful,” “the ethical,” and “the oppositional.” These three investments will help construct a description of a community-centred art that acknowledges the presence of “residual” and “emergent” work (Williams 1981, 204) that historically shapes a community-centred practice. This language will serve to anchor more resolutely my examples within particular historical lineages that are guided by specific ambitions (learning, change, representation) and formulations (community, collaboration, co-creativity) of collective cultural production. Orientating this dissertation towards several questions of ethics underlying these ambitions and formulations will further become the basis for questions of listening.

My research and material practice engages histories of “community arts” in Britain as a different manifestation from that occurring in the north of Ireland after the 1970s, and in Canada particularly after the 1980s. In Britain, the period of cultural production from c.1960 to the early 1990s brackets the densest years of community arts and the State (Kelly 1984). In the north of Ireland, community arts is documented as having emerged through theatre in West Belfast during the early 1970s, when England “was in full swing” (Lynch in Fitzgerald 2004, 57-8). In Canada, projects such as the National Film Board’s Challenge for Change programme, beginning in the late 1960s (Tuer 1994), and early labour arts (Diamond 1986; Donegan 1987, 1998) put community arts into practice without naming it. Yet, through my investigations of archival sources in the Canadian provinces of Ontario and Québec, the term does appear in the 1980s through the writings and exhibitions of dedicated cultural activists such as Karl Beveridge and Carole Condé in Ontario. In 1982, they helped found the Labour, Arts and Media Working Group.
(LAMWG) to encourage collaboration across arts-labour lines, leading to the annual Mayworks Festival of Working People and the Arts started in Toronto in 1986 (see Tuer 1995a, 206).

Moreover, in the province of Québec, the eclectic pages of the ephemeral, radical and comprehensive publication called *Québec Underground* (1973), as well as the recent writing of the political scientist and art historian, Ève Lamoureux (2007, 2009), help document histories of political and cultural activisms found in the organising of artist collectives who relied upon practical manifestations of “collective” and “community.”

I would like to signal that what is comfortably referred to and practiced as “community arts” in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s can be deemed to have appeared under different guises, both before and after this peak. A focus on “popular arts” and pedagogy can be considered as a “residual” example. The revolutionary and agitational context of the 1960s is argued to have propelled the emergence of the community arts movement in Britain (Braden 1978; Kelly 1984; Lane 1978; Fitzgerald 2004). Other “emergent,” activist art practices were developing concomitantly elsewhere into the 1970s and the 1980s (Kahn and Neumaier 1985). In the early 1990s, “socially-engaged art” emerges as the result of the increasing “professionalisation” of the sector through the progressive incorporation of art activisms into institutional frameworks of high art. This includes, for example, the rise of curators and biennales of community arts, as well as significant theoretical contributions now assembled within art history rather than in earlier sites of discursive space. Praxes today can no longer solely be called community arts; it has produced nomenclature that signals further hybridisation.

Writing from the U.S. in an article entitled “Postscript to the Past: Notes Towards a History of Community Arts,” Arlene Goldbard (1993) proposes the idea of chronological phases of community arts: “The present run of community arts activity in this country began in the ’60s
and flows right through to the present” (23). That Goldbard recognises a “present run” of activity has been my starting point for the identification of distinct yet overlapping variations of praxis of “community” expressed through “popular arts,” “community arts,” and, later on from the 1990s, “socially-engaged arts.” Furthermore, Goldbard’s consideration of previous threads of activity – such as William Morris’ craft revolution, the work of Mexican muralists as early as the 1920s and the employment of artists through federal funding schemes like the Works Progress Administration between the World Wars (ibid., 26) – points both to the international dimension of this phenomenon and insists on strong linkages between Goldbard’s focus and earlier currents.

Canadian cultural workers like Robin Pacific and Melanie Fernandez have rooted community arts in Canada within precedents such as “the little theatres, the Sunday painter groups, the choirs and bands largely started by immigrants from the British Isles” (Pacific 1998, 42). In parallel, Fernandez (2008, 10-12) submits that community arts could be said to be “the oldest continuous artistic practice in the country,” citing early examples of collective practices in the form of choirs and orchestras, as well as visual arts and theatre groups influenced by British community theatre. Undoubtedly, Pacific, Fernandez, and Goldbard help to reconfigure a continuum of working practices of creative expression that precedes the 1960s junction. I would like to consider how the philosophies and practices themselves – whether termed community arts or not – have a deeper, longer, evolution. From this perspective, community arts did not start with a “big bang” in the 1960s.

2.3 Describing Histories of Practice

My working concept of “community-centred art” is indebted to the literature and debates of popular arts (a reference to “folk art” from c.1900-), community arts (c.1960s-), art and activisms (1980s-), and socially-engaged art from 1993 to the present. I will now introduce my
understanding of some facets of these histories of practice informing a continuum of cultural production.

2.3.1 Popular Arts

The phrase “community arts,” as we have come to understand it, may not have been widely circulated until the 1960s. Nonetheless, this combination of words had been used in reference to early “community art centres,” namely in sources such as Shull (1954) and Bell (1991), “community art clubs” (Gordon 1965), 31 and “community arts councils” (Key 1958; Freedlander Gibans 1982 32). For example, in the introduction to The Kingston Conference Proceedings, Michael Bell discusses Lawren Harris’ proposal of 1944 for the establishment of community art centres (note the singular “art” not “arts”) throughout Canada, noting the lack of clear differentiation between the “community centre” and the “community art centre” (Bell 1991, n.93, xxxi). In these cited instances, “community” was intended to signify a localised/geographic sense, 33 where its adjectival function qualifies the de-centralised organisational framework (the arts centre, arts club or arts council) rather than the practices therein. These early institutions were centres/clubs/councils for use by communities of local people, but not strictly institutions for the practicing of what would later be known as “community arts.” To be sure, their institutional histories contribute to the specific lineage of “popular arts.” For contemporary readers, it is important to make a distinction between “popular arts” and its references to “folk art,” and industrial popular culture. 34

The popular arts existed within specific institutional contexts and “cultural formations” (Williams 1981). Williams uses the term “cultural formations” to indicate practices (that are not yet institutionalised) closer to the site of production. A related use of the term arises in references to popular theatre, which politically signifies popular control over theatre – implying by and for
the people. As theatre theorists Tim Prentki and Jan Selman explain in reference to popular theatre in Britain and Canada, “‘popular’ implies that the process of making and showing the theatre piece is owned and controlled by a specific community . . . The ‘popular’ refers to ‘of the people’, belonging to the people” (2003, 9).

Deeply rooted in the late nineteenth century, I document “popular arts” as a residual yet generative praxis that accumulates meaning over time. For example, contemporary artists Jeremy Deller and Alan Kane have developed a “folk archive” by collecting objects throughout the UK that represent present day “folk art.” They employ this term interchangeably with “popular art” in a bookwork (Deller and Kane 2005) presenting documentation of community festivals, handmade relics, DIY handicrafts, and propagandist images made as a self-invented craft.

Like the older community choirs, little theatres and Sunday painter groups, a popular arts of recreation includes popular songs, community theatre, visual imagery and folklore produced and performed by and for the people. This recreational dimension of making culture is emphasised by historian Maria Tippett (1990) in her seminal book by the same name, Making Culture. Writing about English Canada before state-subsidised culture in the mid-twentieth century, Tippett explains: “Cultural activity belonged to leisure time, to the amateur” (ibid., 7). Her use of “amateur,” consistent throughout the book, emphasises a non-professional status wherein producers would not necessarily self-identify as artists.

The participative ethos of “popular arts” recognises that every one of us communally produces culture in different forms, through self-education and personal need. A second dimension necessitates recognising that “being artful” is not only the stuff of the artistic or of the talented, but more importantly, is an attitude identifying and cultivating aesthetic qualities in experiences beyond art.
This ethos is perhaps at the heart of ideas such as “to make things special” or “making special” (Ellen Dissanayake in conversation with Suzi Gablik in Gablik (1995b, 37-55); also see Dissanayake (2011)). In a unique fashion, Dissanayake’s writing goes back through prehistory in order to document human behaviour and its tendency to make special the material conditions of our world – the physical environment in which we live. A not dissimilar movement is extensively theorised by Diana Maltz (2006), who describes practices of “missionary aestheticism” in Victorian England by the educated middle class, who brought art, culture and beauty to the poor, urban working classes for their betterment. Maltz’ book is on the act of educating and I will not dwell here on the differing historic meanings between missionary education and self-education.

Citing a historical context of English Canada, Maria Tippett’s (1990) Making Culture documents how popular arts were commonplace from the turn of the twentieth century to the 1950s. In the first chapter entitled “From the Campfire to the Concert Hall” (ibid., 3-34), Tippett describes forms of practice supported by largely private, cultural organisations including a long list of choirs, reading clubs, drama leagues, community theatres and radio plays, as well as supporting bodies such as the Arts and Letters Club, “bringing together the amateur and the professional” (ibid., 9). Linking amateur production to cultural nation-building, Tippett insists: “The belief that cultural activity existed ‘for its own sake rather than for commercial purposes,’ that it was to be done in one’s leisure time, and that an indigenous culture could be fostered by the amateur did much, of course, to exalt the amateur’s role” (ibid., 16). Tippett’s chapter highlights the importance of popular arts to an essentialised, settler Canadian cultural identity. She also reminds us of the status of popular arts during this time period and of “non-profit” cultural ideals that persist. As the array of practices and organisations described by Tippett suggests, popular arts cannot be condensed or reduced into a single cultural-historical lineage that
overlaps in labels such as “folk art,” “vernacular art” and “people’s art.” Organisationally, “community cultural centres” are important for the production of the social-aesthetic.

This precept of “popular” artmaking by and for all, which I describe as “artful” (and which would inform subsequent ideals of “cultural democracy”), is a quality that can further be associated with the principles of Herbert Read (1893-1968). Though Read has been underappreciated in community arts literature, as an anarchist and influential British art historian, he advocated for an “education through art.” The creation of a society where there are only “artists” in Read’s sense would be a society of equals. Influential to Herbert Read’s Education Through Art of 1943, the American philosopher and educational reformer John Dewey (1859-1952) wrote the book Art as Experience a decade prior in 1934. Although less directly pedagogical, Art as Experience corresponds with the conception of “the artful” put forward by this study, i.e. the desire to close the gap between life and art. While Herbert Read (1969/1943) enables us to speak of “integral education” with Dewey (1934) we encounter the idea of “ordinary experience” integrating art and life, what he calls “integral experience” (esp. 11, 37, 41). From here, we will go a step further to understand the ensuing “community arts” as part of an educational ambition and process of cultural democracy that creates new “artists,” where the difference between non-artists and artists is one of access to education.

2.3.2 Community Arts and cultural democracy from the late 1960s to the 1980s
One of the histories of community arts could be told by considering the implication of the State under different guises, as well as that of the labour movement. When the Committee for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA, which became the Arts Council of Great Britain and is now the Arts Council England) and the Canada Council for the Arts were founded in 1940 and 1957 respectively, neither had a formal structure in place for the funding of community
arts. In 1968, the Arts Council of Great Britain appointed its first committee to deal directly with community arts: the New Activities Committee (see Hope 2011, 16-18). While the Arts Council of Great Britain had a committee dedicated to the funding of community arts by the mid-1970s, the Australia Council for the Arts had instigated a Community Arts Board. Despite the fact that the Canada Council for the Arts had an Explorations program in 1973 with a wider mandate than simply high art, as late as 1981, the Canada Council for the Arts opposed the idea of having a distinct community arts programme. Following a 1981 symposium co-sponsored by the Ontario Arts Council and the Swedish Embassy in Canada, a group of Canadian unionists and artists formed the Labour Arts and Media Working Group (LAMWG) under the Canadian Labour Congress. Of particular interest and coincidence, both Canadian and British community artists were bolstered by the Art and Working Life Programme initiated by the unique Community Arts Board of the Australia Council for the Arts. As labour activists and community artists Carole Condé and Karl Beveridge (2008) write, “It subsequently became the model for the Ontario Arts Council’s Artist in the Workplace Program that was initiated in 1989” (61).

So, how can community arts be defined? This raises further questions concerning who is defining, for whom, and for what purposes? On the one hand, it implies – deceptively – that a fixed set of characteristics defining community arts can be identified. Definitional debates and tensions reveal that the praxis of community arts was continually subject to adjustments to suit the competing agendas of artists, communities and policy stakeholders. Querying who is doing the defining immediately conveys that to define community arts is a matter of stakes. On the other hand, to state outright that there are no defining characteristics undermines the clear presence of a community arts movement.
The paper, “Barriers & Gateways,” written by community visual artist John Phillips for the conference, *Friends and Allies* at Salisbury (UK), queries whether or not it is possible to speak of a community arts movement if this necessarily infers “a coherent body of ideas, working practices, and their resultant products acting in unison upon society” (Phillips 1983, 26). If community arts is a movement, by definition, it must have features to speak of; however, could its incoherence, or resistance to definition, be one of these defining features?

John Phillips also begins to reveal how the cultural policy structures of the State have an emphasis on implementation rather than on the practices of any programme itself. Phillips identifies artist-audience equality, co-authorship and an emphasis on process rather than on producing objects (ibid., 27). Effectively, I read the article as explaining how any understanding of characteristics is differently constructed by many stakeholders, including those contributing to the infrastructure of state arts policy, as overseen by the former Arts Council of Great Britain (Phillips 1983). Remarking on the Arts Council’s first Community Arts Working Party’s claim of 1974 that “it is possible to pick out certain features which together add up to a distinctive picture” of community arts, Phillips points out that it was the Working Party under the aegis of the Arts Council – not his peer community artists or communities – that believed it “possible” and necessary to identity “certain features” (ibid., 26).

Concepts of cultural democracy can serve as an illustration of definitional tensions. Across the popular arts and the later community arts, cultural democracy is an ideal upheld by many artists and writers within the British community arts movement, such as Su Braden (1978), John Lane (1978), Owen Kelly (1984), Kevin West (n.d.), as well as those writing on behalf of the Shelton Trust for Community Arts (1986). In these recorded instances, the expression “cultural democracy” is used explicitly to dissect and circulate particular understandings of the
coupling of the words “culture” and “democracy.” Based on these sources in combination, I consider “cultural democracy” to represent a cultural ambition, where all peoples – regardless of differences in race, class, gender, age, ability and creative education – could access and control the tools of cultural production and distribution. In this sense, the community arts movement has bracketed a set of processes through which this access and control can be achieved on practical terms at a micro/community-level.

To provide an example across different contexts of community arts, cultural democracy is perhaps not named but its rhetoric is strongly suggested by the Ontario Arts Council (OAC). Years after these British examples, reporting on the newly piloted Artists and the Workplace programme, Jonathan Forbes quotes OAC’s first Community Arts Development Officer Naomi Lightbourn citing from Australia’s Art and Working Life programme (Forbes 1990): “All people have a right to be involved in making art, to experience art which illuminates their own lives, and to see such art as valued in the society. This right is basic to a democratic society and to a real diversity of cultural interest and values” (24).

To be sure, the confidence of this vision was intercepted by competing cultural interests that undoubtedly affected fundable practice. Community artist Owen Kelly (1984) contributes to this debate with his important book Community, Art and the State, where he argues that community arts needs re-definition: a process of critical reappraisal which should enfold an analysis of its relationship to the State. As part of this process, Kelly proposes a programme for community arts in Britain that is sharply principled upon cultural democracy by exposing incompatibilities with its counterpart – the programme of democratisation of culture (ibid., 97-101). Here, he convincingly argues that “cultural democracy” and “the democratisation of culture” are potentially competing, not parallel, motivations. The democratisation of culture (that
is, the practice of making culture commonly accessible) usually facilitates the consumption of high culture, which becomes “a substitute for direct participation in the production of a living culture” (ibid., 100). Kelly relates how this approach to cultural engagement through consumption – rather than creative expression – was promoted by figureheads such as Sir Roy Shaw, the then Secretary-General of the Arts Council of Great Britain (ibid., 98-100). In summary, his argument provides an example of the State’s advocacy (through the aegis of Shaw) of a rival sense of cultural engagement.

The aim of the democratisation of culture is to make high culture consumable by maintaining popular access to it. Following Kelly’s distinctions, the instruments of a democratisation of culture undermine the inimitable benefits that can be gained only through the production of culture, which develops “primary” knowledge as opposed to that acquired through “the study of texts chosen for their ‘importance,’ by an externally controlled hierarchy . . .” (ibid., 101). The democratisation of culture begets viewers and readers of high cultural forms, instead of makers and distributors of self-determined forms of culture. In 1984, in the reign of Thatcherism, Kelly criticised the State – specifically, its “oppressive imposition . . . of an already decided cultural agenda” bound up with capitalist ideology (ibid., 99-100). The point to be made is that there is and will be a tension between the state ideologies of cultural consumption reflected here and the ideal of cultural democracy advocated by community arts practitioners.45

All in all, I am proposing that a convincing manifestation of the ideal of cultural democracy occurs within community arts practices. Less-regulated by high cultural forms, certain recurring practices of artmaking and education can be associated with the creation of circumstances that allow for cultural democracy.
It may be important here to emphasise that I am making reference to many histories of time and place that could be said to be articulated through a common project of placing communication and its means of production in the hands of the people. This includes the early popular arts, the labour arts and the community arts, as I have already indicated, the attentions to post-new left politics in terms of community action, and therein, the rise in the 1960s and 1970s of distinctions between social action media and art media. A Canadian example is the national conference of 1978, Fifth Network (Cinquième réseaux), held in Toronto, which gave space to debates about the different intentions and purposes between those who made social action video and those who were trying to advance video as an experimental art form. In the 1980s, we saw a revival of labour arts, community arts, and shifts in community media, and, across the 1980s until the end of the century, very focussed attentions on racialised and sexualised cultural citizens, the working poor, the unemployed – in a word, a return to class-consciousness.

It is important here to make a clear distinction between the conjuncture of political art and cultural activisms occurring from the 1960s though the 1980s, as recorded in a key text like Cultures in Contention (Kahn and Neumaier 1985), and the later text, But is it Art?: The Spirit of Art as Activism (Felshin 1995). We can ask: What examples of radical art and community practices appear in Cultures in Contention? In their introduction, authors Douglas Kahn (sound historian and audio artist) and Diane Neumaier (photographer and cultural critic) refer to art practices as “motivate[ions for] the pursuit of liberatory social and political change” (Kahn and Neumaier 1985, 8).

In order of appearance the practices documented, mostly by the practitioners themselves, are Peter Dunn and Loraine Leeson (London, UK), Docklands project; DeeDee Halleck (New York), Paper Tiger Television; Ernesto Cardenal (Minister of Culture, Managua),
Democratisation of Culture in Nicaragua; Ross Kidd (Toronto), popular theatre in Kenya; Judith Franciscia Baca (Venice, California), Chicana muralism and the Social and Public Art Resource Center; Holly Near (Fullerton, California), women’s song and resistance in Uruguay; Gabriel Garcia Marquez (Cartegena, Colombia), Nicaraguan film; Honor Ford-Smith (Toronto), Sistren’s Jamaican women’s theatre; Martha Gever (Brooklyn), early feminist video; Fred Lonidier (San Diego), labour arts; Tetsuo Kogawa (Tokyo), free radio in Japan; Suzanne Lacy and Leslie Labowitz (Venice, California), Feminist Media Strategies for Political Performance; Abbie Hoffman (Berkeley), Museum of the Streets; Tom Ward (New York), The Situationists Reconsidered; Archie Shepp (Amherst, Massachusetts), a critique of American culture; Bernice Johnson Reagon (Washington, DC), communal song; Richie Perez (the Bronx), the anti-racist actions against the film Committee Against Fort Apache; Peter King (Melbourne, Australia), Above-Ground Organization of Australia’s Underground Billboard; Hans Haacke (New York), concentrations of the consciousness industry; Arlene Raven (Los Angeles), lesbian art in Los Angeles; Lucy R. Lippard (New York), advocacy criticism as activism; Klaus Staeck (Heidelberg, Germany), photomontage as political intervention; and Albert J. Camigliano (St. Charles, Missouri), the German connection in the Portuguese revolution (Kahn and Neumaier 1985).

This long naming is indeed a heterogeneous assembly of practices documented, as I have said, by the practitioners themselves. This contrasts with the writings exclusively by critics and historians that appear in Nina Felshin’s (1995) book, But is it Art? The Spirit of Art as Activism. Released a decade later, the book was published by Bay Press as a trade book cum course-text reader. In a sense, its usefulness is in its attentions to theorising activist art, political art, and new
public art. In her introduction, Felshin makes an apt distinction between the similarity of methodologies and the content in the practices examined:

> While the specific issues vary – homelessness, the AIDS crisis, violence against women, the environment, sexism, ageism, illegal immigration, racism, and trade unionism, among others – the artists share similar methodologies, formal strategies, and intentions, so that what most sets this kind of work apart from other political art is not its content, but its methodologies, formal strategies, and activist goals. (ibid., 9)

2.3.3 The 1980s and beyond: Professionalisation and the impact of the State

The drive towards increasing professionalisation can be observed cumulatively across the historical continuum and is largely linked to state arts policy. For instance, the predominance of popular arts in English Canada was affected by the Massey Report of 1951 and the subsequent rise of the Canada Council for the Arts from 1957, which employed British and European standards to measure artistic excellence (Tippett 1990). The impact of the change of patronage described in Tippett’s book (away from self-subsidy as well as private and corporate local sponsorship, towards state subsidy), was that the professionalisation of high artists gained momentum at the detriment of “popular” makers of arts and culture.

During the early 1980s, symposia and discussion events, such as the Art and Working Life seminar, organised by the Australian Trade Council in Melbourne (Berland 1982), and the conferences Community Arts in Wales at Merthyr Tydfil (Wales Association for Community Arts and Clwyd Library and Museums Services 1983), Friends and Allies, hosted in Salisbury by the Greater London Association of Community Artists and the Shelton Trust (1983), as well as the Barnstaple National Conference, Community Arts Principles and Practices, organised by the Shelton Trust (1980). In Britain, such events were often made possible through the planning of associations dedicated to buttressing the activities of community arts or artists. Beyond strictly
definitional questions, they enabled discussion on a range of issues – from international discourse to radical praxis (Friends and Allies); from examples of community artmaking and organisational structures to debates on policy and funding (Barnstaple National Conference). The very occurrence of a national conference in 1980 Britain evidences the spread of a contagion to urban localities and rural corners throughout the nation.

Propelled with the rise of the “community arts movement” in Britain, the professionalisation of community arts was also assisted by printed resources, such as publications offering practical guidance on many aspects of community arts, from the use of video technologies in community contexts (such as Biren 1975; Dowmunt 1987) to sculptural and theatrical forms of engagement (such as Leyh 1980; Arctic Public Legal Education and Information Society 1992). Moreover, specialist courses, training and informational resources (see Davies 1981; Brooks 1988; Bowles 1992; McBurney 1992), as well as serials such as Another Standard in the UK (published by the Shelton Trust from c.1980-7) and Dateline in Canada (subsequently called The Magazine Community Arts, published by Manitoba Association of Community Arts Council from 1987-92), signalled the development of a documented legacy that would be interpreted, modelled and adapted by new generations of practitioners. Circulating ideas about community arts, these publications served to anchor understandings within the experiential knowledge of practitioners and community arts organisations, or the blueprints of public trusts and charitable foundations, for example, through programmes such as the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation’s apprenticeship scheme for community artists, described by Brooks (1988). This UK scheme supported the training of community artists through artist-placements with organisations such as the East Midlands Arts consortium and Jubilee Arts in Sandwell (ibid.).
More than any other external regulator, it would seem that policy (and primarily state arts policy pertaining to community arts and community development)⁴⁹ has impacted what counts as “legitimate” (read fundable) community arts practice. This is almost self-evident from the significant number of secondary sources reviewed that reinterpret the development of community arts against socio-historical considerations accounting for the changing climate of policy and funding (Kelly 1984; Mulgan and Worpole 1986; Bianchini 1989; Goldbard 1993; Dickson 1995; Gosse 2002; Fitzgerald 2004; Lynch 2004; Fernandez 2005, 2008; Hope 2011). I have also reviewed a number of primary-source policy documents in Britain and Canada, most often published to signal (proposed) changes or the implementation of new programmes.⁵⁰ Such policies set standards of practice through the formulation and endorsement of regulating definitions/guidelines/objectives that, to be sure, affected how community arts were practiced and to what (social and cultural) ends they were used. For example, it is difficult to evaluate the real impact of the social inclusion policies drawn up by our governments; yet, these policies have helped to shape what counts as legitimate engagement in our museums and cultural institutions, especially in the UK since the late 1990s.⁵¹ Where such inclusion practices involve community arts, it would seem that community arts has become the bridesmaid of the State, usurped under the pretext of good intentions.

2.4 Discussions and Debates

2.4.1 Struggles for forms
I have encountered a range of initiatives, most continuing today, which constitute recurring forms that are characteristic of “community arts.” Specific examples can be grouped into labour arts, community festivals, community media and community arts centres. This includes labour arts by working peoples in Lancashire (Higney 1985) and Ontario, documented by the Workers Arts and
Heritage Centre (Beveridge and Johnston 1999), collaborative projects by artists supporting workers’ struggles in Canada (Condé 1986; Diamond 1986; Robertson 1987; Condé and Beveridge 1995), and the Trade Council arts in Australia (Walsh 1985) and the UK (Arts Council of Great Britain 1978); *community festivals* created by and for communities, like the E1 and E2 festivals demarcated by eastern postal code areas in London (Braden 1978, 17-23), the festival of the people, *Félie an Phobail*, held in predominantly Catholic West Belfast, and, one of the earliest recognised examples of community arts proper, the Craigmillar Festival Society established on a housing estate in Scotland in 1964 (Crummy 1992), as well as the Mayworks Festival of Working People and the Arts, began in Toronto and Vancouver and now in other cities within English Canada; *community media*, often created by groups, such as aboriginal media (Alexander 1986; Cousineau 1996), and/or housed in production centres, such as Vidéographe in Montréal, as well as the community video of The Basement Project in Tower Hamlets, London (Braden 1978, 18-24; Nigg and Wade 1980, 165-191), and that described in Biren’s video resource handbook of 1975.  

Community arts centres housed some of the best-known examples of community arts. In Britain, this includes Inter-Action, Interplay, Bath Arts Workshop, The Youth Arts Workshop, Telford Community Arts Project, The Cockpit Youth Arts Workshop and the Great Georges Project, to name a few described by Lane (1978) who distinguishes “building-based” projects (152) from more peripatetic ones. The first recognised community arts centre was the Blackie in Liverpool, which started in 1967. In Dublin, City Arts, formerly Grapevine, began in 1973. Many were long lived, like Welfare State International, operating a base called Lanterhouse in Ulverston as well as spectacular outdoor events in the form of parades and carnivals from 1968 to 2006 (West n.d.). Others are still active today, such as the Toronto-based Pelican Players (Lushington 1984), the Leeds-based Interplay (Downing and Jones 1989),
Tinderbox Theatre Company in Belfast, and the Playhouse Community Arts Resource Centre in Derry/Londonderry. What might seem like a long, “uncut” listing above is one way of describing the categories of artistic and organisational forms that inform “community-centred art” by referencing specific examples encountered in my practices of research and art.

As I have suggested, such manifestations of community arts were tightly connected with community action struggles. Focusing on case descriptions of community media in the UK, Heinz Nigg and Graham Wade have written the following:

> It is not surprising that the development of the alternative media movement was crucially stimulated by the community action struggles of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Generally, grassroots activists were inspired by the same belief in the necessity of people’s involvement in all public and private decisions considering their homes and their wider social and physical environment. The concepts of participation and intervention have been further nourished by collective and non-authoritarian methods of decision-making which were rediscovered in the youth rebellion of the sixties. But there was also an objective strategic demand for the development of participatory approaches in community struggle. Unlike the factory and the office where interventionist activity mostly relies on established and well-oiled union machinery, community activists were, and still are, faced with an organisational vacuum. The lack of existing organisations hindered community struggle. Therefore the push for effective mobilisation techniques became a primary task of the experiments that were taking place, and alternative forms of community communications slowly emerged. (1980, 7-8)

In this quotation, it becomes clear that the need for organisations in and of themselves, therefore, the question of the form and “cultural formations” (Williams 1981) is deemed to be crucial to effective mobilisations and activisms. This is also where the problems of coherent definition, like the apparent randomness of a proliferating list, might represent histories of practice but nonetheless illustrate a difficulty to pin-down a distinct set of characteristics.
Despite this struggle for form(s), some projects are more obviously categorised according to a socio-political issue, usually engaging with subaltern concerns, such as those tackling the theme of unemployment described in the conference report *Community Arts in Wales* (Wales Association for Community Arts and Clwyd Library and Museums Services 1983, parts 2 and 3). Similarly, projects like Bootle Arts and Action, a community photography organisation based in the deprived docklands town of Bootle, Merseyside (UK), engages with the socio-economic conditions faced by its residents (Arts and Action 1980), as does the Craigmillar Festival Society (Crummy 1980, 1992).

Bootle Arts and Action describes the conditions of deprivation against which Arts and Action fosters self-expression and co-operation (Arts and Action 1980): “unemployment is high; there is a higher than average number of unskilled male workers; there is widespread dissatisfaction with educational provision; there are few facilities with Bootle having all the expected associated problems” (3). Active since 1977 as Church Street Community Association, subsequently Arts and Action, artist-facilitators such as Bill Dolce shared photography skills with younger and older residents of Bootle, enabling them to develop the means of representing themselves (ibid., 4-9). During the decade of the 1980s, another docklands project, the photo-narrative billboards by artists Loraine Leeson and Peter Dunn, provided opportunities for local people to voice their resistance against Crown Corporation schemes for the redevelopment of the East London docklands area (Condé 1982; Dunn and Leeson 1985).

The oscillation from the celebratory or everyday pleasures of just making, at the heart of popular arts, to growing concerns with purposeful making (for what purposes and why?), transformed the social consciousness of community arts. Arguably, there is a causal correlation between ideology and ethics, insofar that moral judgments (which inform broader social systems
of value), are established by people within their changing conditions of (art and) life. The ideological systems guarding what is deemed ethical at any given moment (time/place) are always changing.\(^{61}\)

### 2.4.2 Ethical stakes

Writing in the Irish context, in an essay entitled “‘Can you paint my soul?’: Ethics and community arts,” Community theatre artist Jo Egan (2004) puts forward the definition of “ethics,” as “formulated knowledge or principles for behaviour within a group or society according to which actions are judged” (141). Her essay elaborates a set of precepts for community arts derived from specific cases of practice (Egan 2004). Examples include Belfast-based projects such as the cross-community play called *The Wedding Community Play*, a bold site-specific theatre project carrying actors and audiences from P/U/L to C/N/R areas of the city for a fictitious wedding presented in the aftermath of the Troubles; and ‘Drawing the Blinds,’ where artist Rita Duffy painted agreed-upon images on the house blinds of residents of the deprived Divis Flats for view during the Belfast Festival at Queen’s.\(^{62}\) Set against a post-conflict backdrop, the examples described by Egan would seem to have been designed to imagine and effect a different Belfast soon after the height of sectarian conflict, thus supporting processes of peace and social renewal through cultural production. As ideological questions become integral within community arts, in tandem we witness the rise of “the ethical” as a growing concern for community arts.

The ethical, therefore, as a recurrent concern and another problem-space, can also be deemed to be a quality that describes the practice of community arts. Thus, what is community arts’ value system – how do we define the ethical stakes/investments for community arts? Is there
a relationship between these investments and a particular understanding of what constitutes “social change”?

Among a longer list (including projects that have explored questions pertaining to health and disability, racism and immigration, religion and language), that these practices had and have an underlying ideological basis connecting creative expression to hopes and dreams of social change could also be considered characteristic of community arts. Similarly, Sally Morgan writes (in Dickson 1995): “If community arts is anything, it is the manifestation of an ideology” (18). However, she also recognises that there are varying degrees of activism and political determination (ibid., 18-21). Introducing their publication, Art in Action, which documents how Bootle Arts and Action encourages “self-expression” through the production of photographs, its members summarise (Arts and Action 1980): “One message of this book is that local people are determined to bring about change for the better and know that they have much to offer” (2-3). Here, it is the enabling of self-expression that engenders social transformation.

We begin to discern how “community arts” can be defined through practices of creative expression, cultural democracy and representation that are ethically-bound, rather than specific media forms. An ethical sensitivity becomes integral to practical and theoretical enquiry surrounding “community arts,” and, to “the artful,” we are able to suggest “the ethical,” as a second quality of praxis informing “community-centred art.” It is this stress on ethics, I think, that maintains the productive tension between ethics and aesthetics that is still debated more recently in relation to socially-engaged art; it differentiates (an ethically-mindful) community arts from an (ethically-vacuous) art of aesthetics, by calling on our responsibility, where “ethics” is being responsible: to ego, other, eco.

2.4.3 Collaboration

46
What is common to the examples cited thus far in this chapter is the provision of opportunities where cultural democracy can be practiced. This usually occurs in one of two ways, which I understand as overlapping models of practice. A first model relies on forms developing from the creative expression of makers who do not self-identify as artists. As I have already tried to suggest, this model is symptomatic of earlier examples of popular arts (like those discussed by Tippett 1990; Cooper 1994; Pacific 1998, 42; Fernandez 2008), a model which can still be recovered in later practices (for example, see Beveridge 1988; Beveridge and Johnston 1999) and persists into today, as is further evidenced below.

The ethics of practicing cultural democracy are concretised as intersubjective relationships develop. This study asks how are ethics embodied, reflected upon and operationalised through collective cultural production? The second model for practicing cultural democracy relies on forms developing through processes of collaboration, where artists work closely with others.64 With the growing familiarity of this model of collective cultural production arises questions of the co/authorship of the art and of roles (collapse or division of labour?) that are ensnared in the recognition of relations of power (concerned with who produces/makes and whose production/making matters). Describing a spectrum of collaborative practices, which I find useful in containing the range of representational practices under the second model, community artists-duo Carole Condé and Karl Beveridge explain (1995, 211): “The artist either develops people’s artistic skills or, more indirectly, represents people’s expression in a finished artwork.” Prevalent during the community arts movement (c.1960s-1992), the collaborative model, I would argue, is the third defining feature of community arts.

Many useful definitions of “community arts” have been posited by practitioners and policymakers alike (see Community Arts Working Party 1974; Kelly 1984; Mulgan and Worpole
1986; Crean 1987; Rothwell 1992; Ontario Arts Council 1998; Fernandez 2005). Certainly, one of the most resonant definitions pertaining to what I identify as the second model is put forward by Robin Pacific writing as the past co-director of Art Starts Neighbourhood Storefront Cultural Centre in Toronto from 1991 to 1996:

> People with training, knowledge, experience in an art form enter into collaborative art making with people with a desire for creative expression. The latter participants have some perceived social bond – a neighbourhood, a common cause, a cultural background. They may have extensive knowledge of art making, some knowledge or none, but certainly they have “culture.” (1998, 40)

Pacific rightly describes the complex formation (social, cultural, artistic) making up “community arts” in a multifarious way – as locational/political/cultural. Pointedly, this definition tries to overcome binaries such as “artists/non-artists” or “professionals/amateurs,” especially evident in the language of sources such as Ministry of Education (1944), Murphy (1973), Braden (1978, 153), and Phillips (1983, 26). I believe that this language (which I too exploit by default) plays a part in upholding the artistic hierarchies of the dominant cultural order. Writing in 1998, Pacific continues the sentiment of those writing during the community arts movement (for example, the British Owen Kelly and Su Braden), but her phraseology emphasises the creative equality that is at the core of cultural democracy more ethically.

The Ontario Arts Council (OAC) concretised its understanding of community arts with the 1997 Vital Links conference and the resultant Community Arts Workbook: “Broadly defined, community arts is a collaborative creative process between a professional practising artist and a community” (Ontario Arts Council 1998, 7). Interestingly, in the article “Reflections of a Community Arts Officer,” former OAC Arts Officer Melanie Fernandez, who had been heavily involved in the policy, is critical of the definition’s potential discrimination (2005). In hindsight,
Fernandez points to the biases attached to this definition, which is “grounded in a particular trajectory of European artistic production,” calling for an understanding of community arts as an organic set of practices not set in any one artistic or cultural framework (ibid., 10-11). In particular, Fernandez points to the fact that, for some groups, spirituality informs community arts and to the incompatibilities, in some contexts, of emphasising a notion of professionalism couched in the narrow terms of academic training (ibid., 12-14). Ironically, the requirement of policy authors to define community arts in order to enable funding not only limits what counts as community arts, but in turn, may have inadvertently changed the nature of community arts and what counts as professional practice.

Entitled « Le Pouvoir de la Collaboration » / “The Power of Collaboration,” more recently, anthropologist Bob W. White (2011), writing from l’université de Montréal, takes up similar issues again. Chaired by Liz Burns of Fire Station Artists’ Studios in Dublin the same year, so does a panel discussion featuring papers by British artist and critic Dave Beech, Irish artist Jesse Jones, and Dr. Aine O’Brien, the Irish filmmaker, held on 11 March 2011 at the National College of Art and Design (IRE). Inspiring discussion about ethics and collaboration, the panel was the epilogue to an exhibition of collaborative video by the Polish-born artist Artur Zmijewski in Dublin, which had closed in late 2010. Fire Station’s public panel discussion was aptly called “The Ethics of Collaboration,” which in name resembles my similarly titled paper “Collaborative Ethics,” written in 2001 (Fiala c. 2005). There is nevertheless a perceptible difference between THE ethics of collaboration, which suggests a fixed set of ethical parameters, and the plural and indeterminate sounding collaborative ethics.

Challenging the accepted synonymy of “collaboration” and “participation,” Beech (2011) bases the former in ideology as to propose participation as a less problematic alternative.
Moreover, he positions “collaboration as a species of participation,” describing participation as the playing of a part, where there are many, and different, parts to play (ibid.). However, what I retain most is Beech’s question, “How might we resist that ethical urge?” (ibid.). Coupling the ethical and the ideological, I take Beech to mean that refusing to accept what is deemed ethical can allow for new forms of part(collaboration)icipation [my wordplay]. Collaboration is visualised within the rhetoric and practices of participation. During the question period that followed the panel, Beech put forward the concept of the (community) participant as (the artist’s) guest, which allowed for a rethinking of the ascribed roles and functions of the principal stakeholders be it of “collaboration” or of “participation.”

Distinctively, White’s (2011) paper puts forward the notion of « travailler ensemble » (working together) and argues that working together requires a consideration of a set of ethics or « éthique collaborative, » citing “Collaborative Ethics” (Fiala c. 2005). On artistic terms, White’s « travailler ensemble » could be transliterated into a kind of “arting together.” The contribution of White’s (2011) paper is to propose a set of defined criteria to discuss inter-human relations in light of evaluating collaboration as co-production. These are listed and outlined in the form of seven distinct categorical themes, ranging from the management (« la gestion ») of corporeality, to the management of utterance to that of temporality and fear (ibid.). Whereas I opted for a spectral discussion of collaboration by plotting a continuum of examples from more to less collaborative (Fiala c. 2005), White’s (2011) thematic classification is more structurally useful in terms of helping to organise and present a guided and systematic analysis of collaboration.

2.4.4 From Questions of Community to a Socially-Engaged Art
A focus on identity politics and politics of representation conducted in Canadian artist-run centres and elsewhere in the 1980s, serves to re-popularise community arts. The focus on community shifts to be shared with the arts sphere. The activist intention becomes somewhat sanitised by the appearance of terms like “socially-engaged art.” A push was coming from the visual arts sector, through the curatorial work of Mary Jane Jacob, especially her well-known community public art project Culture in Action (Jacob 1995), and shortly thereafter, Suzanne Lacy’s edited book *Mapping the Terrain* (1995), which circulated the phrase “new genre public art.” A new generation of Canadian community artists were organising their own set of conferences, including: From ARTSPEAK to ARTSACTION (Saskatoon, 1994), Vital Links: Enriching Communities through Art and Art through Communities (Toronto, 1997), the Active Practices Symposium (Kingston, 2002) in which I was a speaker, and Live in Public: The Art of Engagement (Vancouver, 2007) with its affiliated book *Access all Areas: Conversations on Engaged Arts* (Willard 2008).

Assembled by an editorial group of curators and arts professionals, the English-Canadian book, *Questions of Community: Artists, Audiences, Coalitions* (Augaitis et al. 1995) – published contemporaneously with the reader *But is it Art* and the above-mentioned books of the same year edited by Lacy and Jacob – was one platform for reflexion about “community” and “collaboration” in Canada. Organised by the Visual Arts programme of the Banff Centre for the Arts in Alberta, the project also supported a “Community residency and symposium,” wherein artists developed projects destined “to go back into” predetermined communities (Augaitis et al. 1995, xiii). This multi-stranded project re-centred the debates on “community” itself. The book unpacks this concept while circulating phrases such as “community-based collaborative art” (Mathews in ibid., 185-7), and advocating for “the reconciliation . . . [of] art practice and
community involvement” (Beaulieu in ibid., 180). Interestingly, cultural historian Dot Tuer (in ibid., 1-22) reminds us that in the Canadian multicultural landscape, “Art and community are conceived of as antithetical terms, with community as that which is not western (read European) in origin or outlook” (11).

A juxtaposition of these core books from 1995 maintains definitional tensions between what is “community” and what counts as “new.” If “community” can never be “new,” that is, avant-garde, and if it can never be “art,” that is, European, I think we are in trouble of being trapped, conceptually and maybe practically too, within the limits of our nomenclature. Again, Williams’ (1981) ideas of “the residual” and the “emergent,” as overlapping possibilities and practices can help us to alleviate this burden. It is at this problem-space and bridge between “community” and “art,” I think, that “socially-engaged art” seems to have emerged, as a set of artistic practices fraught with paradoxes – varying in method, political motivation, degrees of activism, and, it would seem, levels of engagement with the social itself.

At around the same time in the UK, Malcolm Dickson edited and introduced the significant handbook Art with People, where he explicitly uses the phrase “socially engaged arts” (1995, 11). It would seem that the definitional debates surrounding community arts opened up an area for discourse that called for critical frameworks and unlocked terminology. This invitation was taken up by curators, artists, and then academics and art historians, who enabled (some examples of) community arts to be accepted as a legitimate art form, leading to its theorisation and gradual institutionalisation within the discourses and spaces of high art. This progression moves us into the socially-engaged art of the present.

International discussion events such as Interrupt: Artists in Socially Engaged Practice, organised by the Arts Council of England in 2003 (see Henderson 2004), signal the beginning of
the internationalisation of the discourse, while a key development in Toronto, CAB: Community Arts Biennale (A Space 2000) and its evaluative publication No Frame Around It (Fernandez 2001), signal a certain institutionalisation of practice within dominant cultural modes of presentation, here the art biennale. The increasingly critical discourse enabled through such publications and forums heightened the professionalisation of the sector, leading to what now points to (a) its inevitable institutionalisation, and (b) a resistance to this propelled by emerging artists who engage with broader social movements that oppose neoliberalism.

A few unresolved questions are the following: Does the proliferation of different, yet adjacent names, to which this chapter obviously contributes, gesture towards a new “phase” of praxis, or are these symptoms of the rebranding of a “residual” practice? Is “socially-engaged art” the new “community arts,” or does language shift signal a break away? A problème for the art historian and theorist might be that this apparent hybridisation through plural articulations now seems to point simultaneously to – not one – but many definitions.

With the emergence of phrases such as “socially-engaged art” comes the emphasis on other terminology such as “participation” and “participatory art” (Bishop 2012; Beech 2011), as well as the even more recent appearance of associated terminology such as “social practice” (mentioned in Helguera 2011 and Bishop 2012), evidenced in the inception of university-level scholarship in social practice in the U.S. As the educator and visual and performance artist Pablo Helguera (2011, 3-5) has noted, “social practice” does away with the explicit reference to art while somehow nevertheless maintaining some of its practices.

Similarly, at the onset of her book, Artificial Hells, the critic, curator and professor, Claire Bishop (2012, 1) has acknowledged this multiplicity: “This expanded field of post-studio practices currently goes under a variety of names: socially engaged art, community-based art,
experimental communities, dialogic art, littoral art, interventionist art, participatory art, collaborative art, contextual art and (most recently) social practice.” A book by such a title as *Artificial Hells* brings to the fore a fairly unique discussion of this praxis as an unsettling and confrontational one, that cannot be reduced to do-good (ethical) modus operandi. Partly, Bishop’s (2012, esp. 129-162) discussion of socially-engaged arts as confrontation relies in part on her situating participation within particular artistic lineages of the avant-garde, including Dada beginning in Zurich as well as the Soviet Futurists and Constructivists experiments in collective theatre and public space where “art was put into direct confrontation with an ‘authentic’ everyday audience” (199). In my mind the damning curious phrase, “artificial hells” raises questions about the fallacy or artificiality (artifice) of art in the development of ethical relationships (what counts as heaven or hell?); it in in this sense perhaps that it breaks with the utopian promises of community arts. Contemporary examples of praxis, such as Santiago Sierra’s pragmatically-titled *24 Blocks of Concrete Constantly Moved During a Day’s Work by Paid Workers* (described in Bishop 2012, 222), are without a doubt “socially-engaged” insofar as they engage with serious social issues from a political standpoint. The artist takes on a responsibility to expose social ills, rather than a responsibility over the (ethical) representation of an Other. For example, this work by Sierra seeks to raise awareness of issues such as economic inequities of poorly paid (slave) labour. However, such projects do so in confrontational ways that are effective precisely because they are disturbing. The issue of remunerated co-labourers in particular examples of collaborative art is one of historical, ethical resonance – recall, for example debates surrounding Judy Chicago’s infamous *Dinner Party* (1974-9) – but Bishop’s contention is that to analyse the work on merely ethical terms does not allow to wholly consider the ways that it communicates antagonism.
Similar ideas are evoked in the recently published book, *Imaging Resistance: Visual Culture and Activism in Canada*, a testimony to praxis at the intersection of art, politics, artistic intervention, community arts and performance (Cronin and Robertson 2011). Plainly put, the book considers the “visual politics of protest” (ibid., 17). Set against the backdrop of neoliberalism’s rise and momentum, the book begins by asking the right questions: “[W]hat defines art and what defines resistance[?]” (ibid., 1); Also, “What does it mean to study, write about, and resist through the visual?” (ibid., 5). This compilation of essays and historical vignettes includes discussion surrounding the Refus Global manifesto released in 1948 in Montréal, the on-going activism of Toronto-based artists Karl Beveridge and Carole Condé started in the 1970s, issues of indigenous representation in Canada, the 2012 Olympics in London and Vancouver in 2010, artistic rights to copyright, representation and remuneration, as well as anarchist praxis (ibid.).

Moreover, projects such as the extensive work of the London-based art activist group Platform, active in the UK since the 1990s, as well the majority of projects described in rare readers, such as *Accidental Audiences: Urban Interventions by Artists* in Toronto (Pruesse 1999) and *Les commensaux: When Art Becomes Circumstance* in Montréal (Ninacs and Loubier, 2001), document a post-1995 history of practice combining concerns for public space, performance art, fleeting gestures, interventionist practices, art activism, art in/and life, and issues such as social justice and ecological citizenship. In these examples, the link between confrontation, art activism, and the practices of art as intervention (or “artistic intervention”) is undeniable.

Based on this discussion, I would like to put forward “the oppositional” as a third quality that informs “community-centred art.” So far, by following a historical chronology, this study has begun to trace and circumscribe a praxical definition of a “community-centre art” that
conjoins investments in “the artful” (from popular arts) and “the ethical” (from community arts), to which I add “the oppositional” aspects of socially-engaged art, which carry forward some of the attentions of earlier art activations into today.

Founded in 2001, the Montreal-based non-profit art advocacy and funding organisation, Engrenage Noir provides a unique and elaborate illustration of recent praxis. Entitled Affirming Collaboration: Community and Humanist Activist Art in Québec and Elsewhere (Neumark and Chagnon 2011), the unprecedented publication, rich with elaborate description, is to my knowledge one of the most significant bilingual publications in this area.

Produced by Engrenage Noir’s Levier, the volume puts forward two key definitions at the core of its funding scheme and projects supported during the first five years of the organisation’s programming from 2002 to 2007. Through training during this period (including workshops on conflict resolution and collective creativity, discussion forums on ethical and theoretical issues) as well as internally managed policies and funding programmes, Engrenage Noir had supported two categories of related activities. These are well documented under separate sections bound within the book: respectively, what they categorise as “Community Art” (ibid., 139-189) and “Humanist Activist Art” (ibid., 190-271). At the onset of this book, editors Devora Neumark and Johanne Chagnon (ibid., 11-5) provide two core definitions within an introductory text entitled “The Unsettling Powers of Collective Creativity”:

Community art, according to LEVIER, implicates long-term artistic collaborations between members of community groups or organizations and individuals who self-identify and are recognized by others as artists (who may or may not be otherwise associated with the community groups or organizations linked to the projects). With its emphasis on dialogue, community arts offers the possibility for collaborative exploration, which in turn fosters the potential for individual and collective imagination, critical reflection, and informed decision-making. The communities and all associated project members
control the process, aesthetics, context, production and dissemination or the creative process and finished product(s).

LEVIER identifies humanist activist art as short- or long-term individual or collective non-violent creative efforts that redefine militant socio-political protest and demonstrate a thoughtful analysis of what’s at stake for the individuals involved and for the society at large. Such art may advocate on behalf of a given community but does not necessarily implicate its members in as active a manner as community art. Humanist activist art often emerges spontaneously in reaction to specific current events, which unfold locally and/or internationally. (Ibid., 12; emphasis added)

Here, Neumark and Chagnon put forward a two-pronged, bifurcated definition of praxis that is incredibly useful to the conception of “community-centred art” put forward herein. Using them as conceptual extremities, I wish to position these descriptions on different ends of a spectrum that loosely contains the practices documented by this dissertation. Thus, I am inviting the reader to imagine “community art” and “humanist activist art” as movable descriptors/practices that can differ from one another yet without presumption that they do not interfere, interact and overlap.

While what I circumscribe as “community-centred art” retains the durational, dialogic and collaborative aspects of the “community art” defined by Levier, it can also retain the regularly impulsive and punctual, protest-oriented and geo-political specificity of their “humanist activist art” that is time/place sensitive. The latter I understand as a more interventionist practice that can be oppositional.

There is another dimension to Engrenage Noir that is particularly important to the spirit of a critical praxis: their continual revaluation of definitions and nomenclature (terms and conditions). From the dyad of “community art” and “humanist activist art” (cited at length above), to their compounded « art communautaire activiste » / “community activist art” to their even more recent unilingual « art communautaire militant » of 2014, Engrenage Noir’s
challenge to nomenclature is, I think, exemplary. It is emblematic of their serious and on-going efforts to get closer to useful orientations and discursive formulations. This is important because such formulations not only describe but also shape and influence practice, where self-regulated policies, programmes and ethics not only reflect but inspire particular types of (shifting) production.

2.5 Conclusion

As I have attempted to show in Chapter Two, under whatever names, the qualities of such praxis can be described as a historically accumulation with “residual” and “emergent” aspects, just as Williams (1981) had argued about how culture is reproduced. They are complex hybrid practices transforming within and by the contexts of today. “Community-centred art,” therefore, as a phrase, is meant to encapsulate the heterogeneous practices that have been documented and debated in the literature that forms this chapter. While my objective here has not been to scrutinise the practices or critique the historical “phases” as such, I believe that such delineations can be useful here for locating community-centred art as I will be utilising this term in the subsequent chapters about listening and ethics.
Chapter 3

Mapping my Terrain: Existing Theoretical Frameworks and Listening as an Attitude

3.1 Established Critical Frameworks

Chapter Three serves to discuss some of the more established critical discourses that presently frame community-centred art and representational politics in contemporary art, primarily in North America, Britain and Ireland. The chapter discusses key theoretical discourses informing this dissertation’s propositions surrounding the praxes of “listening” as they are lived out within recent experiences of community-centred art. I document a number of well-established, key concepts and frameworks (aesthetic and ethical) developed within contemporary art criticism on socially-engaged art – namely “new genre public art,” “connective aesthetics,” and “dialogical aesthetics” – focussing on the treatment of themes such as intersubjectivity, ethics, empathy, dialogue, speaking, and most importantly for us here, listening. Following Hal Foster’s (1996) well-known text, “The Artist as Ethnographer,” my intention is to posit the usefulness of “fieldwork” in various forms to generate creative and analytical strategies for building upon critical frameworks already available for understanding this art.

Specifically, I stress the importance of interpersonal ethics within the social spaces of artmaking. The chapter is based largely on criticism from 1993 onwards developing during the period bracketed as “socially-engaged arts” in Chapter Two. This third chapter considers the role of listening in the development of effective, ethically-mindful, community-centred art. Through this process, I assemble and construct a theoretical backdrop and armature for the fieldwork-based contribution to these debates in chapters Four and Five. For reasons argued herein, it is
vital to emphasise that, although important, this backdrop alone is an insufficient platform to support my theory about listening. This backdrop is made from knowledge in the primary areas of art history and criticism, performance and sound art, as well as philosophy.

3.2 New Genre Public Art

Curator Mary Jane Jacob’s *Culture in Action*, a public art programme and catalogue (Jacob 1995), coincides art historically with artist Suzanne Lacy’s edited compilation, *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* (Lacy 1995), both published by Bay Press in Seattle during the same year. While Lacy’s seminal book begins to theorise her influential concept of “new genre public art,” Jacob’s project (organised for Sculpture Chicago) seems to be a practical reiteration of the theoretical space of Lacy’s book. With an emphasis on examples culled from visual arts of the three decades prior, Lacy (1995) emphasises the social and activist practices of artists working towards social change agendas. With a flurry of examples (like the British duo of Loraine Leeson and Peter Dunn, and the American Judith Baca), and with the support of contributing critics such as Lucy Lippard and Suzi Gablik, new genre public art is conceptualised as a collaborative praxis at the interstice of art and community (ibid.). In her introduction of “Cultural Pilgrimages and Metaphoric Journeys” (ibid. 19-47), Lacy theorises new genre public art as a visual arts practice that shifts the concerns of traditional public art towards experimentation and engaged modes of art production. Importantly, she argues that an alternative history for public art can be constructed through the work of politically-active artists, informed by leftist ideologies such as feminism and Marxist concepts of labour (ibid. 25-8). Crucially new genre public art enfolds notions of cultural democracy, social transformation, as well as ethical responsibility when representing an Other in relation to one’s Self.
New genre public art shapes my comprehension of community arts. It could be argued that despite often being synonymous, the main difference between “community arts” and “new genre public art” is formal: the former is interdisciplinary (that is, used across the arts of dance, theatre, music, visual arts, etc.), while the latter is described as a primarily visual arts form widening (and also perhaps critiquing) traditional public art. Both genealogies offer discursive trajectories from which to build relational theories, yet “community arts,” as a term, does not iterate newness. This “new genre” (unintentionally perhaps) obscures the thirty-year precedent that Lacy (1995) means to evoke. It seems to ignore the longevity of community arts that supersedes new genre public art, which I suspect is a result of the public site art emphasis of the latter discourse. A point of enquiry originating during my first field exam can now be phrased as, when did the “new” begin and what can we make of the “old”? The catalogue Culture in Action (Jacob 1995) makes similar claims about newness. “New Art, New Audiences: Experiments in Public Art” (in Jacob 1995, 9-14) is the title of an introductory article by Eva M. Olson, Executive Director of Sculpture Chicago. Here, Olson writes about the desire “to engage new public” with a programme of multi-site art projects and artistic interventions citywide, eight in total over a two-year period (in ibid., 9-10). Both linguistically and conceptually, there is a strong connection between Lacy’s new genre public art and the artistic tendencies described in the Culture in Action catalogue. I would put forward the claim that it was developments in the discourse – concerning audiences and not the practice itself – that, post 1990, made “new genre” new.

What does interest me about new genre public art are the incorporations of concepts and articulations of listening. As a case in point is Tele-Vecindario, the work of Inigo Manglano-Ovalle with Street-Level Video presented in Culture and Action (ibid., 76-87). Describing this
project, Jacob writes about the progression of the artist’s ideas, from forms of urban design as a means to unite factions of the community, to a video workshop and neighbourhood intervention uniting the community using a display of more than seventy-five television monitors installed throughout homes on a residential street (ibid., 84-7). The numerous monitors featured videos by young people, as Street-Level Video member Eddie Carrion explains: “We are young people armed with camcorders, giving voice to the community, and producing videos in, around, and about our community” (cited in Jacob 1995, 84; my emphasis). The idea of “giving voice” brings us to the concept of voice as expression (both literally and symbolically, where video images too are a form of “speaking to” developed by “speaking with” the facilitators who coordinated the video workshop, and amongst themselves. Listening is mentioned in Jacob’s account in relation to “[i]nsiders and outsiders to the neighborhood . . . found in conversation with each other and listening to each other on the videos” (ibid., 85). Listening, here, is described as an effect or consequence of making – not as a condition of process.

3.3 Connective Aesthetics

Art critic Suzi Gablik’s early writing stimulates possibilities for listening as praxis. Her article, “Connective Aesthetics: Art After Individualism” (Gablik 1995a), presents ideas about ethically-mindful artforms centred upon listening that are unmatched by other thinkers. Reprinted in Lacy’s (1995) Mapping the Terrain, this essay presents a different approach to “new genre public art.” Gablik’s emphasis is on listening-centred art practices that confront the dominant tradition of a profoundly visual, visual arts, which upholds late Modernist ideals of the singular artist-genius working in detachment from the social world (Gablik 1995a). Again here, we read about “a new art” (ibid., 86).
Gablik writes about a shift from denial to embrace of social responsibility through artmaking. Of particular interest, she puts forward the example of California artists Jonathan Borofsky and Gary Glassman, an artistic duo who worked with prisoners in the mid 1980s to produce video that listened to their concerns: “they went to listen to the prisoners in order to try and understand their plight. They wanted to understand for themselves” (ibid., 81). Gablik interprets this to mean that “[t]he knowledge that one is being heard, according to Glassman, creates a sense of empowerment” (ibid., 81). Although it is unstated how Gablik ascertains the importance of listening, this is a clear statement ascribing the centrality of listening to their art.

Gablik’s concept of listening is well theorised. Hinging on the philosophy of David Michael Levin’s book, *The Listening Self: Personal Growth, Social Change and the Closure of Metaphysics* (1989), Gablik (1991) writes on a human “relatedness” (114, 125, 131) that can be actualised through artmaking centred on listening (also see Irwin (1999), who extends this line of thought to collaborative artmaking). Levin (1989) conceptualises a model of enlightened listening, where the Other is reconfigured within the boundaries of the Self. Gablik (1995a) understands a paradigm shift, where this “listening orientation challenges the dominant ocularcentric tradition, which suggests that art is an experience available primarily to the eye [...]” (83). Coining the phrase “connective aesthetics” (ibid., 84), she manages to shift our consideration as readers/artists/critics from the eye to the ear – from seeing to listening; through Gablik we become listening Selves responsive to Others. I should add here that a focus upon one particular sense – in this case either seeing or listening – does not prevent or guarantee a detachment from or embrace of the social world. Gablik’s term “connective aesthetics” both reflects a shift and enables us to rethink the questions of social responsibility and artmaking.
3.4 Dialogical Aesthetics

To be sure, Gablik’s theorising foreshadows some of the predominant ideas of her American colleague Grant H. Kester, whose writing gained momentum in the late 1990s after his editorial work for the journal *Afterimage* (see Kester 1998). Kester’s concept of a “dialogical aesthetic” (2000, 2004) is configured in opposition to the dominant critical tradition that puts an emphasis on the visual as a primary sensory modality and approach to criticism. Following Russian thinker Mikhail Bakhtin,97 Kester (2004) hopes this concept can constitute a useful theoretical lens for the interpretation of artworks that use dialogue as both process and product to implement practical and lasting social change. Dialogue, in these texts, not only includes the conversations that happen as part of dialogical artworks (such as the “floating dialogues” organised by the Austrian collective WockenKlausur at the heart of *Intervention to Aid Drug-Addicted Women*),98 but can also be understood as the tendency for certain artworks to provoke on-going discussion and to engage with wider surrounding discourses, including those outside of art.

In sum, Kester’s (2004) consideration of dialogical art (and his critical framework of dialogical aesthetics) is constructed in contrast to the visual, pleasure-based emphasis of conventional aesthetics from the late Enlightenment to Modernism and early Postmodernism. He considers the limitations of theories linked to the criticism of Clive Bell, Roger Fry, Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried for his articulation of a dialogical aesthetic, maintaining that “the twentieth-century formalist avant-garde . . . elevated the visual per se into the dominant condition of art making” (ibid., 51). It is in opposition to this “ocularcentric tradition,” to borrow a phrase encountered within Gablik’s writing (1995a, 83), that Kester develops his concept of dialogical aesthetics.
Kester (2004), citing Italian philosopher Gemma Corradi Fiumara, does begin to discuss the work of artists like Jay Koh and Suzanne Lacy in relation to a formulation of the concept of listening. What may be missing in Kester’s approach is verifiable evidence of how listening functions in “the actual.” There is a discernable difference between “the conceptual” and “the actual,” and Kester’s assessment of listening functions at the level of the conceptual, perpetuating an abstraction that may or may not reflect the actual lived experience of the community artmaking described. It is problematic for me that Kester does not clarify his social location – the position from which he himself constructs his critical framework and analysis. For example, when describing a series of simultaneous “rooftop dialogues” (ibid., 3-5) between teenagers about problems affecting young people of colour in California, Kester writes: “The process of active, creative listening is evident both in Lacy’s extensive discussions with the students in developing the project and in the attitude of openness encouraged in the viewer/overhearer by the work itself” (ibid., 116). But how is this “evident”? Would revealing this information enable an author to write dynamically about listening as a methodological and ethical praxis that is central to community-centred arts’ effectiveness in social change? I am interested in how disclosing and exercising one’s positionality as a fieldworking critic might allow for a different kind of listening and theory-building, and for the development of radically different critical lenses. Here, Kester’s readers do not know if he himself has participated in this said listening. How much is his writing based on experiential knowledge and direct experience of the work?

Lacy’s more recent article (2008, 24) reviewing new genre public art from a contemporary perspective does suggest that Kester is in fact a fieldworking critic – that he travels extensively and knows well the dialogical art that he presents and analyses. Therefore, a reader
would expect that this writing is developed from more than just archival research and, perhaps, from more than personal correspondence or interviews with the artists (his own or interview done by others).

3.5 The Artist as Fieldworker

It is from such a perspective that listening becomes a learned skill that can also be practiced by the artist-critic or analyst of this art. Listening is not just part of the theatre of action of the community (or dialogical) artwork. I understand the listening-artist/critic – at best – to be a fieldworker, where forms of active and empathetic listening are learned and practiced as part of both the making and criticism of community arts. Although listening per se is not directly mentioned, the concept of the artist as fieldworker has been most convincingly theorised by American art historian Hal Foster. He proposes “the artist as ethnographer” paradigm (Foster 1996) in a book chapter by this name, recognising both the traps and the possibilities of ethnographic approaches to artmaking. Extending Walter Benjamin’s notion of “the author as producer,” Foster (ibid.) substitutes Benjamin’s “author” for “artist” and the proletariat Other (implicated in Benjamin’s original text) for the postcolonial Other. The task of representing this Other is not straightforward, but is subject to ethical traps such as “ideological patronage” (ibid., 173-4) and “over-identification” (ibid., 203), resulting in misidentifications and misrepresentations. The recognition that the artist-ethnographer works in the name of, and to represent, a subaltern subject usually defined culturally and/or ethnically does not seem that far removed from the earlier Canadian community film project and affiliated newsletter, Challenge for Change / Société Nouvelle (National Film Board of Canada, 1967-1980), linking community arts to the struggle against ethno-cultural and racial subordination.
In Foster’s (1996) chapter the ethnographic position is principally occupied by the person of the artist, although he does to a lesser extent include the critic (181). This is interesting as an opportunity for art critics (like artists) to fully occupy ethnographic-researcher positions. My research will endeavour to encourage critics, as well as artists, to develop autoethnographies (such as Miller 2003; see page 15 above), which would incorporate clear “articulations” (Slack 1996) of the social location from which one listens/speaks/writes. This opens up the possibility of the artist-researcher-critic as a fieldworker constructing critical analysis through praxis. Barring Foster’s (1996) reference to a handful of anthropologists (including that of James Clifford, Pierre Bourdieu and Claude Levis-Strauss), a large part of his theorising builds upon conceptual theories (that of Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Benjamin, and others), instead of fieldwork.

Concordant with Foster’s proposition, Lacy (2008, 21-5) establishes a three-tier framework for the analysis of practice. She suggests the following three critical strategies: “Close reading critique,” described as “immersion” and “intimate access,” resembling what I would call fieldwork (ibid., 22); “Multivocal criticism,” described as “qualitative” criticism “from varied [artist and non-artist] positions” (ibid., 22-3); and a third strategy stressing the importance of “actual field practices” in addition to analysis derived from theory (primarily continental theory) and history (ibid., 23). Despite putting forward a useful framework, the case studies in the second half of Lacy’s article (ibid., 25-31) do not reflect these outlined fieldworking strategies. These case-study descriptions, including that of Lacy’s own collaborative Oakland Projects and Code 33, and other projects that she may or may not have experienced directly (ibid., 28-31), read like distanced journalism with theoretical leanings – not self-reflexive analysis or immersive reportage as one might have expected.
Returning to Kester, his most recent book, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (Kester 2011), does, it would seem, develop from fieldwork practices in many locations worldwide. Kester travelled to Hamburg, Myanmar, Argentina and Senegal to inform his criticism, which is focussed more around the politics of labour and place than on dialogue in and of itself or on listening. As well as certain indicators within the language, form, and content of the writing, we know this unquestionably because many of the photo-documents published therein are credited to Kester. There is definitely something artful (as well as traditionally aesthetic) about this kind of approach to the production of research. The aesthetic, material, visual – but also the practical (i.e. linked to artful practice) – qualities of image-taking/making as an embodied act of presence can surely complement Kester’s emphasis on the ethical aspects of practice.107

3.6 A First Case: Grant Kester on Loraine Leeson
There is an underlying challenge of interpreting research in writing. What do we as meaning-makers choose to reveal? How do we authenticate our research in the fields of community-centred art? To be sure, we are the first interpreter/editor of our own stories. I consider where descriptive knowledge is s/cited (situated and quoted) in order to query, what is the genesis and evolution of particular case descriptions (textual, visual) of community-centred art? In part this comes down to the question of how can we trace the development of an “articulation” (Slack 1996).

When describing the co-creative artwork of Loraine Leeson and Peter Dunn,108 co-produced with a group of Bengali girls living in East London, Kester (2004) emphasises the dialogical aspects of the collective cultural production: “extended dialogue” and exchange in the
form of “personal interaction with the groups and individuals involved” (22). It would seem that Kester embeds listening within this process, as I will examine closely.

The art critic provides the following insightful description of the challenges of collaborative artmaking across cultures and languages: “Many of the student collaborators in West Meets East were recent immigrants and spoke little English. As a result, Leeson relied on a process of visual communication to develop the project … [through] the juxtaposition of images, objects, and words (in Bengali and English) in a series of exercises” (Kester 2004, 23; emphasis added). On the next page Kester (ibid., 24) states that “Leeson defines herself less as an object maker than as an artist who facilitates shared visions.” But how does he (come to) know such details, and also others, thoughtful and meticulous, about Leeson and her praxis of working with others through art? Kester continues, and, concurrently, I bracket my analysis:

The starting point for their work is a dialogue with the community within which the work will be produced. [Dialogue here is recognised as situated, where the importance of context is suggested by “within.”] The particular idea, object, image, or experience then emerges [But how exactly? What are the details, complexities and contradictions of this development – is this dictated by memory skills and forgetting?] from this situated dialogue. Leeson and Dunn attempt to learn as much as possible about the cultural and political histories of the people with whom they work, as well as their particular needs and skills [In Chapter Five, I align this sensitivity to social history and subjectivity through the praxis of “listening to context.”] Their artistic identity is based in part on their capacity to listen [This suggests that “to listen” can be qualitatively identified or described – therefore, one is more or less capable of listening], openly and actively, and to organize scenarios [set the conditions] that maximize the collective creative potential [footnote 13] (Ibid., 24; emphasis added).

Miwon Kwon’s (2004) writing about “site-specific art and locational identity,” and Lucy R. Lippard’s theorisation of “senses of place” (1997), could be cross-referenced here. However, what interests me more specifically pertains to “the origin” of knowledge. With this dissertation, I
argue that certain claims about community-centred art can only (better?) be made or authenticated through forms of “being present” to the art and social relations that are part and parcel of the art.111

Returning to this project and extending his description in a later chapter, Kester correspondingly writes:

Further, I would contend that the process of collaborative production that occurs in the works I am discussing (involving both verbal and bodily interaction) can help to generate this insight while at the same time allowing for a discursive exchange that can acknowledge, rather than exile, the nonverbal. Loraine Leeson, in her work with non-English-speaking students on West Meets East, describes the importance of collaborative exchange framed around images and objects. (Kester 2004, 115)

Kester notes verbal/linguistic practices and accounts for non-verbal/extra-linguistic practices within the collaborative process that Leeson sets. We might guess, but we do not know absolutely where the ideas at the source of these conclusions about insightful (effective?) communication come from. This statement, which would seem to be paraphrased, is interrupted by a direct quotation from Leeson placed in parentheses: “(‘[R]ight from the beginning you have access to layers of embedded meanings, and [you] don’t exclude those who are less confident or proficient in language’) [footnote 54]” (ibid.). Then Kester immediately continues, “Empathetic insight can be produced along a series of axes” (ibid.).112 Although concealed in the footnote following the direct quotation from Leeson, importantly, I think, Kester does go on to reveal that one of his sources is an email from the artist (ibid., 215).

Such claims, however, were corroborated by the artist during our face-to-face interview in London, where she stressed the importance of “visual communication,” that incorporated “visual ways of hearing” in the case of West Meets East (Leeson interview with the author, 11 October 2011). During this interview, I invited Loraine Leeson to extend her ideas about listening
in response to one of my questions. In the citation below, Leeson gets at the intricacies and nitty-gritty of a complex definition of listening (ibid.):

Julie Fiala [JF]: I believe that listening is an art. Do you agree with that? And if you could comment.

Loraine Leeson [LL]: Well you’d have to define art then and that’s, that’s a big one.

JF: I guess I’m thinking more as “artful,” but often, when I’ve asked the question, it’s been interpreted more as a visual art form, or as a…

LL: Well I’m trying to think if it correlates with my own definition of art. I’m just wondering whether to rephrase the question. Whether listening is a creative process? – and I would say it is, because, with a creative process, you have to know that you don’t know, and you have to set up a situation in which you can create certain boundaries. Okay, let me just think about this. I’m sorry; I’m going to define art for you.

I would see creativity as a terrible coming together of energy and matter. It might be the birth of a planet, or a baby, or an idea.

JF: Why do you say “terrible”?

LL: “Terrible” in the biblical sense, I would say; because energy (which could be physical energy or it could be a thought) and matter, are the different stuff. So if I want to sculpt your head, I can see your head and I’ve got a lump of clay, and the two things are completely different, but in my head I’ve got this idea of your head realised in the clay. But to make that happen, I’ve got to go through this process where I enable the energy of that idea to interact with that matter that is unwieldy and it sticks and it doesn’t work properly. So my hands are busy being the facilitators in that intermediary process. So creativity applies to all sorts of things, and art is a way, a very particular discipline that uses creativity in a very direct way. But that means that you are putting this together that you don’t know… it’s a process how they work. So I suppose in listening, if you’re trying to apply that to listening, which is a bit tricky, but…

[Leeson continues to defines art as energy working on matter in an indeterminate way.]

LL: […] So you know that you want to hear. So there is the energy to that. And there is that person who has all this knowledge or ideas or experience. Out of that you are trying to extract something that makes sense.
Well, I imagine that in the same way you have to set up a framework (so I might have to sit you there, my board there and create a metal structure) and then you can allow something to happen but allowing it to happen isn’t necessarily something that you can preconceive. You might know that this is the process that will enable that to happen, but you don’t quite know how it’s going to happen. And it is terrible in the sense that, in my experience, in any creative work that I’ve ever made, there is at least a moment, if not, much bigger than a moment, where you absolutely think, “How on earth am I going to do this. I have no idea how I’m going to turn that into this. I don’t know.” And all you can do is bring all the skills, all your experience to bear, stay with the process and see the process through. Well isn’t listening a bit like that, because, in a way, you don’t really know what’s going to come out of it. You can keep the boundaries and set the framework, and then out of that something coherent is going to come.

JF: It’s a tricky question I think. I guess I just see listening as an art. I see it as something artful, as something that needs to be practiced, and in that way I see it as an artform.

LL: Well it’s definitely not a science. […]

Leeson reminds us that there are many different intentions, directions and routes to listening. On the one hand, Leeson describes a deepened listening that respects and extracts experience – it works with it reciprocally like hands to clay. On the other hand, she relates a sense of obedient listening enabling absorption and learning.

What I am not doing here is privileging the form of the interview over the email exchange. However, what I do want to foreground is oft neglected: that knowledge is jointly produced in complex ways through its “citationality” (Butler 1997), whether overt, covert, acknowledged, approximated or presented exactly. As I have already suggested, this is an observation that relates to authenticating knowledge, to co-presence in the practice of research, and perhaps to an attitude towards listening research through conversation, whether electronically or face-to-face.113
3.7 A Second Case: Jay Koh’s Listening; Kester on Koh, Koh on Koh

Kester’s (1999) journal article, “The Art of Listening (and of Being Heard),” subtitled “Jay Koh’s Discursive Networks,” is an earlier attempt to deal with some of the issues that Kester tackles again in his later book Conversation Pieces. Although the article’s title literally promises an exploration into the topic of listening in relation to the artist Jay Koh’s work, Kester’s emphasis is more on the “discursive networks” and “facilitation of exchange” (ibid., 24) made by Koh between Western and Asian artists and between artists within Asia.114

Following these claims, in the section entitled, “An Aesthetics of Listening,” Kester (ibid., 26) refers to “Koh’s interest in the moral economy of exchange and communication,” tying ethics (a system of “moral economy”) to the interpersonal and communicational, and, if we are to account for the section’s title, to listening. It is under this section, towards the end of the article, that Kester explicitly uses the term “listening” (apart from in his titles) for the first time, where he writes: “In order to understand Koh’s work, it is necessary to shift from the expressive/productive nexus of conventional art practice to a concern with listening and process” (ibid., 26). In reading this explanation, I am curious as to why and how this interpretive shift should happen? Here, Kester seems to be suggesting that it is the critic or they who seek to interpret Koh’s work that must shift to a listening paradigm. Kester conjoins/confabulates what he is calling “an ‘aesthetics of listening’” with “the very act of establishing networks” without explaining how this figurative jump from “listening” to “networks” is possible. Does he mean to imply that establishing networks requires listening?

If so, the following questions, to my mind, should be asked concurrently, in order to flesh out and describe this aesthetics: What are the intricacies of such a process of listening/networking on the ground?; What are some of the challenges and limits of this listening/networking? Largely,
the theoretical premise for his argument relies on the thought of the Italian philosopher Gemma Corradi Fiumara, who recognises the preponderance of a logic of speaking within Western philosophy at the expense of listening without completely abandoning the idea of discourse (ibid., 26). In sum, announced by a title that could be read to evoke the physiological process of hearing, this piece of writing, and Koh’s practice as described herein by Kester, would still seem to favour a theory of dialogue over a theory of listening.

Nevertheless Kester finishes the essay with the following claim, which I cite at length:

For Koh an art practice that privileges dialogue and communication cannot be based on the serial imposition of a fixed formal or spatial motif […]. Rather, it must begin with an attempt to understand as thoroughly as possible the specific conditions and nuances of a given site or community. Only then can the appropriate or strategically effective formal manifestation, gesture or situation be devised, in response to those specific conditions. Well before the enunciative act of art-making […] there must first be a period of openness, of non-action, of learning and of listening. For Koh it is even more important that those western artists and institutions […] begin by listening. (Ibid., 26)

In placing the emphasis on listening as a preliminary, ordered process, Kester weakens the potential to recognise how this initial listening can lead to more and other instances of listening; therefore, he restricts the potential for a more dynamic understanding of how listening develops with/in practice and implies that listening is not active.

In contrast, in texts authored by Jay Koh, we get a sense of a more evolutive process of listening. For example, Koh’s writing describes a continuum of generative activities (encounters, workshops, discussion events, publications and exhibitions) that allow for “reading” of self and others as part of a “capacity-building process producing inter-subjective meanings that would in themselves allow further inter-subjective understandings and relationships to evolve” (Koh 2010a, 17).
Nevertheless, what Kester (1999, 26) explains as “an attempt to understand as thoroughly as possible the specific conditions and nuances of a given site or community,” can relate, I think, to practices of

(1) listening in order to understand, followed by;

(2) understanding in order to conjure a response.

I will later describe this process explicitly in terms of

a. listening to the specific circumstances and minutiae that make-up context, and;

b. listening to the particularities, the wants, needs, points of tension, that constitute community.

However, what is truly listening-centred, I have found, is not always “strategically effective” (it does not always lead to or effect social change) because it must involve a certain surrender to the other that, in practice, requires us to shift from strategy to emotionality. Therefore, to my mind, what is “appropriate” under certain conditions is not necessarily “strategically effective.” To be sure, we must concurrently ask the question of what “effective” really means.

Kester (ibid.) would seem to be paraphrasing Koh – stating “For Koh” twice – or speaking for him. Is this, literally, part of what a critic does, to speak for others through art criticism? In rereading this essay by Kester, I am also interested in the differences between what a critic can reveal (having not lived the listening nor the processes through which it happens) and what the artist can say. How do their claims differ? Where do they intersect?

Again, Kester’s (ibid.) article is important for entering the topic of listening through dialogue, yet his discussion neither gets at the intricacies (including the tensions) that are part of the practices of listening, nor at the fact that listening itself can take practice. These latter two
contentions are key for this dissertation. This article by Kester acts as a theoretical frame that enunciates, that is, announces the topic, yet it does not describe its workings. From Kester’s synthesis of Koh, we have some idea of what listening is, of what it does – it enables the formation of networks; it makes understanding possible across differences of East/West – but not how it does what it does. In this way, Kester’s article does not analyse what listening is, how it functions on the ground through practice, as well as its limits and the challenges it can pose in praxis.

In counterpoint, Koh’s self-reflexive writing of recent years does reveal this kind of information. My intention here is not to pit the critic’s account against the artist’s self-reflection. Rather, what I am interested in is tracing the development of ideas and practices pertaining to “listening” in the critical terrains of community-centred art, and deepening our understanding of how listening is worked and developed as an intentioned praxis of attentiveness to others.

What interests me starts with an empirical question: How can we get at describing this “period of openness, of non-action, of learning and of listening” (Kester 1999, 26), which complicates and repeats itself with far less slickness (first step, second step) than this statement suggests. From a grounded, empirical description, can we extract a theoretical framework? Lastly, for the purposes of analysis, is it useful to separate listening out from dialogue by defining it distinctively in order to scrutinise it more precisely? Might this be useful if we are indeed actively aware of the weight of the utterance?

Jay Koh’s (2010b) essay draft, entitled “Artist’s Research Text on Public and Participative Art: Performance in Everyday Life,” insightfully discusses the challenges of a community-centred art practice that is deliberately cross-cultural. In Dublin, the artist sought to provide opportunities for increased understanding and interaction between the native Irish and the
growing immigrant Chinese communities who were establishing a growing presence, or “Chinatown” on Parnell Street.

Through a thick description/reflection of telling moments of exchange within “the initial stage” (ibid., 1) of a project called *Ni Hao – Dia Duit* (meaning hello in Chinese then Irish), Koh brings to the fore some of the challenges and limits in generating positive encounters for the formation of productive inter-subjective meanings across cultures – productive, insofar that they set the conditions for collective cultural production. Of practical use for artists working in-community, Koh shares his methods of mitigating cross-cultural difference, detailing precise examples of tension, miscommunication and mistranslation. Admittedly influenced by Kester, Koh’s discussion moves away from the illustration of a dialogical ideal/theory of art to expose the complexities of miscommunication that affect participation and impede the negotiation of meaning. Koh reveals the difficulty of positing a succinct theory of dialogical aesthetics, that which Kester attempts in his book of 2004.

Koh (ibid., 12-3) introduces his concept of listening under a concluding section, entitled “Listening and Engaging across Divides,” where listening is clearly implied (yet not explicitly stated) in a process whereby “praxis is negotiated with individuals and responds to local cultural practices” (ibid., 12). Setting himself against Bourriaud’s conception of “relational aesthetics,” which Koh understands as only engaging with the field of art history, he champions interdisciplinary insights to better inform the complexities of communication, and argues for “an open mindset, inclusive processes and suspension of hasty judgement that may obscure sensitivity towards different cultural behaviors, perspectives and value systems,” which he understands as “crucial for the creation of ethical, sustainable and productive engagement” (ibid., 13).
This essay overlaps thematically with another piece of writing where Koh’s concept of listening is made even more explicit. Koh (2010a, 17; 2010b, 9-11) draws from sociology, citing Erving Goffman’s concept of “fronts,” which are tied to non-verbal body language that reflects culturally-embedded attitudes and behaviours. Such “fronts” may be misinterpreted across cultures. He presents the example of an encounter, where a Chinese man, unfamiliar with dialogical models of artistic practice, asked him if he was a spy: “As an artist working without a commercial goal and funded by NGOs, I came to understand that what I was doing would likely appear to be a strange phenomenon, from the pragmatic cultural perspective and knowledge of this particular Chinese migrant” (2010a, 17). Presenting a second example, that of an encounter between an Irish artist experienced in youth work and a young Chinese person, Koh suggests that the early withdrawal of the Chinese person from the project may have been based on confusion across different conversational styles (ibid.).

Here, Koh’s methods for understanding the other also draw from theories of communication, psychotherapy and philosophy. In “Are You A Spy?,” Koh (ibid.) makes explicit reference to listening in two instances. First, listening (alongside conversation and devoting time) is practiced upon meeting someone for “reducing uncertainty between strangers,” where Koh (ibid.) cites C.R. Berger and R.J. Calabrese’s “Uncertainty Reduction Theory.” In this instance, listening helps to form relationships, serving to take initial encounters further. Second, following the philosophy of Gemma Corradi Fiumara, Koh (ibid.) recognises the privileging of speaking/writing over listening in Western philosophy, and insists that listening be considered an “integral component of a dialogical exchange” in order to achieve a more symmetrical conversation. Listening is conceptualised as an important part of dialogue that not only underlies verbal communication, but also non-verbal communication and likewise influences our
perceptions of others. Insightfully, Koh writes: “By ‘listening’ I would also include *attentiveness* to non-verbal body language – the posture of the body and micro-expressions that can denote discomfort, irritation and suppression of certain feelings” (ibid.; emphasis added). Although Koh does not define “listening” precisely in the two texts cited above, his conceptualisation of a listening that incorporates “attentiveness” to expressive details extends listening further within the realm of the non-verbal, which is consistent with the definition put forward in this dissertation.

### 3.8 New Openings: Listening as an expanded practice and proposition

Listening is not just an auditory disposition. It is not just linguistic or sonorous. It can also be symbolic – that is, practicing an empathic responsiveness to another. I understand this claim to be consistent with the thought of Levin as presented by Gablik (1991; Gablik 1995a). Listening functions metonymically in relation to other selves. It is part of our self negotiated as communities of being with other selves (refer to discussions of Jean-Luc Nancy’s revision of the concept of “community” by Kester (2004, 154-8) and Kwon (2004, 153-5)). More pragmatically, I maintain that listening must also be considered as a permeable and elastic membrane that encircles and contains forms of speech. From this, the idea of “silence speaks” makes perfect sense.

Therefore, speaking and listening are neither contrasting (nor oppositional) concepts, nor are they spectral concepts in antagonism. They are not necessarily relational concepts either. Rather, listening enfolds forms of verbal and non-verbal articulations, so that listening – not speaking – is of higher order in signification within collaborative art. Listening becomes an epistemological method for raising questions relating to art’s ethical potentiality.
Listening is also sited in and experienced through the body, and by this I mean not just the ear. Jean-Luc Nancy’s (2002) philosophical book, *À l’écoute*, enters the subject (where my use of “subject” refers to both the person and the topic or senses of listening, both to the sensory body and to the practices of making sense) through the body as a container – a sonorous box – for all sorts of internal, corporeal sounds and embodied acoustic experiences. What does it mean to exist through listening (ibid., 17)?

It is noteworthy, too, that the English infinitive “to hear” signals both the physical capacity of the ear, and the process of understanding through listening (“I hear you,” for example, means both I hear what you are saying through my senses, and I believe that I understand you). If I listen to hear/pour entendre/to understand, I am searching for meaning in language. Already at the beginning of Nancy’s (2002) book, he expresses this tension between listening (which I interpret as *just listening* without intentioning interpretation) and grasping meaning (meaning-making) through the process of « entendement » (listening to make meaning or understanding) (esp. 18-9). This differentiation between listening and hearing is perhaps akin to “to look” and “to see.”

To be within-listening or *just listening* (« Être à l’écoute ») forms a captive register of philanthropic sensibilities (ibid., 16) – within which we could easily locate community-centred art – where listening is bound with do-gooder intentions. This evokes the ethical; however, Nancy also introduces a significant sensory dimension, which, as I will later illustrate, is embodied through particular practices of art.

So far in this chapter the primary consideration has been how art historians and critics studying community-centred art have been primarily able to reframe a traditional art history by focussing on relational frameworks centring on dialogue as acts of speaking (both linguistically
and metaphorically). Although I have strategically isolated listening in this analysis, the focal emphasis for Kester’s (2004) concept of a dialogical aesthetic, is, as such, the slippage between speaking “‘through,’ ‘with,’ ‘about’ or ‘on behalf of’ other [represented] subjects” by the artist (147). Dialogue becomes the chief conduit and method for developing ethical representation across differences of race, culture, sex, gender, age, ability, competence.

Community-centred art can describe a “collective artistic praxis” (Kwon 2004, 154), or better still, a collective creative praxis, that allows for wide-ranging creativity outside of realms of expert artmaking, and a broader understanding of creative capital. As second wave feminist artists in the United States would have maintained, artmaking can become a transformative, collective gesture with consciousness-raising effects. The link with listening as praxis is that, at best, community-centred art provides a sound ethical framework for listening. Not only does it provide this framework, listening can also become a methodological tool to develop sound representation. More plainly put, community-centred art uses listening (as a dialogical tool) and listening in turn allows for a certain type of art that is grounded in identification, empathy, understanding, and respect.

3.9 Listening, Only Listening: Frameworks and Attitude

This section opens with an image of what might first appear to be a drawing by the Japanese artist Chihara Shiotu. Aptly called In Silence, the 2011 installation presented as part of the solo exhibition “Detached” at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, shows a grouping of empty chairs and a piano without a pianist or a seated audience (Figure 1). This powerful image of Shiotu’s art installation looks as delicate as a charcoal drawing. The piano and chairs, which are enwombed in a complex net of spider-like weavings, say succinctly, and visually through art,
what I would like to formulate with words herein. To my mind, the image is “in”, as the title announces, in silence (« en silence » translated into French), but this is not a quiet silence.

Figure 1: Chihara Shioto, In Silence (2011)
Available at www.art.kunst.arte (accessed January 12, 2012)

Shioto’s lonely piano and chairs are perhaps in silence as much as John Cage’s infamous 4′33″, that well-known composition first performed by David Tudor at Woodstock (NY) in 1952, where Tudor’s NOT playing the piano enabled the audience to hear the sounds of their own presence in the room and the resonance of the room itself: of that space and of the sound.

Albeit uniquely, both Cage and Shioto were able to speak through kinds of “in/visible” silence; where a state of silence is invoked by what we see (the visible), as much as what we do not see (the invisible). “This visible” signifies for “the audible” and “the invisible,” for “the inaudible.” This articulated, “symbolic” juxtaposition between seeing and hearing will aid in
developing my theorisation of “listening with the eye” (Back 2007) that is grounded in practice (see Chapter Five), inextricably knotting the visual and the sonorous. 

This writing endeavours to concretise similar, but distinct, philosophies on listening and its “artfulness” (Back 2007) in reinterpreting John Cage’s writing and lectures. Cage opens four theoretical possibilities, which I describe as follows: (1) the interrelationship between the visual and the sonorous, as well as (2) the recognition of the omnipresence of sound and (3) of our responsibility to sound, as explicated below, and finally, (4) the usefulness of hearing sound to understanding context, which I will return to in the last chapter.

Cage introduces “Experimental Music” with the following:

For in this new music nothing takes place but sounds: those that are notated [read visible] and those that are not [read invisible]. Those that are not notated appear in the written music as silences, opening the doors of the music to the sounds that happen to be in the environment. […] There is always something to see, something to hear. In fact, try as we may to make a silence, we cannot. (Cage 1961, 7-8; my comments bracketed)

What strikes me is that Cage’s vocabulary here is both visual (“notated,” “written,” “see”) and sonorous (“sounds,” “music,” “hear”), that these “sensory” language choices are equally important in illustrating his claim that there is always sound (and never silence), like the phenomenon of thunder (sound) and lightening (image) that he mentions shortly afterwards (ibid., 10). This sits well with the intermingling of listening and seeing in my Shioto/Cage juxtaposition above.

More so than a sensory diptych, however, Cage undoes the typical sound/silence binary by suggesting just sound: There are only “intended” and “(so-called silence) not intended” sounds (“Experimental Music: Doctrine” in Cage 1961, 13-4). This allows us to conceptualise silence as sound, and too sound as silence, where one is integrated into the other without polarisation or
sharp separation. For the purposes of this analysis, following Cage, what this can encourage is an attempt to think or to write through sound (and listening, which is not the same, but proximal and relational to sound), without forcibly discarding what is being offered up by the other senses, especially the visual (of the visual arts, in the case of this dissertation).

In inviting “[j]ust an attention to the activity of sounds,” Cage also encourages our “respond ability” towards feeling them (Cage 1961, 10) – and openness to listen out for, and to hear. This “respond ability,” I think, is not merely our ability to respond, or Cage would have stated it that plainly. Devora Neumark invoked a similar neologism in 2004 upon speaking of our “respond-ability” to others as artists engaged in processes of community arts. And like Cage’s invitation to undertake listening as our responsibility, Neumark’s remark has serious ethical implications. It is the identification of our respons(i/a)bility to listen out: to be all ears. This slippage with “responsibility,” and what it may connote, returns me to the praxes and problematics of community-centred art, and specifically, to its ethical dimension, which this dissertation couples with listening, as its title states.

Thus, we arrive again at the notion of ethics, which is key to this study, “Ethics of Listening” (emphasis added here). “Ethics,” here, signals an attitude, or disposition, that places the emphasis on listening. An important dimension wherein this ethics is exercised is within and by the social – which is never neutral or apolitical – where oral conversation itself (dyadic or otherwise) is only one measure of the social. As the rhetorician David Beard (2009) has stipulated, the communicational sense of listening is not the only determinant in the constitution of an ethical subject through listening.

Reinterpreting Foucault, David Beard (2009) argues that limiting the study of listening to that of apprehending (hearing) and interpreting (understanding) messages does not allow for an
understanding of how subjects are constituted ethically by listening in multifarious ways. Importantly, it would seem that “ethics” performs not simply an outward reaching function (in relation to others), but an inward reaching function (in terms of self-definition, growth and the formation of the subject).

Citing the music composer, R. Murray Schafer, Beard maintains that we must also account for the “soundscape” or “acoustic environment” that frames our experience (Beard 2009, 11-13; citing Schafer 1977/1994). This view is consistent with Cage, and, as I have explained, Shiotu (Figure 1) through my juxtaposition. Moreover, for “recrafting an ethics of listening,” Beard (2009, 17-8) offers up Krista Ratcliffe’s (1999) metaphorical argument “for listening for unconscious presences, absences and unknowns,” which is based on the philosophies of Heidegger and Fiumara. (This remains consistent with what I will call “unsaid” in Chapter Four.)

Yet at the same time, David Beard (2009, 18) criticises Ratcliffe’s lack of ideological critique. Returning to ideas that are proximal to those of Schaefer (and perhaps Cage too), Beard writes, “My ability to listen for harmonies in the voice of the other is complicated by the noise of my soundscape” (ibid., 18). Beard recognises how our (outer) sonic relationships to others are always filtered and mediated by the sounds of the (inner) self and the choices that we make “to listen” and “not to listen,” as well as by how we listen (“individually,” “selectively,” “together,” or “to each other”) (ibid., 18-9).

Consequently, from Beard (and Cage) we can begin to appreciate listening as an expanded notion, that is, a notion which extends far beyond its role in the dyadic form of communication between two people. This is a listening that is ever-present, sonic (acoustic) as

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much as it is spatial (environmental), shared (co-created), social and introspective, as well as responsible – to which we can further ask: What does it mean to be responsible?

A second figure below documents a performance by Toronto-based artist Paul Couillard. Here, the artist is pictured with red duct tape sealing his mouth. Over the red tape, are inscribed the words, LISTENING ONLY LISTENING:

![Paul Couillard, Listening Only Listening (2007)](image)

**Figure 2: Paul Couillard, Listening Only Listening (2007)**


I do not want to interpret this image with too many additional words – to literalise it more than this – because the linguistic act of “anchorage” (Barthes 1977) could be breaking with the “pure” idea of the work itself, if this is really that of listening, only listening. On its own with little supplementary text, analysis, or context, I choose to place it here because I think it speaks very visually displayed on this page. The listening that we do when we read this image with our eyes is surely beyond articulated words alone.
To do any anything more than to “only listen” would be to defy the parameters for engagement that the artist/image sets. These are ethical parameters in that they govern the relationship between any viewer and the imaged/performing body of Couillard (and perhaps that of the performer to himself during the act of performing). The bold enunciation, “LISTENING ONLY LISTENING,” in turn beckons an ethics of listening.

The reader should by now be more familiar with what might be meant by “listening” in this study, that is to specify, in its expanded meaning, as a philosophical disposition, attitude, and praxis. Listening, as I have begun to describe it here, is an embodied praxis insofar as it has to do with bodies in space (In Silence by Shiotu) and time (4’33″ by Cage) through absence, as with the first image of the empty places and instrument, and through presence, as with the second of Paul Couillard. Within this “embodied” conception of listening, I explore the idea of the multisensory and the synaesthetic.

3.10 Multisensory Listening and its Challenges

I would like to invite you to think of listening as a multisensory, holistic practice that can engage and generate synaesthesia. In Québec and French Canada, Radio Canada’s catchphrase « Écouter pour voir » (“Listen to see”) captures well the essence of this inter-sensoriality: the idea that listening leads us to comprehension, here seeing, where the visual metaphor of sight is used to signal this understanding. Such a rhetorical emphasis (common with visual verbs like “see,” “observe,” “reflect”) repeatedly reinstates the visual where it has little real significance in and of itself, except perhaps to overstate its sound/welcome.

We are accustomed to thinking of seeing as a practice of the eye, like listening is a practice of the ear. However, as Ferdinand de Saussure’s sound-image diagrams suggest (1915/1959, 66-7; written 1857-1913), there is a correlation and interrelationship between the
written word on a page and the way we hear it: both visually/psychologically with our eyes, and
sonorously. An utterance, or word in the practice of thinking or speaking it, is simultaneously a
mind/mental image, and a sound (whether heard, unheard, or thought). These combine as we
ascribe signification in the processes of articulating our lives into our (private and public) worlds.

As I have documented in this chapter, Suzi Gablik, like Grant Kester, conceptualises
modalities of resistance that seem to pit “listening” against “seeing” as if it were possible to
consider them separately and choose one at the exclusion of the other. The integrational model
proposed herein goes beyond this sensory dualism in understanding the different senses as
inseparable and intertwined. Therefore, holistically, I am also attempting to write/work towards a
truly multisensory approach as a way of making sens(es). Rather than instigating a conflict here, I
think it is useful to acknowledge that “seeing” and “listening” can simply be two examples of
ways of understanding, which work conjointly through the corpus/corpora of able bodies.

An approach to the (multi-)sensorial that informs this study has been the extensive
research of the French Otolaryngologist, Dr. Alfred Tomatis (1920-2001). Dr. Tomatis
maintained that listening was a kind of perception that extends to the whole body (« à toute la
corporeité »), a perception that is integrated in the dimensions of conscience (« du champ
conscient ») (Tomatis 1974, 27). Furthermore, he argues that, although we think of the ear at first
when we speak of human listening, it is equally important to specify that all the sensorial
functions participate in the activities contributing to the phenomenon of listening to language («
toutes les fonctions sensorielles ont leur part d’activité dans le phénomène d’écoute du language
») (ibid., 37-8). He concludes that it is the whole being who listens: « On peut donc pressentir
maintenant avec force que ce n’est pas l’oreille seule qui écoute, mais tout l’être » (ibid., 38).
What is more, his distinction between hearing (« entendre »), as a physical capacity, and listening
(« écouter »), as an intentioned, conscious choice and process (ibid., esp. 34), will also be useful. To listen, or not to listen.

Tomatis was a prolific writer, philosopher of the body, and health care specialist, who had worked with individuals with audition and vocal problems in different professions from aircraft factory workers to opera singers, and even, painters (Tomatis 1977; also Tomatis interviewed in Michaud 1989). In a noteworthy passage, Tomatis (1977, 154-5) identifies what he calls an organic solidarity (« une certaine solidarité organique ») between the pictorial gesture and audition. In treating painters, he remarked that the precision of their brush stroke and the richness of their palette diminished in correlation with auditory troubles (ibid.). Associating the loss of certain colours with particular types of deafness, Tomatis articulates a unique correlation between the ear and sight; aptly exclaiming his temptation to say that we paint with the ear (« J’étais presque tenté de dire qu’on peint avec son oreille! ») (ibid.). From the point of view of the visual arts, as a visual performance artist myself, I am incredibly fascinated by this claim: that our acoustic/sonic health might have practical visual and artistic applications/implications.

Still, in a subsequent book, Tomatis (1978, 69) explains that the ear can be easily considered as a sonic mouth (« L’oreille peut être considérée sans trop de crainte comme une bouche sonique »). He suggests, this time more metaphorically than physiologically, yet another inter-sensorial connection, here an analogy between the mouth (taste) and the organ of the ear that looks like / acts like a mouth.

In summary, Dr. Tomatis can enable us to better understand listening as an aptitude that interrelates the senses in ways that are physiological (bodily), psychological (conscious), artistic, and symbolic. Following Tomatis, it is no longer possible to “separate” senses out, even though
we may have come to think, under Western and/or dominant frames of signification, that the eye is the dominant sense with the ear following second.

Therefore, if we adhere to Dr. Tomatis, the question of sonority cannot strictly be attached to the capacities of two ears to hear. We can hear someone is coming towards us up the stairs because, as well as hearing them, that is, if we are physiologically able to hear, we can feel the vibrations of the floorboards under us. So in this instance, our haptic senses are exerted to “hear” the sounds of the footsteps. Awoken from a deep sleep, the conscious process of listening ensues as we begin to make sense of the footsteps. This sound may bring on feeling – fear, longing, or whatever. We are suddenly consciously alert, listening out for more, unless of course our power to ignore or filter out that sound is stronger. Steven Connor (2004) has written that “hearing provides intensity without specificity, which is why it has often been thought to be aligned more closely with feeling than with understanding” (157). I am thinking here of the feeling of distress spurred by the alarming sound of an ambulance siren. Therefore, although the pragmatist in me wants to decode the messages in sound, my reaction to sound is also emotive. I hear, therefore I feel?

Connor’s essay, “Edison’s Teeth: Touching Hearing,” is a convincing example of the twining of the tactile with audition (ibid., 153-172). Within this thoughtful piece of writing, he cites the examples of Beethoven and, of the inventor of the gramophone, Thomas Edison himself, hearing through touch. Connor writes, “It is said that the deaf Beethoven gripped a stick between his teeth to convey the sounds of the piano to him. Similarly, Thomas Edison would chomp on the wood of a gramophone in order to hear faint overtones that, as he claimed in a 1913 interview, were normally lost before they reached the inner ear […]” (ibid., 169). For Connor, it is touching through the teeth, and here I would also add, perhaps the taste and smell of the wood (as these
might impact factors like pleasure and memory that affect the interpretation of the sound), which interplay to enable effective listening.

In addition, Connor’s essay is useful for us in that it communicates more generally a relationship between the senses, what he calls “intersensoriality” (ibid., 154-156). Playing off the many meanings, or senses, of the word “sense,” which are even more evident in French,Connor explains, “The sense we make of any one sense is always mixed and mediated by that of others. […] The senses communicate with each other in cooperations and conjugations that are complex, irregular, and multilateral (ibid., 156). For instance, a friend of mine, who was losing her sense of touch through her fight against Multiple Sclerosis, spoke about the ways that, when she reaches into her pocket, she listens to the sounds (of coins, etc.) with her hands, because she can no longer feel with her fingers like she used to. The ways that this “intersensoriality” is exercised are erratic, personal, changing, and imaginably difficult to predict and to theorise with fullness and finitude. “Able bodied” people, like myself, in most ways that is, might take their acute sensitivity with one or another sense as a human given.

This is where I reckon that disability theory (or theories of disabilities, specifically those written by people living with them) would provide a useful opening to think more critically through “intersensoriality” (Connor 2004). Although it is beyond the remit of this study, sources such as Gerard Goggin’s (2009) article, entitled “Disability and the Ethics of Listening,” where once again we encounter the terminology used in this dissertation, point to the ways that sign language [which could be conceptualised as a form of “listening with the eyes”], cochlear technologies [as a form of “listening through prosthetics”], as well as emergent assistive technologies, create different kinds of listening that pose challenges to normalised ways of listening (my inferences in brackets). Similarly, from his own experience, the visually-impaired
sociologist, Professor Rod Michalko (2002, 84-7), has written about how he lives in/through his eyes; despite the fact he can hardly “see.” He achieves this with the assistance of his guide dog, but also through memory from a time in his younger life when he could see (ibid.).

Following this expanded concept of listening, I adopt listening as an “attitude” to the shaping of this writing, just as it has shaped my arts and research praxes working in specific contexts of cultural production and community.

3.11 Other Definitions and Openings: Additional Areas of Literature

Michael Purdy (in Purdy and Borisoff 1997) proposes the following definition of listening from a communicational standpoint, where deciphering messages is key: “Listening is the active and dynamic process of attending, perceiving, interpreting, remembering, and responding to the expressed (verbal and nonverbal) needs, concerns, and information offered by other human beings” (8). While I adhere to this definition of listening, which is first and foremost about listening in human communication, I believe that it does not deny the ethical in such processes.

In his concern for “effective listening,” Purdy does emphasise “[c]are about the relationship as you listen” (ibid., 8-9), which, I think, is ethically bound. Even if, as some have argued, effective listening is not necessarily ethical listening, all interpersonal relationships are bound by ethics and, therefore, it would be an error, I think, to interpret the above definition as uninterested in “the ethical.” The ethical, here, is part of the embodied and cerebral aspects of attending (how we think and do “attention” toward others), which is never neutral. It is always contingent on the context (of listening): the situational, the relational, the temporal, the ecological. To be sure, these can comprise so much more than speech and language in all its forms, which includes intuition. According to Purdy, these are the, “Steps to Become an Effective Listener

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1. Want to listen
2. Focus your attention
3. Be aware (perceptive) as you listen
4. Keep in mind that the listening process involves interpretation (including both verbal and nonverbal cues)
5. Consciously work to remember what you hear
6. Make a habit of responding with feedback
7. Care about the relationship as you listen” (ibid., 8-9).

Moreover, Purdy goes on to outlines a description of “therapeutic listening,” among other
“types”: “Therapeutic listening,” he summarises, “is listening which lends a non-judgmental
healing ear to family, friends, and professional associates. It is listening with the interests of the
other in mind. The person who understands fully a friend’s loss, the parent who can empathize
with a child’s anxiety, the employee who understands a colleague’s special concern, or the
therapist who helps a patient work out a particular problem are all demonstrating therapeutic
listening” (ibid., 12). Moreover, Purdy describes an “empathic listening” where “[…] the listener
attempts to feel with the other person […]” (ibid. 12.).

Additionally, composer and accordionist Pauline Oliveros’ praxis of “deep listening”
(2005) presents a programme of “mind-body” practices intended to enhance our capacity to listen.
“Deep Listening,” Oliveros writes, “is a practice that is intended to heighten and expand
consciousness of sound in as many dimensions of awareness and attentional dynamics as
humanly possible” (xxiii). Oliveros’ elaborate codification of “deep listening” and description of
meditative practices that involve, she explains, “noticing my listening or listening to my
listening” (xxiv), could be potentially explored further to enhance the analytical framework and
praxes proposed in Chapter Five.

connections between sound as music and ethics, on which I will end this chapter at the
intersection of ethics and listening. She puts forward the following expansive understanding of ethics:

The happy human life is my concern in ethics. My aim is to investigate ways in which music might make life happier. […] Ethics, as I understand it, is concerned with thought-mediated human behavior. The range of behavior involved extends from action chosen as a result of detailed deliberation to habitual, even mechanical behavior, but in all human behavior, thought or attitude plays some casual role. Ethics uses reflective consciousness to influence our behavior. Ethics is also the practice of self-consciously cultivating attitudes and habits of thought. [New paragraph] But ethics is essentially social. […] The focal choice of life and the major decisions that settle moral dilemmas are important matters of ethical interest. But so are a host of less conspicuous matters, including how one balances the diverse demands one faces in everyday life as an adult. Relevant to ethics are the range of details and the implicit models that comprise one’s way of living and interacting with others. (Ibid., xvii-xix)

Higgins thoughtfully concludes this statement by affirming: “Music, I argue illuminates some of those details and provides some valuable models and concerns for ethics” (Ibid., xix). And with certitude she later stresses: “I am convinced, in addition, that openness to a broad range of musical possibilities is of value to developing ethically valuable capacities, such as openness to other human beings in general (Ibid., xx).
Chapter 4

Them, Selves: Ethics of Self, Community and Ethical Research

4.1 Overview

Chapter Four examines issues pertaining to representation, ethics and research protocols in relation to “community-centred art” and interconnected praxes of “research-creation” (recherche-creation). Carefully, I develop self-reflexive writing that is strongly autoethnographic in its orientation. Focusing on what can be learnt from and about others and the self, this is achieved by recounting, interpreting and analysing aspects of our lived experiences of co-creativity, and the ethical decisions that we make when engaged in processes of community-centred art. The writing style is narrative and thickly descriptive to locate the people within, and the places of, the research. This is punctuated by segments that could be considered “confessional-emotive writing” (Chang 2008, 145), which inevitably exposes moments of confusion and anxiety resulting from being “trapped” in an ethical problem-space, holding tensions, contradictions and teachings. This exposition of raw “truth” claims precipitates discussion about artistic and research-creation as a site of co-creative, self- and community-meaning(s) that are ethically bound with “political” implications.138

The chapter is split conceptually; while the first half revolves around methods of self- and community-sanctioned “ethics,” the second half reconsiders the specific protocols and methods of ethics review that are enforced upon those sharing in research involving “human subjects” within Canadian universities.139 I juxtapose examples of “doing ethics” as an artist and free-thinker, and “doing ethics” as a scholar and researcher, while recognising at times that the “artist-researcher” is an artificially split subject-position, yet, at other times, less collapsible than it would seem. The
verb “doing” here recalls anarchist pedagogies of learning by doing (Avrich 2006, 14). Whether as an “artist” or as a “researcher,” I question which of these two roles is actually more “free” of “responsibility.” Here, I also note an important distinction between two “r-words”: responsibility, as a human duty, and regulation, as an institutional imposition.

This chapter asks, what is “ethical” representation, and how can we move closer towards “more ethical” methods of art and research for a more “ethically-mindful” community-centred art? “What is ethical?” is a situated problématique continuously under tension, where what counts as “ethical” (that is, “good” in any one time, place, society, community of culture, religion and interest of other kinds) affects the relations of power governing co-creative possibilities, including for social and political purpose. What is implied here is that mobilisations through the social and political fabric are always also co-creative ones, in the sense that effective mobilisations are, I maintain, those that are artful. (By “effective” I mean that part of their task is to effectuate social change.) The socio-political and the creative are conjoined through activisms in an integral relationship; they can only be cosmetically divided or artificially separated out from one another. These mobilisations are the ethics that bring us together or push us apart through art in life – the artful – as subjects with unequal access to that power and to art (creative) education.

In discussing questions concerning research ethics protocols – especially where artistic and creative practices intersect with “research”140 – I am interested in revealing some of the limits (and benefits) of ethics policies and protocols. This critique is also relevant to those reviews that are carried out at arm’s-length from university and research environments. In so doing, I hope that academics and scholars of arts-based research more generally, and specifically those working in the area of community-centred art, will gain insights into the complexity of ethics at the intersection of community-centred art, research-creation, as well as community work – or praxes
– in-action with “human subjects” through art, which can easily be disguised by the formulations of social, educational, and even artistic policy, or by the desire to do without policy.

4.2 Cautions of Meaning-Making for Community-Centred Art

Admittedly, the current chapter (and also the next) presents some key challenges and interpretative limitations. If we try to get at how and what this art communicates – both how it works and what it might be saying – socially, interpersonally, ethically, aesthetically, politically – we sway towards meanings that are never essential truths, but which nevertheless are deemed probable for and by the meaning-maker. The art of miscommunication (misinterpretation) governs communication (interpretation), where the adaptable meaning-maker is constantly involved in the re-evaluation and revaluation of truth claims. In so doing, authorial meaning-makers are offering hypotheses as to the signification of a particular instance, action, social relation, or object of/within the art. From the sites of our experience we are considering, at best, the ways and contexts in and through which this art might communicate and miscommunicate.

We accumulate intuitive, cognitive and bodily knowledge as experience situated within and moving through the self, the social and the ecological by way of the ethical.

Firstly, a challenge related to the “cautious” interpretation that I write about here is echoed in the statements of other creative practitioners working in community-centred ways. As discussed in Chapter Three, artist Jay Koh (2010b) writes about the intricacies making up the conditions, and the listening and social relations surrounding the art, by emphasising specific cross-cultural, communicational tensions ascertained by factors such as understanding culturally-specific non-verbal, habits and preconceptions about self and other. In this rare example of “close” description (akin to close reading), Koh’s vocabulary is sturdily sited within the self, as well as replete with vigilant phrases and speculative verbs expressing a perpetual state of
uncertainty and conditional possibility. Summarising a failed encounter between a young Chinese artist and an Irish artist in a situation where Koh had established the pre-conditions for their conversation, Koh’s self-reflexivity is insightful, “So I think that the Chinese young man and the Irish artist were both correct to arrive at their respective conclusions – which may then lead to a conclusion that I did not do a good job in setting up this social get together” (ibid., 2). Describing the limits of this initial encounter between strangers, Koh stipulates how each party could have arrived at a particular mis/conception of the other based on their different, deeply culturally-seated attitudes and interpretations about the other within/and the meeting. On a single page, phrases such as “seem to be,” “I also noticed,” “my attention was scattered,” “[t]he impression he had,” “I think,” “which may then lead to a conclusion,” “I would conclude,” and “would have” stand out (ibid., 2). Not only do they emphasise the situatedness (first person pronouns) of the account, but also the challenges (dispersed attention) and tentativeness/questionability (conditional verbs) of accounting for the social within such practices of art and life. This, I will suggest, is more than just a speaking style. Language brings to the fore what I call the culture and conscientiousness of “being prudent,” which is part of the ethical sensibility of community arts. Similarly, I have noted this kind of hesitation upon inviting practitioners to share their experiences of community arts by interview. Again, their descriptions were cautious. This was evidenced by vocabulary choices, but also, through changes in timbre, inflection, and in the speed of delivery of the accounts. Writing, it would seem, can conceal these and other extra-linguistic and corporeal variables.

To be sure, the manner of expression at the heart of such descriptions helps form the messy system of signification wherein meaning-making is always a performative construction, where words not only say things, but make sense and do things, within a system of meaning that
is always already governed by ideologies that have been normalised. As Donna Haraway (1988) maintains, the signification that we ascribe is forever incomplete because all knowledge is situated in our experience within a specific enunciative circumstance and context. Because of this, meaning is simultaneously true and tentative; it is both fixed and changing. What is important, I think, is a clear acknowledgement of such limitations.

Secondly, in any system, particular experiences, utterances and meanings mean more than others; so do particular sounds. Referencing R. Murray Schafer, Paul Rodaway (1994, 155-6) explains that we “privilege” certain sounds and that the sounds we do hear change over time. He aptly writes, “Yet, whilst the sounds of aircraft and road traffic are debated as issues of ‘noise pollution,’ the ubiquitous ring of the telephone calls us to attention, demands our immediate action and thus is privileged in our auditory experience” (ibid., 156). This (telephone) call to attention through sound, that is, through sounds that resound more than others, is an appropriate reminder that our listening too discriminates. We hear what we chose to hear if and when we chose to listen – carefully, less carefully, or simply not at all.

Thirdly, it is important to highlight a fundamental tension within my own fieldwork research described within the last two chapters of this dissertation, linked to methods for gathering evidence. Under new questions of observation as a question of artistic research, I will briefly return to issues of sense hierarchy dealt with in Chapter Three. Although describing my approach as “observational” fits well within ethnographic traditions of qualitative inquiry, I recognise that the emphasis on observation emphasises ocular methods of information gathering. In so doing, this also maintains the hierarchy of seeing over listening and other sensory knowledge. Interestingly, Rodaway has stated the following about the omniscient, all seeing, observer:
Therefore, it seems that the eye, as defined by the Western
cultural tradition, sets at a distance what is viewed, detaches the
observer from what is observed and implies an hierarchical
relationship of power giving the viewer – who chooses to look –
a kind of control or privilege over what is viewed. Furthermore,
this visual geography is presented as ‘objective,’ as verifiable
truth. However, appearances deceive and illusions can be both
accidental and quite deliberate. (Ibid., 124)

Observation, accepted in this power-bound sense of a controlling gaze, can manage to circumvent
questions of responsibility over the research and the researched, which, I think, take on great
importance in the area of community-centred arts. While I accept this observer/listener dichotomy
as a fundamental challenge governing the fieldwork and do not mean to claim that listening-
centred research is immune from such systems of power, I maintain this tension. This not only
allows us to locate the research practice within particular conventions of research, but at the same
time, it incites questioning nomenclature. Naming not only has definitional implications but it
dictates and influences the actual methods and modes of analysis when it names: it dictates what
and that we see. Therefore, the repetitive evocation of the observant-listener binary (Chapter Four
and Chapter Five) is meant to serve to re-invoke such a tension for the reader throughout this
writing.

Fourthly, by introducing my self above using the dissociative third-person (“the
researcher-artist,” “she who”), I want to hint at the somewhat uncomfortable quagmire of
appointing myself as both tester and “truth”-teller. As I have already suggested through my
discussion surrounding “caution” as an ethical stance, likewise, the descriptions of the art (and
social relations) herein are never “impartial” accounts sourcing an autonomous art and its
processes, as if they were themselves “fixed” artworks communicating set interpretations – “from
nowhere” (Haraway 1988, 581). They are artworks “working” through me in processes of
becoming through this writing. These are accounted for through experiences of observation/listening which are my own and which are inevitably limited.

Donna Haraway maintains that all research and research-positions are partial, where objective/subjective binaries are inapt at describing how/why/where knowledge develops and how/why/where certain knowledge circulates and counts: “Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object. It allows us to become answerable for what we learn how to see” (ibid., 583), and perhaps predictably I would add, for what we learn how to listen. With Haraway in mind, I would argue that all research practices – combining whatever sources of information – involve a certain degree of fieldworking, in the guise of searching, witnessing and assembling. Ultimately, these practices are choreographed from a situated position: a researching-self from/with their particular, albeit mutable/mutating, positionality.

To synthesise and close this section, the challenges of meaning-making identified above are the following:

The cautions of interpretation, linked to:

a) Language choices;
b) The privileging of certain sounds;
c) The observant-listener duality;
d) The partiality of subject-positions and knowledge.

4.3 The Anecdotal as a Method for Community-centred Art

The first and fourth items listed above bring the reader back especially to the complexity, and also, the complications, of description, where it becomes an other(ed) “problem-space” within recent art criticism since Conceptual art perhaps. We avoid description of any detail, I think,
preferring the projection and application of theoretical ideas onto our “art of social relations.” But with this tendency of evasion in mind, how do we stay with and tell the stories of community-centred art with representational integrity, by which I do in part mean ethically, and, where ethically possible, integrally (intégralement)? as wholly (entière)? Whose stories are we telling? What is our right to speak? Is, or how is, this right ethically-bound?

A recent artist’s talk by Claudine Cotton (11 March 2014, Université Laval, Québec City) highlighted how the anecdotal, as a means of telling particular fragments or moments of a story, begins to reveal some of the harder to aestheticise aspects of the “manoeuvre” as a holistic practice that moves within and beyond the art to-and-fro the social. Upon hearing this talk, I could begin to intuit and understand the artful for what it is really about and worth. Claudine Cotton, who lived and worked in the Saguenay region of Québec before moving to Montréal, is an artist of « la manoeuvre » proper. She believes that the spectator or viewer (« le regardeur ») becomes a primary material for the art, where there is a great capacity for abandoning oneself to the work (ibid.). In this sense, I would argue that there is no viewer – only co-creators. Cotton explained her use of attractive objects (« object attracteur ») as sensuous lures in community-centred interventions, such as Une vraie famille (A Real Family) of 2001. For this manoeuvre, a taxidermied fox and a luxurious bed were used to entice passers-by to inhabit and rest within the comfort of the bed placed at street-level, which the artist had left in the Jardin Saint-Roch at the main city square of Québec City. Cotton told us how one of the people who did occupy the bed—an elderly man who was a tourist to Québec from England— is still in touch with Cotton to this day. When her daughter visited England years later, he and Cotton had reconnected by phone and her daughter met him in person.
Invited to present this artist’s talk in the context of a university course on performance and the manoeuvre led by Alain-Martin Richard, a theoretician and practitioner of la manoeuvre, emblematic of the manoeuvre as an artistic form and attitude, Claudine Cotton’s work is, to Richard’s mind, “impalpable” and “incontrollable,” as well as “hard to document” (comment during Cotton artist’s talk, 11 March 2014, Université Laval, Québec City). Consequently, the importance of the narrative (« le narratif ») and the anecdotal emerge with this necessity to tell of the work in an expanded way recognised by both Richard and Cotton. Like Claudine Cotton, I will propose that this expanded way must include details of art in life, such as serendipitous meetings in England. Grant H. Kester (2004) has called this “the afterlife” of the dialogical art.  

During this talk, I was struck and refreshed by the frequently apologetic interjections that Cotton made within her retellings, to the tune of, “please excuse the anecdotal.” What these kinds of interjections reveal is a tension that is very real, a tension about how to communicate these particular stories of art – and what stories of art are worth telling and hearing – beyond standards of visual, often photographic, documentation. Maybe it is because the anecdotal, closer to the nostalgic and the overtly personal life-story, is also nearer to the unresolved memory that reaches more resolution through the articulation of the memory as living, where speaking or writing by remembering seems to bring it into sharpness. (This is also closer to the idea of an artwork that is always open, that is, never closed or complete.)

Can we tell this and similar stories of community-centred art without interweaving personal narratives? Is this kind of (personal) telling appropriate? What kinds of claims might this type of narrative help us state more firmly about the art of social relations? To whom are we responsible here? Does “failed” art mean “failed” relationship, or vice-versa? Therefore, it would seem that these problem-spaces are as much of a concern for artists as they will be for
“researchers,” although the demands on research are differently configured and regulated, as the latter half of this chapter should show.

4.4 The Artist and Methods of Self-Regulating Ethics

4.4.1 Sylvie Cotton’s Residency at Ma maison Saint-Joseph

An article written in French by Frédérique Doyon (2014, B7), recently appearing in the Montréal newspaper Le Devoir, makes clear that questions of ethics are still at the forefront of concerns for artists working in community contexts. The artist, Sylvie Cotton – not to be confused with Claudine Cotton above – is similarly known for her work at the intersection of performance, relational work and community arts. As the article explains, Sylvie Cotton had recently completed an artist residency amongst vulnerable older people, immersed within the residential and care facility for elderly people named Ma maison Saint-Joseph, situated in the Rosemont Petite Patrie sector of Montréal. An exhibition was then held at la Maison de la culture Maisonneuve.

As Doyon writes, this was the artist’s first occasion working with vulnerable older people, most of whom suffered from Alzheimer’s disease and/or did not speak (ibid.). The artist recognises the “intrusive” dimension of her project (« elle en est consciente »). She is cited realising that: « [...] c’était intrusif comme projet parce que la plupart sont Alzheimer et/ou ne parlent pas, donc ne peuvent pas me dire non » (Cotton in Doyon 2014, B7). The fact that, as Cotton attests, “most cannot say no” (« la plupart [...] ne peuvent pas me dire non ») points to the problematic space of consent and, in this case, their (in)ability to consent to participating in a project that the artist had initiated. The author also relays that Sylvie Cotton impaired her senses by blindfolding her eyes and remaining silent (ibid.). (Was this done by means of empathy?)
Moreover, Doyon cites Cotton’s self-reflexive stance: « Dans ma pratique, il m’est arrivé de me dire: attention, es-tu en train de vouloir qu’ils fassent ce que tu veux qu’ils fassent ? » (ibid.). (“In my practice, it has happened that I have told myself: be careful, are you wanting them to do what you want them to do?” (my translation).) Here, Cotton points to another challenge for the community-centred artist, that their orchestration of a directive process compromises the integrity of a collaboration that is not fully possible under certain conditions. To mitigate this, Cotton has read facial expressions (a smile in the case of “Marie” to authorise an exchange), and used a drawing by “M. Miron” as inspiration for her own work (ibid.), an artistic response instead of collaboration, perhaps.

I would also be curious here about issues relating to the privacy of the elderly participants and the author’s choice to include a first name in the former instance and an abbreviation and family name in the later instance. If, as the artist suggests, these participants are not able to fully consent, is a primary care giver authorising this naming in these ways in Le Devoir? Is the use of M. Miron’s drawing as a source of stimulus for creation by the artist a way of her being attentive to him and of producing a response without co-opting him into a process that might impede on his rights to refuse participation?

Additionally, I would like to employ this article to raise certain difficult questions that relate to the public and curatorial aspects of presenting the work by exhibition format. And I do this without pointing a finger:

• Was the residual exhibition at la Maison de la culture Maisonneuve “with” or “without” consent?

• Considering that this exhibition was presented in a neighbourhood at some distance from the care facility, whom is the show ultimately for? – perhaps family and friends living
near this maison de la culture? Les proches vivent-ils ici? L’exposition, est-elle pour ceux et celles-ci?

- What are the representational, individual and collective rights of the humans involved, including the artist?

This brings me back to an attitude and practice of self-questioning and reflexivity – a listening to the self for the good of others – which is perhaps at the heart of community-centred art and its ethical dimension. This case provides a strong example of particular methods of self-regulation by the artist herself, Sylvie Cotton. These methods include: empathetic gestures (through her sensory impairment); attention to body language (facial expression); utilising means of communication that are alternative to the verbal (drawing). In this example, ethical questions relative to one’s ability to consent and to informed consent are mitigated through the body (via the sensory), through sound as silence, and by the prosthetic of the art (that of M. Miron’s, Cotton’s and perhaps others who were involved in the making yet are not mentioned in the above-cited article).

Chapter Four now turns to two examples of my earlier co-creative community-centred art, before presenting the final case of this dissertation that draws from my fieldwork in the north of Ireland, which will be expanded upon in Chapter Five.

4.4.2 Testing Testaments

In 2009, I wrote an essay called “TESTING TESTAMENTS,” which I excerpt and reorient here in order to show how (and what) ethical questions have governed my artistic and research practices of community-centred art from the beginnings. This essay presents an analysis of the artist’s bookwork TESTAMENTS, which was produced using feminist interviewing methodologies to create a platform for dialogue around questions of sexism in the New
Testament. It should be noted that this bookwork was produced just as ethics protocols were being implemented in the Humanities and Social Sciences at Canadian universities. Because Fine Art was (and still remains) a somewhat untouchable area for “institutional” ethics, the artwork that I present here was not subject to ethics review at the time of its production in 2000-2001, while I was a student in a Bachelor of Fine Arts programme in the then Department of Art at Queen’s University. The essay introduces TESTAMENTS as follows:

The object of our investigation is a book, 243 pages in length. The hardcover, devoid of an image, is jet black with the plural word “TESTAMENTS” embossed in gold capital letters on the spine. No author’s name is indicated on the cover. Inside, thin white cartridge paper is densely covered in small black print. Formatted in two equal columns, the eight-point font is Bookman Old Style. Towards the top of page one hundred and ninety-three, part way through Chapter Two of The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to Timothy, a reader encounters the following verses:

11  Let a woman learn in quietness and full submission.
11.1 You can also find empowerment within opposition... so taking emancipatory possibilities from the New Testament because of what’s there, even if it is stuff you disagree with.
12. I do not allow a woman to teach, or to have authority over a man, she must keep silent.
12.1 What you say is, I take what I can and I make myself empowered through what it says I can’t do.
12.2 I’m sorry, there is that submission, but I strenuously disagree with that kind of submission.
12.3 I construct myself in opposition to it. Engagement is about empowerment.
13 For Adam was first formed, then Eve;
13.1 And what’s been said a bunch of times is that where there is a sight of power;
13.2 Whatever that power is, (and in this case it is heterosexist, normative and in some cases misogynist), there is resistance.
13.3 And the most common site of resistance is the body; it’s the individual self, the personal self, and then that spreads out and becomes a form of empowerment.
13.4 So within religion there is empowerment, even it it’s in opposition to a hegemonic structure.¹
14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.
15 Yet women shall be kept safe through childbirth, if they continue in faith and love and holiness with propriety.
I'm Jessica. I'm 30. I identify myself as a feminist academic of Jewish background and culture rather than faith.

Excerpt from TESTAMENTS, 1 TIMOTHY Chapter 2:11-15

Analysing TESTAMENTS nearly a decade after its production, I pointed to problems such as how “to negotiate the problematic of writing self-critically from multiple positionalities.” I feared that “the authorial-‘I’ of the paper could be conflated with the producer-‘I’ of TESTAMENTS.” Through deliberate writing-style choices, the paper attempted to differentiate these positionalities by referring to myself in the third person when evoking my role as the bookwork’s producer, and reserving the first person for my memories and opinions at the time of writing in 2009. All in all, I had wanted to argue that my proximity to the work, as a maker in collective cultural production, was generating particular “privileged” insights.

As I reorient this analysis again here, I still find it perplexing that the question of how to tell the story of TESTAMENTS through multiple stories (some that are still in evolution today as the work continues to circulate and to be read) remains complex. After the passage above, my paper described the object of the book as follows:

TESTAMENTS is the full text of a Revised King James New Testament with additional verses by many authors interspersed throughout. The new decimalised verses are interjected in bold type, accompanied by biographical footnotes to locate each author. The verses in bold type above are Jessica’s words. From the “Preface” and “Index of Contributors,” the reader can infer that Jessica is one of fifty-four “women of different faiths, cultural backgrounds and sexual persuasions” who were interviewed and later cited within TESTAMENTS by the book’s interviewer-editor-producer, Julie Fiala.

The essay then proceeds to close-read the content, editorial, pronouns, vocabulary and language choices – both inclusions and deliberate omissions – in the “Preface,” in order to probe
fundamental questions about representational politics, such as who can speak for whom and when. Through this process of self-reflexion, ethical questions emerge, for example: Why has the author-editor, or why have I, omitted (negated) a discussion of my own privilege and representational authority. What are some pitfalls of representation? How is representation always partial? What are some of the hazards of self-critical writing?

Moving away from the bookwork as an object, in a second instance, I was interested in the type of knowledge-insights that could be gained from a certain privileged proximity to the “dialogical” processes of production. The essay maintains,

As I remember, particular dialogical strategies were employed through the process of TESTAMENTS to create a platform for representation based on consensual respect and to increase my understanding of the women and their interview statements. These strategies certainly complicate the ethical dimensions of the artwork by exemplifying my intention to represent them appropriately and accurately, which was also an attempt to empathise with their views and concerns.

This explanation is followed by a detailed description of the dialogical methods employed to bridge difference through a conversational approach, attitude and aesthetic that centres on empathy, speaking and listening. Citing at length from the transcript of one of the interviews, which is published only partially in the bookwork itself, the essay shows how reconsidering the actual speech (and listening) acts of TESTAMENTS leaves us with unique insights into the processes of production for dialogical artwork.

At this point, I would like to consider more closely the listening in TESTAMENTS by developing an analysis of my interview with Pamela. This interview was different from many others because the power imbalance was not in my favour. It does not prove my skills as a practised listener, but to the contrary, this example illustrates some of the challenges that I faced in relation to listening to others in this project. Listening here was a test-of-self; my beliefs and the project bias were being challenged to
such a degree that my aptitude for interview questioning and my conversational skills were breaking down. Despite good intentions, this analysis will reveal ineffectual moments of ‘listening’ and its complexities.

[...]

When Fiala asked Pamela for her opinion on the “forbidden subject of women’s ordination in the priesthood,” she explained, despite “an element of unfairness . . . I work within the structure that there is, within the hierarchy of the Catholic Church” [interview transcript cited]. Moving the conversation to the issue of priests’ right to marry, Pamela interrupted the start of my next question with the following statement, delivered with absolute poignancy:

I do want to add though that I do believe in being obedient to the Magisterium of the Church. So I think that obedience is an extremely important aspect now. I never believed it when I was younger. I was quite disobedient and it’s as I’m getting older that I see the spiritual value of obedience to a higher spiritual authority: such as the priest, the bishop and the pope. And when you read somebody like the mystic Teresa of Avila, she talks about the absolute necessity for holiness of being obedient to one’s superiors on every plane not just on the spiritual plane – beginning with your parents and so on and so forth, your boss, whatever. [Interview transcript cited]

Stumbling over her words and struggling to respond, Fiala concurred, ‘Because for me the notion of, like, I agree with you completely about the notion of obedience but I have a lot of trouble with the hierarchy that establishes itself because, to me, it’s a very [sighs] heterosexist hierarchy’” [interview transcript cited]. This asymmetrical dialogue consisted of long stretches of speech by Pamela, who occupied most of the conversational floor, interrupted by Fiala’s short interjections along the lines of ‘I agree with you but.’ Listening again to the interview now, I feel that these ‘buts’ were attempts on my part to turn the conversation towards a different issue in self-interest, such as the issue of heterosexism, which was important to my criticism of the New Testament at the time.147

As opposed to guiding the interview process through my questions, in this instance Pamela was guiding the process through her experienced tongue and through the strength of her conviction in particular beliefs. My following her conversational
drift required what Meban [2004] has explained as a certain “self-censorship.” Pamela’s force of will may have unintentionally imposed a suppression of my self-interest and a subservient listening. This ‘listening’ was as much the result of the energy and knowledge communicated through her speech act as it was the result of my own determination to listen. Through this listening, I was working to identify with Pamela, but having great difficulty. This becomes obvious when considering the marked hesitation and stagger of my speech, as well as the general inarticulateness heard on the audio interview tapes and discernable from the transcript.

Pamela was adamant that biblical women were not “as marginalised as our 20th/21st century women believe they are,” a citation that Fiala chose not to include in TESTAMENTS, although, from the interview transcript, it is noteworthy that Pamela repeats variations on this statement three times during the interview [interview transcript cited]. The fact that this statement was not included, absented instead with an ellipse […] in a longer citation [interview transcript and TESTAMENTS cited], alters the intended meaning of her speech and reveals that, in this case, the editing was not true to the interviewee. In fact, none of the interview text quoted above is featured in the pages of TESTAMENTS, where Pamela is cited in three separate instances. In a metaphorical sense, such editing cannot be deemed to constitute effective or even ethically-responsible listening.

This example of strategic editing is consistent with my desire to bolster a particular sentiment about the exclusion of women in relation to New Testament scripture. The absenting of statements (like Pamela’s) that I deemed contra to the initial bias of my investigation and therefore problematic, makes clear that I manipulated the words of particular interviewees to speak about myself through them. Rather than representing their genuine opinions, such editing resulted in a negation of some of the women, which, ironically, continued to exclude their concerns from the New Testament.

This self-reflexion highlights how the ethics of (mis)representation are bound to practices of listening, including those of being deaf to. How to value and honour the Other is always in tension with how to value and honour the Self. Getting it “right” or “wrong” is an ethical
problem-space bound by the relations of power that pre-exist and develop through situations of communication that are co-created.

I do not feel that this self-reflexion upon the interview and the winding and layered situations that led to it require any further explanation. However, I will add in the context of this dissertation that Pamela passed away in 2005 following her battle with breast cancer. In 2009 upon writing the “Testing Testament” essay, perhaps I did not have the courage to make this known because I felt differently about what kinds of details/stories we should reveal in the name of community-centred art. At this point in my artistic and research praxes, I do think that if we are to entertain the idea of a “peoples’ praxis,” we must do this in all the ways that we can. In this instance, this means honouring the life and death of an important co-creator, Pamela, whose family is still part of my parents’ religious life.

In summary, it is this kind of raw (uncomfortable) frankness, which I heard in Claudine Cotton’s artist’s talk and which resonates through Doyon’s article citing Sylvie Cotton, that bears testimony to processes of self-questioning and self-regulation that make-up community-centred art. These are, for the most part, self-imposed questions that artists ask of themselves. These questions emerge from working alongside a community of self-critical practitioners who are concerned for the wellbeing of others as they struggle to establish themselves as professional artists working at the intersections of art and community.

4.4.3 Red Coat Trail

The multi-stranded, community-centred art project Red Coat Trail (RCT) is a second case study arising from my co-creative practice. The analysis below helps us maintain the focus of ethics, while delving more into themes such as listening and initiating other discussions emerging from
the processes of the artwork. In so doing, I do acknowledge that close attention to ethics can minimise other important aspects of RCT.

Project Summary

Started in 2004, RCT is the umbrella title for a generative project that developed through several threads of cultural production, interwoven through serendipity and co-creativity. The project began with the design of an advertisement (Figure 3) that circulated in the form of a screensaver displayed on computers at communal workrooms used by students throughout the University of Leeds (UK), where I was a student beginning a Master of Arts degree in Fine Art. Boldly, the advert beckoned: “Red Coat Trail: Female performance artist seeks a long red winter coat in exchange for almost anything – home-cooked meals, hair colouring, French conversation lessons, art classes, her own coat or something else.” This was followed by my email address.
As a newcomer to Leeds, the colour red would become a visual sign marking my presence and movements (displacements and displaced-ness) within a geographically circumscribed, unfamiliar ground that would become a “community of belonging” defined through my social relations (determined by habitual, economic, artistic and durational...
relationships) with people in place. The most significant of these relationships, which sustains the project into the present, is that developed with Tamsin Macdonald. I met the then incoming student of Cultural Studies in November of 2004. Sparked by the tremendous, unforeseen response to the screensaver advert, I was inspired to host a Red Coat Dinner Party inviting strangers to share a meal and to vote for the best fitting coat. Our relationship would commence when Tamsin and I exchanged coats.149

In the same timeframe, I developed and published a diagrammatic mapping system, entitled Map of You & Me, as a practical tool for “thinking critically about person-to-person exchanges” (Fiala 2004). Produced as a multiple, this artwork encloses four graphs, a thesaurus and an assessment grid, which were designed to be put to practice – consulted, annotated, amended and filled-out – in order to describe our social interactions by quantitative and qualitative measurement. I would “test” this system myself during ritualistic daily “walking performances” (déambulations) within the Hyde Park area of Leeds, clad with the newly acquired red coat.

From the 21st of February to the 4th of May, 2005, I attempted to perform the same, scripted, morning walk each weekday. I followed the same trail, stopping at regular spots (a sandwich/coffee shop, a bakery, a bus stop), while wearing the red coat to establish a presence in place through visual continuity and utilising the map as a performance prop to provide vocabulary and structure to the process of taking written fieldnotes. This trail was meant to be the “constant” in what artist Allan Kaprow (1993) might refer to as a “lifelike art” experiment.150 My encounters with people during the walks and at these locations – some routinely, some once – became the interpersonal data or evidence chronicled on the map. I also recorded notes about these exchanges verbally using a dictaphone and collected ephemera to document my presence in time/place.151
This daily ritual was complicated by a number of unexpected opportunities, which opened the work into more collaborative dimensions. This included a durational process of parallel letter writing undertaken with Tamsin; and a (single-copy) bookwork produced from documentation by my parents who had followed my trail on three mornings during a visit from Canada in April. My letters to Tamsin were posted to her every morning at a post-box located on the trail, which was one of the scored gestures in the walking performance. As such, the letters, as largely textual, material traces that have been exhibited in their original/unedited form for others to handle and read, make for an uncomfortable blurring of private/public boundaries.

**Conversation as Method of Ethical Research**

What is a listening-researcher? What kinds of responsibilities or ethics become apparent, and what kinds of questions surface when we write today about a past project that had problem-solved certain ethical issues that make sense contextually in another time and place? How does the permissibility of disclosing/circulating/revisiting material and conceptual traces pertaining to a project change over time? These questions are ethical ones that are germane to RCT as I re-explored it in retrospect with Tamsin in 2011 and revisit the project again within this dissertation.

Although RCT was not subject to a formal ethics review at the time of the making of the art, as it should be clear the project did involve myself and other “human subjects” occupying different roles. The core of the analysis below is excerpted from a recorded conversation rather than an interview. The method and approach to research that centred on conversation (with past participants in art projects that I had initiated in the past) was ethics reviewed. Ethics clearance was granted by the General Research Ethics Board (GREB), at arm’s-length from Queen’s University, as part of my doctoral fieldwork.
I ground this reconsideration of RCT – many years after its inception – on a structured and recorded conversation that I organised with Tamsin at her home in 2011. Despite her soft-spoken disposition, Tamsin had seemed comfortable during the co-creation of RCT, but nonetheless hesitated to entertain certain questions and to speak on particular issues during our conversation on the evening of the 4th of October of 2011. An immediate question that can therefore be asked is, can we engage in more evolved ethical relationships that better capture how we change over time (artistically, personally, individually, communally)? The conversation itself pivoted around certain themes, which I had suggested: risk, commitment, letter writing as listening, gifting, and rhythm and continuity of exchange. As I discuss below, Tamsin seemed to sidestep the opportunity to add to this roster of themes. Nonetheless, by opting for a conversational modality, as opposed to a more conventional and closed interview format, at the time, I sought to test whether or not a more symmetrical dialogue could be developed. This process of co-listening, I had envisioned, would more closely parallel the art of the letter-writing process that we had undergone in 2005. I hoped that the conversational method would encourage a shared onus over the direction of the inquiry.154

This mutually agreed-upon conversation was at the same time a method of co-creating a living memory of the project, and to verify what details might be re-membered through the “memory screen” (Jones 1997, 12) and re-presented ethically years later for the purposes of the discussion here. Tamsin had been the main interlocutor for RCT. In the instances where she showed unease with particular details or topics raised by the conversation, I have opted to omit this material from the retelling and analysis, despite the fact that the information had now revealed itself as newly questionable. Of a private nature, it had initially been featured with permission in public presentations and exhibitions of RCT. I understood this editorial role as part
of my obligation to “‘listen’ carefully to the data” (Van Den Hoonoord 2012, 177), and more importantly, to the person and relationship informing that data, a relationship that continues to this day. Anecdotally, I would like to mention that in 2014 Tamsin sent me a photograph depicting her immediate office environment. On the partitions were documentary traces and images from my community-centred art projects in Leeds produced a decade earlier. Surrounded by them, I was moved by her comment that they were inspiring her community art activism today. This kind of relationship building through co-creativity is a durational process that requires sensitivity, flexibility and openness to changing positions, permissions, definitions and terms of engagement. This points to the shifting “private” and “public” charge of traces of RCT.

With the self-reflexive analysis presented below, I strive to achieve four objectives: first, to discuss some of the methods and challenges of reciprocal listening that were part of our process of exchange; second, to reveal particular ethical questions and approaches to this artmaking; third, realising that an emphasis on “listening” and “ethics” disguises other important aspects of the work, I introduce other proximal and intersectional concepts that emerged through the conversation; and fourth, to hint at the importance of a peoples’ praxes as a way not only to co-create art but also research insights. I develop these objectives by means of a multi-page table, excerpted below (Table 1), which frames and analyses the conversation, using direct quotations, paraphrased statements and self-reflexions, framed by questions. These questions have been categorised in the headers on the table. Extra-linguistic information and digressions, where they appear, have been bracketed. Table entries are presented in chronological order from left to right then down, in order to mirror the development of the conversation itself. The table is spliced with selected passages foregrounded between rows. Here are the first two-and-a-half pages of the thirteen-page table.
I intended this [the conversation format] as an ethical approach that would allow for symmetrical conversation, where ethical meant equal opportunity to co-creatively determine the direction of conversation. Tamsin assumes agency differently from within my themes, indicated by, “Can I see what I think of as the conversation goes on; I couldn’t really think of anything but I didn’t really give it a great deal of thought.”

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<th>What were my “ethical” processes?</th>
<th>What can I admit to retrospectively?</th>
<th>What were the processes of listening?</th>
<th>What other aspects are revealed by RCT?</th>
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<td>In terms of the conversation, asking Tamsin (T) if she had other themes to add to the provisional list I provided [whispering]: “Can you think of anything else,” [as if not to scare away or intimidate] to which T answered: Can I see what I think of as the conversation goes on; I couldn’t really think of anything but I didn’t really give it a great deal of thought. Julie (J) [exclaims]: It’s fine! T: I just kinda was waiting to see you and see what happens. So would you like me to ask you about specific risks that I thought from the project, and we’re specifically talking about the Red Coat Trail project? I intended this as an ethical approach that would allow for symmetrical conversation, where ethical meant equal opportunity to co-creatively determine the direction of conversation. T assumes agency differently from within my themes.</td>
<td>This was an attempt to transfer agency – but what if this is not a desired conversational role. T reminds me of the importance of being-with and responding, which was key to the initial process of exchange, of attentiveness through presence as it unfolds rather than imposing a framework for a fixed conversation. This reminds me of the importance of dialogue as communication with no predetermined purpose or fixed direction, following physicist David Bohm (1996). I have made the assumption that what is co-created is ethical is not necessarily shared with T. A first ideal definition of what is ethical is revealed.</td>
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T asks about any risks connected to the advert. J: “vulnerability.” J: “Did that intrigue you?” What is ethical is about opening the possibility for decision-making to lie with the other in order to achieve collaboration. For whom do these ethics count? The screen-saver advert that read: “Female performance artist seeks a long red winter coat in exchange for almost anything,” relates to a process of exchange akin to listening. T: “I didn’t even pay
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<td>attention to the fact that it was about an exchange. [...] I didn’t think about that [the exchange], but I guess that could really be leaving you open if you did kind of say, anything. What kind of stuff might people have asked for?”</td>
<td>T displays empathy towards me. This poses a challenge to Kester’s (2004) emphasis on empathy flowing the other way from the artist to the participant. T admits that she never wore the coat we exchanged at the RCDP. Ideal versus Real project. She had forgotten it.</td>
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What is ethical is about opening the possibility for decision-making to lie with the other in order to achieve collaboration. For whom do these ethics count?

T ask me, what other risks?
T: “I always thought about… I remember when you were saying about when you had interactions with certain people and if it was sort of betraying their trust if they knew that what you were doing was anything other than how it seemed on the surface. You were going about your daily business, it happened to be at exactly the same time everyday and I know that when you kind of disclosed it to Sharon in Sharon’s Den she was quite confused by it and maybe betrayed, I don’t know?”

J: “I think definitely, there is some kind of feeling like you’re observing people quite closely and you’re taking notes and you’re kind of using their life as raw material to create an artwork or to experience art or experience life more fully. I guess we do that all the time in a way that we take in our environment and we feel more alive when we do that. But, I think, because I was chronicling it and using it as

There are ethical issues linked to the transparency of interaction and to deception. RCT could also be deemed to present a threat to the privacy of those who are being surreptitiously co-opted into the processes of the artwork.
### Table: Ethical Processes and Retrospective Admissions

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<td>research, I felt that maybe is wasn’t a risk so much as I felt that it was maybe unethical to some extent. Like they weren’t able to consent in the process. They were just part of that process. [...] This blurring between what counts as research and what counts as daily life. There was a risk in a way because I felt that they were observing me as much as I was observing them. So they were probably wondering, who is this person? And I guess there was that fear that they would discover or they would ask me, ‘Why do you come here?’” Anecdote about Mrs. Murton querying the purchase of a coffee elsewhere.</td>
<td>I was worried about their inability to consent to participation.</td>
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<td>T: “And she had been watching you?” J: “Her watching me was completely acceptable but my watching her – I was questioning it for myself.”</td>
<td>This incites ethical questions pertaining to observational research? What are the ethics of “covert observation” (Bulmer 1982)?</td>
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Describing the scored routine for RCT, Tamsin recalled,

> You were going about your daily business, it happened to be at exactly the same time everyday and I know that when you kind of disclosed it to Sharon in Sharon’s Den she was quite confused by it and maybe betrayed, I don’t know?”

Reflecting on this, I later admitted,

> There are ethical issues linked to the transparency of interaction and to deception. RCT could also be deemed to present a threat to the privacy of those who are being surreptitiously co-opted into the processes of the artwork.

Similar to the challenges surrounding the testing testaments described in a previous section, tensions remain obvious in this tabled analysis, for instance, that between “third” and “first” person accounts. Always, it is a challenge to re-present these stories in ways that are ethically-
mindful because what counts as “ethical” for any one individual (or community) can change over time, as I have attempted to discuss.

4.5 Research Ethics and Where We Meet: The Artist-Researcher

4.5.1 Fieldwork Methods and Geo-political “Locations”

From October 2010 to October 2011, my fieldwork research was hosted by Trinity College Dublin’s School of Ecumenics in Belfast. This enabled me to learn from the wealth of experience of community-centred arts in the north of Ireland through the lens of Trinity’s scholarship and expertise in the area of conflict resolution.158 My artistic and research praxes at the intersection of Irish politics continues into the present, as do the co-creative and site-specific praxes developed conjointly with particular individuals and communities residing primarily in Belfast.

In order to gather “evidence” during my involvement in situations of community-centred art, I first wrote through on-the-spot fieldnotes at the site and in the moment of fieldwork. Second, as soon as possible, I clarified these fieldnotes through reflexive journaling. Third, both the fieldnotes and journal entries were annotated according to set analytical codes and content categories. Fourth, in December 2011, away from Belfast in Québec City, I selected material from this evidence pool, showing variations from that originally proposed, on the occasion of renewing my ethics clearance with GREB. These selections became the basis of material that I presented at two conferences in 2012, where I initially considered the question of ethics unpacked below.159 The fieldwork evidence, from a social sciences and qualitative perspective, is therefore grounded in site(s) of production and is generative. Fifth, in May 2012, I returned to Belfast, which allowed for some of the more contentious material to be verified and amended by the co-creators of the art and research.
After my acclimatisation and preliminary research into the pre-post conflict context of Belfast, I identified a community project that excited me because of their recent experiences exploring questions of the contentious “peace walls” using visual art through work with contemporary artists. Predominantly located in the North of the city, peoples and lands are split territorially by physical barriers known as “peace walls” or “peace lines,” and, in some cases, “interface barriers” (or simply “interfaces”). For the most part, these are walls at varying heights with or without gates at access points to allow or disallow entry by controlling the flow of (human and vehicle) traffic.¹⁶⁰

Hosted by the North Belfast Interface Network (NBIN), the art project that interested me was aptly entitled Draw Down the Walls. They worked closely with a number of community organisations in North Belfast who were politically and geographically located on either side of the Catholic/Nationalist/Republican-Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist divide. I first approached NBIN to discuss if and how we might establish a working relationship to further their objectives. Yet I had conceived a specific project that would have involved two choirs singing in harmony on either side of a peace wall. This never happened. Although politically and conceptually aligned, the motivations and creative approach had not been generated from within the community itself. This quickly revealed itself as a problem for them as well as for me.

I wanted to let go of a directive role in order to take on a more attentive, listening role. This declaration immediately sets up a binary between directive processes and listening processes, as if they were on opposite sides of a spectrum of practices, where directive ones are ethically-suspicious and listening ones are ethically-responsible. This is one of the problem-spaces of this artistic research that remains unresolved because lived practice develops in a grey

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zone where there is a push and pull between artistic control and co-creative, consensual community work.

For the community organisations, this would be an art project; for me, it would constitute research-creation. Starting in January 2011 until October 2011, this work was carried out as part of an ex-prisoners’ group based in North Belfast, which had just begun a project under the auspices of Draw Down the Walls (DDTWs). When I returned in May 2012, our work continued through a community performance. Called Tar Isteach, this was an Irish Republican, ex-prisoners’ group that welcomed all people. The organisation worked at local and international levels across the sectarian divide far beyond its premises in Belfast, including helping Irish expatriates in the United States.

Throughout this dissertation, I have been careful, as possible, to state “the north of Ireland,” as opposed to the U.K.’s nation-state place-name, “Northern Ireland.” With each iteration, this intends to remind readers of my alliance with the Republican cause. Every alliance is, I believe, political and conflictual. In the Irish language, “tar isteach” means “come in.” With premises on the Antrim Road in the area called New Lodge of North Belfast, this organisation of political ex-prisoners, their families and supporters warmly welcomed me into their space, community and families – at both organisational and personal levels.

Primarily, I would be working closely with Tar Isteach’s youth group, named Tar Isteach Youth, from their office space in the attic and kitchen of a re-purposed Victorian house. Although the premises are understood as a Catholic/Nationalist/Republican (C/N/R) space, the organisation’s location on the Antrim Road, one of the major inner-city arteries to North Belfast and leading toward the more northern city of Antrim, meant that it would be more-or-less accessible to all.
4.5.2 The People in/and the Places

Accessing this group, however, was not as straightforward as simply entering in. Because of my interest in developing an art project at a physical “interface”\textsuperscript{164} between communities, Professor Ganiel suggested that I speak to a fellow graduate student, who, at the time, was a mature student doing his Master’s degree. He had tremendous experience intervening on the ground as an interface worker in the area. Through this student, I met community activist Breandán Clarke, who is employed at North Belfast Interface Network. Over many years, Clarke, who is both an artist and interface worker, had developed a good working relationship with Ruth Graham the Development Officer responsible for outreach and educational streams of the Golden Thread Gallery (GT).

GT is one of the earliest partner organisations for Draw Down the Walls (DDTWs). Founded in 1998, GT had been previously based in a disused mill in the primarily C/N/R area of North Belfast called Ardoyne, where Clarke was born and continues to reside.\textsuperscript{165} GT was deeply invested in the geo-politics in its immediate environment through its curatorial strand focused on educational and outreach activities. By twist of fate, I got to meet Ruth Graham. Clarke (who had introduced me to DDTWs) had suggested that Graham could arrange for me to gain access to their activities with Tar Isteach.

In reading this description, it should be increasingly clear for the reader that the nexus of organisations and the territorial geographies and premises involved in DDTWs are complexly connected. The task of describing these interweavings is a responsibility that I do not take lightly. It is more than a functional one for the purposes of coherence and veracity in this dissertation. Describing these connections is a process with great political implications, because, for those involved, such alliances are ideological. Some of them in particular, for example DDTWs’ more
recent work with organisations in the Lower Shankill, a primarily Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist (P/U/L) area just Northeast of the city-centre, are bridging interfaces through cross-community efforts. To articulate these alliances is both promising for a shared future and daunting because anything “cross-community” is still fraught with tensions that are somewhat impossible to fully unpack and describe. These are conscious as well as deeply systemic and psychological barriers, in addition to material and territorial ones.

Optimistically, Clarke has told me that he would like to make a clock, counting down twenty years until the peace walls come down. By imagining this countdown, is it possible to shift the collective mind-set? According to statistics gathered by NBIN, a recent billboard produced by Draw Down the Walls announces that “80% of people would be in favour of interface walls coming down, when the time is right.”

So Clarke was right that it is in fact a question of time. By engaging adults and youth from a number of areas in North Belfast (including work in Ardoyne and New Lodge, which I have experienced directly), it is clear by its title what Draw Down the Walls hopes to achieve through art and community relations work.
Figure 4: Community billboard produced by Draw Down the Walls with artist Maria McKinney, *One way in One way out* (2009); courtesy of Draw Down the Walls.

4.5.3 Research within a Divided Society

As I will extend in Chapter Five, it is always important to be mindful of the particularities of the context of research. The social scientist Dirk Schubotz’s (2005) “Beyond the Orange and the Green: The Diversification of the Qualitative Social Research Landscape in Northern Ireland” discusses some of the challenges of research in this particular divided society. He emphasises the multiplication of methods for increased *qualitative* research enabled since the Ceasefire, permitting to get beyond data and typical research foci (for example, the economical impact of the Troubles as a financial measure or the number of deaths).
Drawing primarily from interviews with professionals in the sector, Sarah Alldred’s (2003) doctoral study is a major study of community arts in Belfast, showing some of the ways that the arts have been linked to reconciliation in Northern Ireland after the Troubles. In my mind, here, it is perhaps not the interview as a qualitative methodology that is in itself novel, but rather the idea that art (and the opinions of its professionals) now mattered – that there was space for art in the processes of post-Troubles transformation.

My chosen qualitative approach to research in Belfast was to develop a generative, “action-research” pedagogy through art in a community context. By “generative,” I mean that the actual methodologies for transferring/sharing knowledge (both ways) were, as much as possible, developed organically from the relationship, skills and negotiated desires of the community, which included my own skills and desires. Ideally, I aimed to encourage a “learner-learner” relationship, rather than a student-teacher relationship.

Schubotz’s (2005) article, which I will return to briefly, is valuable for other reasons. In a section entitled, “Numbing Violence,” he writes of a threat that has, of course, very much been quieted, but a threat that I feel still has persistent effects today, both in wider society and intellectually in the minds of researchers and artists vulnerable out on the field:

The open outbreak of violence in Northern Ireland in the late 1960s and early 1970s had a particularly numbing effect on social research in Northern Ireland. The everyday military presence of the British army, curfews and paramilitary threats, the absence of democratic means of participation, the threat of falling victim to shootings or bombings—the generally very intense violence may have traumatised many social researchers and contributed to their silence. (Schubotz 2005, n.p.)

Schubotz aptly uses “their silence” as an analogy that could include not producing, not disseminating and not publishing knowledge, as if these were all matters of making noise. This particular passage – without bows, ribbons, or sugar coating – names some of the real dangers of
a not so distant “historical” reality that must be accounted for as we carry out our research in the north of Ireland and continue to make art there into the present. Upon reading it for the first time, this passage was a call to be cautious in my research.

The sociological perspective of Andrew Finlay (1999, 2001) is also useful in providing a specifically Northern Irish take on the challenges of research within divided societies. In “‘Whatever You Say Say Nothing’: An Ethnographic Encounter in Northern Ireland and its Sequel,” Finley (1999) reflects back on a past experience of interview-based fieldwork. Following the theories of Rosemary Harris and Frank Burton, Finley explains the culturally-embedded praxes of “Telling” – as in “to ‘tell’ whether the strangers we encounter are Catholic or Protestant” – that is, without necessarily asking and saying (ibid., 1.1-1.12). Finlay’s (ibid.) article is a candid admission of how his own identity, as a person of Protestant background, as well as that of his interviewee as Catholic, have mutually taught them “to tell” one another apart, despite the secular researcher’s desired neutrality.167

For example, in Belfast, where one lives (north, south, east or west, and even more so the streets) will usually be an indicator of one’s socio-religious “community” because of the maintenance of long histories of segregated living. However, there are also cultural myths (kicking the balls with either the left or the right foot), and forms of racist profiling (the measurement of the space between the eyes) that are believed by some people to serve, rightly or wrongly, to “tell” of this difference. I also learnt a tremendous amount about the implications and cautions of research in a divided society through Trinity College and the direct advice of my host supervisor Professor Gladys Ganiel and their graduate programme in the area of studies of conflict.168
I would like to add that, as a relative “outsider,” I was not immune to the type of systemic classification of others discussed by Finlay. Working closely with Irish C/N/R community, and with artist-colleagues primarily on this side of the fences, I quickly learned some of their ways of telling and began to apply them in my social environment and day-to-day living. Quickly too, I felt myself transitioning into an “insider” but at the same time working outwards towards the inside. More than my academic partnership with Trinity College, this privileged transitioning was enabled through my affiliation with organisations such as N BIN and Tar Isteach. (As I have already stated, these organisations were heavily Irish and C/N/R.) Through proximity, I adopted some of their ways of knowing and developed empathy for their historical and on-going challenges. (Later in this dissertation I will relate this kind of crossing-over to processes of co-creativity.)

Therefore, even as a foreigner, I was developing preferences and strong local affiliations. Admittedly, my research could no longer be deemed “neutral.” I am reminded that it is often who you know that matters and informs you as much as what you know. It most definitely shaped me personally and the research I present here. My social location and social status in the north of Ireland were complicated by my association with the primarily Protestant tutelage of Belfast’s Trinity College. The fact that I was raised Catholic (although it seemed crucial for me in my decision to work with other Catholics because I assumed it would legitimize my alliance) did not seem relevant to the communities in which I worked. I was deemed external to the historical-religious aspects of the debate. Nevertheless, the fact that I identified as French-Canadian, rather than Canadian, would reveal itself as a point of intersection. Considering C/N/R efforts to revive their indigenous Irish Gaelic language, maintaining a Francophone linguistic and cultural identity in primarily Anglophone Canada, wherein I had spent the first twenty-five years of my life, was
an on-going struggle to which they seemed to relate. This struggle for cultural sovereignty became a point of shared identification and intersection despite our different histories, traditions, and presents.

My function as an artist-researcher gave leverage and flexibility to my roles and the social locations others perceived me to occupy. Fluidly, this bifurcated function allowed me to transgress the limits of a detached researcher-role that is based on the observation of subjects from an “objective” distance. I believe that it was my status as their (community) “artist” that allowed this transgression, because the status and roles of the artist and the possibilities for working in-community are not as historically fixed considering how the north of Ireland was been exhaustively scrutinised by researchers.\(^{169}\) It would be easy to argue that it is the lack of fixity and definition of the status and role for the artist (to return to the definitional debates discussed in Chapter Two) that opened me up to a panoply of unorthodox ways of being and making together through socially-engaged, community-centred art.

Most of all perhaps, those I worked with seemed to be interested in where I lived within the city. When I first moved to Belfast, without fully understanding the tensions, I rented a house on a Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist street neighbouring the Catholic community of Ardoyne.\(^{170}\) This was considered to be a highly patch-worked area of the city with multiple physical divisions at some of the interfaces between working-class communities.\(^{171}\) A feeling of isolation and the lack of local amenities brought me to move to the South side of the city. I was then living in a more prosperous “neutral” and gentrified area with a more transient population of students from Queen’s University (Belfast) and increased services and amenities.\(^{172}\) In recent years, South Belfast has gained a more varied immigrant, rather than strictly Irish, population, including a significant Chinese community, but interestingly, it is still imagined to be primarily P/U/L
because of the proximity of Sandy Hill, which has been historically Loyalist. The main point I want to convey here is that my moving from the North to the South of the city did change perceptions about who I was and it did affect the fieldwork I could do and with whom.\textsuperscript{173}

4.6 Policies of Ethics Clearance: General Remarks

Because this community-centred art project was deemed to be doctoral “research” with “human subjects” it was subject to external processes of ethics review. As I explain below, if I had stressed that it was “art,” perhaps I could have circumvented this obligation; however, as I placed the emphasis on “community-centredness,” I personally felt that it should be ethics reviewed.

Under this section, I attempt to discuss some of the limits of the ethics policy administered by Research Ethics Boards (known as GREBs, for General Research Ethics Board, or just REBs) by weighing the recommended procedure against the demands of the actual, “situated” research.\textsuperscript{174} Details from my particular approach to fieldwork are represented here with some preliminary analysis of the challenges and complexities of research within divided societies, as I also integrate particular considerations of social location.

Primarily concerned with empirical research, the Tri-Council Policy states very little about artistic forms of research (which could fall under various monikers such as “arts praxis,” “arts-based research,” “practiced-based research” or, in French, \textit{recherche-création}), and nothing about community-centred art or variations of community arts.\textsuperscript{175} What it means to “participate” in a process of creation (“creative practice activities”) \textit{does not} need to be defined by GREB, while what it means to participate in research \textit{does} (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada 2010). By this understanding, it would seem that the policy is
inadequate if we are to reconcile creative activities, such as art, with research. What does this mean for a community-centred art premised on human relationships and questions of ethics?

In the case of my application for ethics clearance to GREBs,\textsuperscript{176} “participation” was able to account for the (yet undetermined) creative activities that could not be described at the time of seeking GREB clearance, specifically the art-based action research, and for the shifting roles that I would occupy as an artist-researcher. For GREB in Canada, artistic freedom is conceptualised differently than the academic freedom of the researcher. Article 2.6 of the \textit{Tri-Council Policy Statement} states the following about “creative practice activities”:

\begin{quote}
Creative practice activities […] do not require REB review. However, research that employs creative practice to obtain responses from participants that will be analyzed to answer a research question is subject to REB review. (Ibid.)
\end{quote}

By this definition, then, it would seem that “creative practice” in itself is understood as a set of activities – and not as “research” in and of itself. Also, although I circumscribe “art” within what I understand as the wider parameters of “creative practice activities,” the policy itself does not account expressly for art. Because of this, it cannot account for the challenges that art poses to traditional academic research nor the changing questions and definitions of what is art, which affect ethical questions and possibilities.

In recent years, a limited number of discussions and critiques have been extended by scholars unhappy with the imposition of policies and mechanisms of academic regulation. The concept of the “ethics drift” noted by Magda Lewis (2008, 684; citing a Government of Canada document of 2004) in “New Strategies of Control: Academic Freedom and Research Ethics Boards,” describes the over-extension of the power and authority of REBs beyond their jurisdiction. Interestingly, Lewis (2008) convincingly argues that, without a clear definition of “human subjects,” this push to deal with ethics can erode academic freedom and control critical
scholarship achieved by academics variously engaged with “human contexts” that does not fall under the designation of “empirical research using humans.” An interesting parallel might be drawn here with the “ethical turn” explained by art theorist Claire Bishop (2009, 2012) in relation to socially-engaged art over the last decade.

Moreover, writing in the area of nursing ethics from Norway, Truls Juritzen, Harold Grimn and Kristen Heggen (2011, 640) have written about the importance of “[p]rotecting vulnerable research participants,” remarking that, “The ethical standards and assessments of the researchers are not regulated as sufficient to protect individuals against abuse […].” What seems significant here is that regulation of standards of ethics should come from an external regulator – i.e. not from the self-reflexivity of the researcher or the community itself.

Overall, two key points strike me about these types of critiques of REB policy and protocols. Firstly, although they are concerned with human “ethics,” they neither seem to be sufficiently exploring what counts as “ethical” (which is an ideological and social distinction that does change depending on whose ethics we are dealing with), nor the challenges of setting ethical parameters, if we consider the wider implications of difference at many interrelated levels of research methods, contexts, cultures, genders, races, generations.

The second, more crucial point for us here in relation to community-centred art is that any questions relating to “creative practice activities” and the limits of REBs, although they are occurring, as this research testifies, are not yet appearing and retrievable as published discourse. Nevertheless, there are a few mentions of art and noteworthy analysis, although sparse. For example, writing from Concordia University in Montréal, Owen Chapman and Kim Sawchuk (2012) have considered the recent acceptance in academia of strands of “research-creation” (see note 175 on page 227 of this study). Will C. Van Den Hoonard’s (2011) study published by
the University of Toronto, *The Seduction of Ethics: Transforming the Social Sciences*, does include one mention of “artists,” according to the book’s index:

‘[…] As the stories [of researcher experiences] increase, the sense of frustration, anxiety, and anger appears to increase correspondingly’ (Lincoln and Tierney, 2004: 221). [New paragraph] Some have already reported on the fundamental shifts in the social sciences accompanying these dissatisfactions. Social research, according to journalists, undercover police, or security personnel (Dingwall, 2008: 10). *Some anthropologists are moving to the military (e.g., ‘Human Terrain System’ research in Iraq) (Glen, 2007), corporations, or into the world of artists where there is no requirement for research-ethics review (E28-M, Fieldnotes: 167). (Van Den Hoonaard’s 2011, 7; emphasis added)*

Here, it is curious to me that the author uses “or” instead of “and” as if to suggest that research on the military and corporations shares more similarities than differences with “the world of artists.” Also, it would seem erroneous that the study of artists is recognised as the domain of anthropologists, not that of artists themselves or art historians for that matter. Further, I do nonetheless note the author’s use of the words “frustration, anxiety, and anger” in relation to the demands of formal ethics review, which is consistent with the lingering feelings that followed me throughout my fieldwork.

All in all, it strikes me that it is the relative newness of research-creation of different varieties within universities (such as Concordia University, Université du Québec à Montreal or University of Western Ontario, Canadian universities which offer Doctoral programmes in art practice and acknowledge the importance of research-creation), not the newness of this art practice, or art as research – that could explain this seeming scarcity of critique.
4.7 Some Preliminary Challenges of the Ethics Reviews

I would like to return to my fieldwork in Belfast, which I introduced under section 4.5, in order to discuss some of the features and challenges relating to my particular approach to the demands of formal ethics clearance. I will present some of the discrepancies between the actual research and that originally proposed for ethics clearance in relation to questions of ethics and the limits of ethical protocols such as those enforced by GREB. Over time, I have come to think of these as changes that are useful in describing and shaping what I hope to eventually call “an ethical research methodology.” It should be noted that these challenges are specific to my experience, although I hope that they are relatable to the experiences of other researchers and artists working in-community within and beyond areas of artistic research.

A first challenge is that “ethics” requirements were multiplied not only because of the geographical location and socio-political context of the proposed research within a divided society, but because of the supervision received from Trinity College Dublin at Belfast, who hosted and oversaw the actual fieldwork. Therefore, as well as the ethics review required by Queen’s University, the degree granting institution, a second ethics review was carried out concomitantly by Trinity College Dublin. A Committee internal to the School of Ecumenics was formed for this purpose. This review was incredibly demanding and significantly lengthened the process of the fieldwork.

A second challenge pertaining to the observer/listener fieldwork undergone with/in Tar Isteach, was the ambiguity of the term “participant-observer” dotted throughout my ethics clearance application. This, I felt, enabled me (somewhat covertly) to conduct research as “creative practice activities,” which, as I have explained, are not subjected to the same ethical scrutiny by GREB. Because of this gap, I was able to conduct a process of generative art-in-
action without naming or defining the “terms and conditions” of the actual activities themselves. These were organically decided upon, that is, internally-regulated, with and within the community group. I will indicate that GREB does have a procedure in place whereby applications can be on-goingly reassessed as necessary for continuous clearance, if necessary, as projects develop or change. However this kind of external regulation, I believe, would have regulated the “artistic” aspects of the co-creative work, which are currently not subject to GREB’s regulation. Moreover, I was anxious that it would have overemphasised the work as research instead of art. Consequently, although the “human” aspects of the research-creation were ethically reviewed, the artistic ones were not, which does in fact emphasise the divide between “research” and “art,” as well as the traditional separation of “ethics” from “aesthetics.”

A third challenge is that GREB protocol and consent forms privilege the obtaining of permissions (usually by signed consent) for the research with human subjects to take place, with less consideration of ethical issues pertaining to the analysis of the data obtained, some of which happens (or is collaboratively determined) after the periods of in-person “contact.” (Although I acknowledge the colonial resonance of the word “contact,” I do think that it speaks to real tensions of human research and to questions of what it can mean to be present to the Other of the research and to one another as a mutual process.) Moreover, these forms do not account as much for how both consent and the analysis of the evidence (or raw data), might change over time, that is, beyond REB’s formal exigencies and clearance. Nevertheless, it is this analysis, rather than the period of “contact,” which will be subject to self and community scrutiny, academic eyes/ears, and public consideration. The analysis, not the fieldwork – the embodied textured encounters with others and processes of decision-making – stands-in for the community-centred art as
research. I query whether, and if so, how much, further consent is needed. When, if ever, are we able to move forward anxiety free?

A fourth challenge – certainly the most significant in my mind – pertains to obtaining consent in the first place. This will be detailed under section 4.8.1.

### 4.8 Generative Research and Conflict

The qualitative and experiential evidence referenced within this dissertation is generative insofar that it grows in co-creative scenarios, that is, within communities, and also, in academic contexts (in universities, which are by no means, and rarely, universal). The Irish cultural critic, curator and professor, Declan McGonagle, has once powerfully asserted that art could be found even in the space of the gallery.\(^{179}\) What he meant is that the gallery is in no way the only place of art. I think that art exists well at this uncomfortable tension between the spaces and places of art and those of life.

Figure 5: Still from Roi Varra’s performance, *Artist’s Dilemma* (1997)

I appreciate this image by the performance artist Roi Varra. However, his title choice in an art-life tension is not just the artist’s prerogative. To “anchor” (Barthes 1977) in that way does limit the ways in which art can work in life and life in art, which is far beyond a dilemma proper to the artist subject. This dialectic could constitute the basis for epistemological questions, for example, How can we all speak to the very categories of art in/and life?

In effect, both compete in a divided society where everything signifies: first and last names (Irish or English), colours (green or orange), months of the year (the spring-summer parades), ways of doing and saying – so many qualifiers take on specific, deeply-rooted cultural meanings in “the north of Ireland.” Certain “unsaid”s can function as shared and unquestioned knowledge, simultaneously separating insiders (those who know) from outsiders (those who do not know). In popular history and in the collective consciousness of those living in the north of Ireland, dates like 1994 (the Ceasefire) and 1998 (the Good Friday or the Belfast Agreement, depending on which side of the socio-religious divide you are on, or find yourself on in my case), need no further explanation, and the place-name for the stoke city known as “Derry/Londonderry” always separates the Nationalists from the Unionists, and, differently, the locals from the insouciant visitors.

4.8.1 Insights and Limits of Informed Consent
One aspect that became increasingly clear in the context of research was that of structural hierarchies within the pre-existing social formations. For example, although a typical research protocol calls for obtaining parental signatures as a means to working with young people under the age of eighteen, sometimes it is not permissible or acceptable in a particular context to
approach parents directly. Through my fieldwork, I experienced circumstances where this would simply be a question of disrespect.

If I consider the specifics of my attempts to secure parental consent at Tar Isteach, we must also understand that this ex-prisoners organisation is governed by hierarchies that are linked to social histories as much as familial histories, whereby systemic and socially understood yet unspoken hierarchies exist. Therefore although it might be normal, even acceptable, in most situations to speak or seek consent directly from a parent, in this situation it was the youth worker that the parents had already bestowed with a certain authority to speak, and in this instance to sign, on their behalf.

If we understand the pre-existing hierarchy that exists in an organization like Tar Isteach, we understand that we must go through the youth worker to get to the parents. That, because the parents already trust the youth worker, because there is already a pre-established relationship of power there, it would be violating those power relationships to go straight to the parents. Perhaps this is not unlike the context of the school where the parents have bestowed some power and decision-making authority onto the teacher.

At last, I arrive at the articulation of a first, crucial change. The Youth Worker acted “in loco parentis,” by which I mean that he provided and authorised access to the field of research. I had originally planned for the young people to deliver a letter to their parents in order to secure their consent, following the young person’s assent; however, I wanted to respect the hierarchy of the organisation. To communicate to the parents/guardians, I understood that I had to communicate through him as a figure of authority and decision-making. The parents had already bestowed their trust onto him, who cared for their children on a daily basis.
Therefore, it was the Youth Worker (not the young people themselves as I had initially expected) who acted as what I will deem “the ethical-protocol mediator” between myself and the parents, which came to mean that permissions were obtained at his rhythm. This youth worker, Finbarr Kelly, has requested explicitly, that is, in conversation and duly in writing, to be named in this study. In many ways, this action research (or research “in-action” with others), as well as the art developed as an intrinsic part of it, would not have been possible without him. Kelly was, in every way, my entry and access point: not only to the young people who would co-create this experience with us, but to the familial, organisational, social-cultural and political histories implicating the immediate geopolitical spaces surrounding the premises of Tar Isteach. This included the primarily Catholic/Nationalist/Republican, inner-city communities of New Lodge and Newington, uncomfortably neighbouring the primarily Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist communities of Tiger’s Bay.

Figure 6: Peace wall dividing Alexandra Park; shows Newington/New Lodge (left) and Tiger’s Bay (right); photographs Julie Fiala.

Through numerous walks in the area with Kelly annotating this shared experience through narratives from his personal history and that of his family’s, the most familiar of these
barriers became the two gated walls dividing Halliday’s Road at Duncairn Gardens, controlling pedestrian access to Duncairn Gardens (see Figure 7), and the longer peace line dividing the majestic, yet underused Victorian Park called Alexandra Park (see Figure 6). Since the 16th of September 2011, a gate, which had mostly remained closed since the erection of the wall in 1994, had been opened for pedestrian thoroughfare at scheduled times on weekdays.

Figure 7: Gates at Duncairn Gardens; photographs Julie Fiala

Kelly openly shared his incredible “situated” knowledge, acquired through years of lived experience as a life-long resident of Newington and Newlodge. As a parent and “detached” youth worker, who works on the ground with young people – both in and out of the Tar Isteach
premises – Kelly dedicates much of his time to feeding the bodies and minds of young people in his area.

Through Kelly, I learnt how to safely navigate this complex area by foot, which was not self-evident considering the peace walls, which are far from organised grid lines on the land, as much as those “unspoken,” un-walled interfaces, or “invisible lines” between persons that know where one community starts and the other begins. Through him, I began to understand how to move through this territory by foot like a local, and, as importantly, I began to recognise the risks that I was willing to take because my life had not been shaped in the same way as his by the conflict.

Kelly had told me about incidences of violence and imprisonment overcome by his family, and about their contribution to the education of ex-prisoners and their families in their struggle for political and cultural justice. He has also verbally outlined a family tree of marriages across the religious divide, while emphasising his family’s hope for an unoccupied and free island of Ireland. It was with warmth and openness that our life stories were exchanged. His story perhaps as much as mine. Although I was the researcher, we may both have been under a respectful kind of co-present scrutiny.

4.8.2 Unsaid

There are many things that Kelly has not said explicitly. Equally, there are details that I have not bared to him, and questions that I have not asked of him. Over time, it is working together that has revealed the complexity of our mutual identities as well as, I think, our vulnerabilities. Listening for the nuances has been important too, where it would have been simpler here to narrow identities to ideological and cultural types: “French Canadian” and “Irish.” This kind of
relationship building requires a patient listening, or attentiveness, to read between the lines of one another, of self and other.

Kelly’s family is well known as one that fought for the rights of Irish Republicans. This is certainly one defining aspect of his identity as I encountered him. Kelly has a great humanity. As important as his politics is a respect for education, and a desire to allow the young people of *Tar Isteach Youth* to acquire the tools (historical, familial, artistic) to express themselves freely.

We started with one question, which would summarise our intention for the young people through the project: “If you could say anything, what would you say?” (Meeting Notes, 15 February 2011).

The portrait of Finbarr Kelly presented above was written by me in the spring of 2012, taking into account editorial suggestions, omissions, and changes recommended by him during a face-to-face meeting at *Tar Isteach* in May 2012. After all, I recognised that he was the best expert on his own life. This may seem self-evident but can easily be forgotten by researchers over-zealous to draw out conclusions about the “objects” of their research, as if they were never subjects in and of themselves.

Over the months of working closely with Finbarr in 2011-2012, we had been able to practice different ways of communication. An effective way of getting his direct feedback seemed to be by my reading fieldnote excerpts and conference papers to him in person. This proved mutually beneficial because, as someone who stumbles with reading aloud, it also enabled me to practice my verbal articulation while verifying content for veracity and accuracy.

### 4.8.3 Literacy

Kelly was unapologetic about his dyslexia. It was difficult for me to ascertain the degree to which it affected him because of this lucidity and intelligence, as well as his exceptional conversational
skills. Tasks like jotting names or words on the white board were often left to the young people, and Kelly routinely and cooperatively asked for the assistance of colleagues at Tar Isteach (including myself) in completing written documents such as grant applications.

What remained unspoken was the degree to which the form of the communication was intelligible for him. For example, in late March 2011, we agreed that he would continue the workshops while I was away presenting my research in Canada and the United States during most of April. To follow up on a workshop preparation meeting that we had in Belfast (30 March 2011), as email attachments, I provided him with two text-based Workshop Plans for sessions to be led by him on 7 & 14 April 2011. I was delighted by his reply, “Be confident when speaking about the project. Show it in all its glory” (personal correspondence by email, 7 April 2011). This fuelled my passion for the project and reminded me that my speaking at the conference was appreciated. Yet, Kelly never explicitly referred to receiving or to using these documents. At the time, due to the newness of our collaboration, I was not sensitive to the fact that it was the very form of the correspondence (a document sent electronically with written instructions) that was misjudged on my part. It was due to my oversight if this information had not been relayed to the young people. In a sense, this points to the complexities of being “fully” attentive, of listening for the subtleties of our changing selves.

With time, I realised that this literacy could have been a factor impacting many aspects pertaining to written communication, from email correspondence to workshop instructions, to form filling, including the consent forms required by GREB. GREB makes accommodations for other forms of consent; however, it does not account for issues such as the pride of consenting through a signature and the fact that some people do not want special accommodation. In an ex-
prisoner community that has been historically marginalised and deprived of certain resources, would this be symptomatic of more widespread injustices that link poverty with literacy issues?

Listening for “unsaids” has been crucial. This kind of relationship-building requires a patient listening, or attentiveness, to read between the lines of one another, of self and other. As already noted, Finbarr’s family was well-known as one that fought for the rights of Irish Republicans and their implications in efforts to grant ex-prisoners with (human) rights. As friends, “we” will be, as one of the many “afterlife”(s) (Kester 2004) of this research, lifelong friends.

There are many things that Finbarr has not said: both about himself, his choices, and his interests. Similarly, there are many spoken details that I do feel obliged to omit here for different reasons that I am not always making explicit. Therefore this research can ask, How should we deal with partial truth-claims, and what might this mean for the veracity of this research?

4.9 Towards Ethical Representation

Chapter Four has deepened the investigation in Chapter Three by considering cautions relating to ethical representation, while feeling the weight of doing ethics as an artist, and as a researcher. I have shown ways that questions of ethics and representational politics are linked to particular methods that exercise particular attitudes to the production of knowledge as art and knowledge as research. These ways of making, thinking and writing help us to describe and document community-centred art in ethically-mindful ways that might be conceptualised in terms of the following framework:

(1) the autoethnographic,

(2) the anecdotal,
(3) the self-reflexive (artist and community),

(4) the functional (internal and external processes of regulation).

To arrive at this operational framework, I have described, with varying degrees of detail, six examples of community-centred art that ground (theoretical) ethics in practice. In order, these were the cases of Jay Koh, Claudine Cotton, and Sylvie Cotton, and three examples from my practice, the artworks entitled TESTAMENTS, Red Coat Trail and Where We Meet. The methods described in this chapter pertain as much to writing, that is, to telling our stories, as they do to making our stories through art and its analysis, including scrutinising the social relations at play.

I have myself attempted to unravel a particular story that pertains to the formulation of knowledge as academic inquiry. Therefore, when describing instances relating to situations of community-centred art, I have been restricted by the format and set criteria of the doctoral dissertation. It is a particular site of knowledge-production with its own demands: some formal, some procedural, and many systemic ethical ones. What counts as knowledge for whom? Nonetheless, I have attempted to convey that knowledge situated within the lived experiences of co-creative, cultural production, including, as we know, their integrated social relations, enables us to unpack questions of ethics in textured ways that might not otherwise be possible. At the same time, questions of listening are interwoven to ethics. Listening to whom? In reference to this chapter, we can answer, to GREB’s policies (externally-regulated), as well as to community ethics and to ethics of our selves (internally-regulated).

In closing, I would like to return to the title of this chapter – “Them, Selves: Ethics of Self, Community and Ethical Research.” We might now understand how the Othered “them,” as a position that tries to separate out the self – “them” is not “me” and it is not “us” – is complexly
rather than contradictorily part of a collective or whole. “Them” and “selves” are not only conceptually disconnectable subject-positions; on another facet of the Rubik’s cube, themselves is an intricate collective whole, where “you” and “them” are indicative of “me,” and part and parcel of the self. The Other exists within the boundaries and at the limits of the self. “Them” and “us,” therefore, might be just as fluid subject-positions as the intertwining of “artist” and “researcher.”
Chapter 5

A Typology of Listening from Community-Centred Art

5.1 Overview: Types of Listening in Context

Chapter Five serves to propose a typology explaining the ways that listening is encouraged and developed through art. By citing from the area of *art actuel*, or the art of today, the chapter asks concretely, What are some of the conditions that make listening possible?; How might we co-determine and put to practice the conditions that are appropriate for working with, and writing about, others across our differences and similarities?; How can we describe the practices of attending and being attentive to others to articulate this listening as a contextual practice that is embodied, spatial and material?

This chapter documents examples of community-centred art by describing them through their constituent practices of listening, in order to propose a distinctive praxical formulation and entrance into the topics of both “community-centred art” and “listening.” The chapter also serves to exemplify what can constitute practicing “attentiveness” by describing practice in terms of ways, or modes, of listening, where “listening” is repurposed as a holistic, multisensory praxis. The word “listening” (a noun and intransitive verb) is employed as a discursive tool to help analyse the practical work that we do with all of our senses in order to become attentive to one another, and to ourselves.

First, I will argue for the importance of grounded practices of research and artmaking as methods to understand the specificity of contexts. Second, I will construct a thematic analysis of a series of co-creative workshops in order to describe the conditions for these listening practices.
and the listening as it develops within the processes of artmaking. Third, I will attempt to foreground a typology of “modes of listening” from descriptions of community-centred art.

Discussed mainly as “grounded” knowledge sited in direct experience, the case examples are associated, where discursively useful, with the specific bodies of literature on listening considered in this dissertation, developing in the areas of art criticism, listening studies, psychology, philosophy and musicology. In selecting examples from community-centred art projects where I functioned as an artist-researcher, the chapter also hopes to show how the presumed “bias” of a self-study can reveal insights that are unique and otherwise inaccessible. Consequently, I continue to maintain that the conditions appropriate for working with others through art are by necessity “situated” conditions (Haraway 1988). Herein, the anecdotal becomes an important narrative strategy for telling/writing this story.

5.2 Listening and What Works in Contexts

The listening that we do is shaped – whether enabled, hampered or prohibited – by our work in context(s). These contexts are shifting even if they appear to be stable. This section argues that understanding the workings and stakes at play in any one context of community-centred art is crucial to its study. I document examples of “mapping” in order to consider how such interrelated approaches have been, and can be, useful methods or “ways of knowing” (Goldberger et al. 1996) context and knowing in context. In so doing, I deepen argumentation about how knowledge is situated – that is, how it is always grounded in our differing experience and screened through our memory, which is an individual as well as collective capacity for making and taking history into the present. Our methods and aptitudes for listening in context in order to understand “place” depend not only on how and what we map, but who maps with us and what experiences or memories of that place we hold collectively.
Although this dissertation only brushes the surface of theoretical literature on mapping, I would like to bring in Frederic Jameson’s (1984/1991) influential formulation of “cognitive mapping” under postmodern capitalism. Jameson convincingly accounts for the overlap of the subjective, psycho-geographic maps etched onto individual memory, with the collective, other/worldly maps that are social, cultural and geographical. From this perspective, our experience of place, both in and out of context(s), even if it is intersubjective, is always necessarily that – our own.

5.2.1 Mapping and Grounded Theory: Hazards and Possibilities

The literary specialist Robert T. Tally (1996) provides a useful overview for identifying the stakes, tensions and spaces around “cognitive mapping.”¹⁸⁷ Tally (ibid.) takes up a number of themes – the spatiality of mapping, mapping and domination, resistance through mapping, mapping as pedagogy – which are acknowledged as crucial to a thorough understanding of the praxis of mapping.

My interest in mapping through art is focussed sharply on some of the benefits of integrating mapping practices into our listening practices so as to make our pedagogy of community-centred art more critical. I embrace Robert T. Tally’s (1996, 401) argument that “a form of cartographic practice is necessary for any pedagogical, not to say political, project that attempts to deal with the present condition.”

To map can involve the representation of particular interconnections that are deemed to matter on the ground. Embroiled in relations of power, it could be argued that mapping is never neutral. Whether pedagogical or not, it is a political practice. The cartographic and territorial processes of dividing and conquering, like reserving land that was never free for taking, are acts of violence and erasure (of people, language and culture).¹⁸⁸ Minimised, moreover, are the ways
that mapping has been co-opted by those at the top of the neo-liberal pinnacle, which effectuates
groups of minorities, underclasses as well as other/ed “oppressed” peoples. It is impossible, I
think, to take colonial power – but also, let us not forget, post/colonial resistance – out of the
socio-cultural implications and real world applications of mapping, in all its cartographic, even
its “a/r/tographic” (Irwin et al. 2009) forms. Art is never the exception.

A cross-disciplinary method for interpreting the social world, characteristically,
“mapping” has been the research tool of the outside/r for understanding the inside/r. To be sure,
the phenomenon of an outsider-artist, who parachutes into a socio-cultural and territorial
“location” unknown to him or her, is subjected to questions of speaking “‘through,’ ‘with,’
‘about,’ or ‘on behalf of’ other subjects” (Kester 2004, 147). Such questions are primarily ethical
ones. These are continually relevant to my own working practice with others through art, where I
am constantly self-checking and working towards practices that are non-colonising.

It is clear that the problem-spaces of “speaking” and speech politics present both
intellectual and practical challenges. They can generate what Karl Beveridge and Carole Condé
have called “antagonisms” (interview with the author, 21 November 2011, Kingston). As artist-
activists, Beveridge and Condé have worked at the intersection of labour arts and union
organising primarily in Ontario since the mid 1970s. Relevant to the current discussion is
Beveridge’s suggestion, “You usually try to map in such a way that those antagonisms, you’ve
seen a way that you can move through those” (ibid.). For Beveridge, it would seem that “to map”
is not only a means of knowing (as in understanding), but it is also a means of pre-empting and
manoeuvring around “antagonisms,” a term that it would seem here refers to political and
ideological differences.
Representational pitfalls can result from a comprehension of the context that is partial in ways that are too significant to be ignored. Because we do not fully comprehend crucial dimensions of contexts, which are both personal and social, we are not able to identify the specific areas where our individual and collective identities intersect, where and how we glide and collide. Moreover, we may have trouble understanding the desire within community, where and when that desire is manifested, for experts or intellectuals, including artists, to speak on behalf of others in contexts where their voices are more likely to be heard. Such complicity can strengthen collaboration, making it more conceivable to ask, what fruitful alliances can be made? Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s (1988) well-known essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” is a testimony to instances where the insight of the intellectual services representational politics and resistance across educational/cultural/religious differences. It is through processes of understanding the specificity of context, and I return sharply to mapping as one important example, that we might create the right conditions for working across difference without competition or colonisation of others, and too, of the self.

Though they begin as simple word-associations, I am interested in the possible relationships between “groundwork,” “grounded knowledge,” and “grounded theory” (Sociology). When I asked what “tools” they had developed “for improving listening skills in the community arts sector,” Karl Beveridge and Carole Condé pointed to the interrelated concepts of “mapping” and “groundwork” (interview with the author, 21 November 2011, Kingston). Beveridge stressed, “you do a lot of groundwork before you actually meet with people so you have an idea of where the politics and issues exist . . . of where the issues are located,” a claim with which Condé concurs (ibid.). To this, Condé added that there are “level[s]” of negotiation
with the union, which allow to establish a supportive partnership, leading to the financing of the project in the form of grant and to relationship-building with future collaborators (ibid.).

To this discussion of “groundwork,” Beveridge adds the practice of “mapping,” stressing that it is “incredibly important” (ibid.). He goes on to describe mapping as a form of community knowing/knowledge, of understanding and relatability which allows for respect: “Knowing where people are, where they’re coming from, how they see the issues and how you’re going to relate to that […] and, you know, the other thing is, then you can also respect that” (ibid.).

In summary, by stressing the importance of the preliminary “groundwork,” and of the continued mapping of those peoples and inter/relationships constituting that grounded context, this interview leaves us with a discussion of methods that can relate back to listening. These segments from the longer interview not only suggest that listening is something that we do to/with people. Interestingly, listening is, moreover, something that can develop through a committed relationship as we study a place, circumstance, or present-history (in the sense of a present closely tied to a past).

Figure 8: Detail from *It’s Still Privileged Art* (1975) by Karl Beveridge and Carole Condé.

Available at http://condebeveridge.ca (accessed June 20, 2014)
Parenthetical to this discussion of mapping and groundwork, I would like to mention that the interview cited above spoke in ways that go far beyond Beveridge and Condé’s words. Figure 8, which is a self-portrait of the artists, might serve to illustrate this claim. (The captioned drawing appears as one of the pages within an artist’s bookwork first produced for the show at Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.) In this early autobiographical caricature, languages that are beyond spoken words alone are identifiable visibly. Through visual literacy we see and read some of the tensions of collaboration onto the artists’ bodies. Therefore, even though my analysis above is tightly bound to spoken language, as I have already mentioned, how one says what one says – how the body communicates – is also important.

Turning back to the topic of “groundwork,” according to sociologist Kathy Charmaz (2006), “grounded theory” is an organic process of qualitative analysis, where the theory is revealed and shaped by the evidence and its analysis, rather than superimposed to a research context to make it fit. Charmaz, who works in the areas of health and social psychology, explains that instead of applying “preconceived logically deduced hypotheses,” grounded theory methods generate “analytic codes and categories” that evolve from the practice of the research (Charmaz 2006, 5). Scrutiny and revisions take place continually to get it right, where getting it right signifies building theory as the basis of our ever-changing maps of self and other.

While cognisant of the trappings of power that are implicated in representational politics and ethics, I would rather choose to emphasise some of the more hopeful possibilities that can be opened through mapping by starting with the following three questions:

1. Are there practices of mapping that are not (as) colonial?
2. If so, how can we approximate these practices through art?
(3) What kinds of alliances, working relationships and creativity can help make this possible?

As I discuss below, these questions can be related back to community-centred art.

5.2.2 Mapping and Grounding Praxes of Community-Centred Art

The often literature-based exercise of doing our groundwork, like “mapping the terrain,” to echo artist Suzanne Lacy (1995), is also necessarily a praxis that at best involves fieldwork practices, which evolve through a set of contextual research methods and/or art practices. These can also serve to describe community-centred art.

Typologies of “cultural mapping” have been developed by artists – particularly those oscillating inside/outside at margins of a respective “community” – in order to capture its complexity, for instance, its territorial and psycho-geography. For example, North-55’s Testimonies of the River (2005–2007) was “[c]onceived as a process of socio-cultural mapping” by the Irish Marie Barrett at River Foyle in London/Derry, and developed from the stories of people with different investments in place at cross-border between the south and the north of Ireland, adjacent to the river (Barrett c. 2009, n.p.).

Like the collective “a/r/tographic cartography” produced in collaboration with eight families within the migrant landscape of this British Columbian city under the name of The City of Richgate (a Chinese translation for the City of Richmond; see Irwin et al. 2009), every project mentioned above involved display by public art, presenting forms of public pedagogy as well as the community pedagogy, which had been grown through community-centered art and the process of mapping itself.

These examples render more concrete what it can mean very literally to map through different artistic practices. What is at stake was identified, plotted and charted in ways that are
concrete – using objects, lines, words, images, sounds, bodies – to create tangible maps of (what) matters in common. Whilst developing community-knowledge, such processes can also highlight both the benefits and limitations of being on the outside of any one community as a cultural worker or artist (with outside expertise or expertise from the outside).

One particularly important illustration of this in the divided context(s) of the city of Belfast was developed from the year 2000, less than two years after the Good Friday or Belfast Agreement that officialised the peace process. The multi-faceted project called the ROUTES was created in collaboration with the Irish transport union (ATGWU – Amalgamated Transport & General Workers Union) and, specifically, bus workers, artists, and cultural workers, many of whom reappear elsewhere in this study. (Namely, these are artists Ursula Burke, Brian Patterson of Bbeyond, and Ruth Graham, who was the Project Coordinator for the ROUTES and is currently the Development Officer of the Golden Thread Gallery.) The ROUTES utilised the expertise of a number of people from diverse spheres of local knowledge and experience, although the project was coordinated by Littoral, the collective of Ian Hunter and Celia Larner based in Lancashire, England. On their website, they summarise the project as follows:

The ROUTES project recorded the history and experiences of the men and women employed in the region’s bus industry over the past 30 years, and gave them an opportunity to communicate their experiences and talk about their contribution to the community, using their own words and images, as part of a major public celebration of the bus workers in the North of Ireland. A team of photographers (Belfast Exposed), artists (Flaxart Studios), and film makers (Banter Productions) worked with Littoral and with the bus drivers and associated workers over two years (2000 - 2001) to develop the ROUTES project. The ROUTES documentary provides a record of the role of the Transport & General Workers Union and its members in maintaining an essential public service and community lifeline over the past 30 years of conflict in the region. The project is also an investigation of shop-floor approaches to anti-sectarianism in the workplace. (Littoral 2002)
From reading newspaper texts and images and informal conversations with Burke, Graham and Patterson about the ROUTES project, it is evident that the knowledge being produced was set deeply on the ground within local knowledges and experiences of Belfast both from within and without the community arts focus. In effect, the contents of the free newspaper of 2002, *The Busworker*, could itself be interpreted “to map” the territorial spaces and debates that configure the divided cityscape of Belfast in ways that lay bare the extensive fieldwork that grounded the project to sustain it over the years.

What I have attempted to advocate for so far in this chapter is the necessity for community-centred art to be attentive to the context of shared cultural production in order to maintain its community-centredness. This is what we could call “listening to context,” where listening to *what, how, where and under what socio-political conditions* something is said or done is significant to making sense(s).

### 5.3 Listening within the Community-Centred Art Itself: By Way of Artmaking

The discussion presented below takes us further into the social and personal body, and into the spatial and political city. Using images and anecdotal writing from the sites of the co-creative artwork itself, the analysis develops from my direct experience of community-centred artmaking. Supported heavily by documentary photographs that can double as artworks, I will endeavour for an integration of the visual and the sonorous using a format relating to the late John Berger’s (Berger et al. 1972) visual essays.

The ex-prisoners’ organisation *Tar Isteach* was an anchor point in this generative case study with many branches. The fieldwork, which I began to describe in Chapter Four, was carried out in the form of creativity workshops led by artists, cultural workers including myself. In the remainder of the chapter, examples from these workshops are intermixed with examples from my
parallel, collaborative practice in performance art. The latter practice helped me in developing a kind of “place listening” (Speight 2013) that was directly sited on the land and in the body. 

Commissioned as part of the community-relations activities of the aforementioned Draw Down the Walls (DDTWs), the first three workshops that I attended were led by Irish artist Ursula Burke. These workshops are discussed below. Associated with the activities of DDTWs, the subsequent workshops discussed were part of the programme of workshops called Where We Meet that I ran concomitantly. These workshops were led by invited guest artist Lawrence Molloy, Huron-Wendat, sociologist of art Guy Sioui Durand, and Ursula Burke, upon my invitation for them to collaborate in the workshop series. In these instances, my functions as an “artist-curatur/programmer” and “research-creation scholar” required oscillating between a semi-detached observant-listener to a participant observant-listener, where varying degrees of participation could have been noted.

All and all, these workshops enabled me to further explore a self-reflexive research practice of intentioned listening I had developed in my earlier Leeds work, Map of You & Me (Fiala 2004). As a method of information gathering, my listening – both what I listened to (selectively, intuitively and unconsciously) and how I listened (at a distance or by art in action with others) – orientates the discussion herein. And I think that it would be a mistake to conceptualise the “observer” and the “observed” as separate or self-contained subject-positions. Intentioned listening, as a practice of attentiveness, is a crossing over into the spaces of one another. Here, Lee Smith’s concept of “throu-otherness,” which means “mingled through one another” (17 May 2012, “No More Them and Us,” lecture, Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College Dublin, Belfast), posits a useful alternative to self-containment. Seeking “throu-otherness” presents a different image: that of the passage of meaning through and between us
towards a peaceful complicity that heeds, yet respects, difference in order to go beyond otherness. I think “throu-otherwise,” as an ecumenical listening ideal, allows for mutual or co-created meaning-making. The careful (full of care), self-reflexive artist-researcher attempts to move beyond the self into territories of the other, back-and-forth through difference and relatedness.

Below, in a descriptive narrative style, I attempt to relate certain ethical and aesthetic practices of collective/collaborative cultural production to a listening paradigm by documenting aspects of these workshops. This discussion also opens to the playfulness, challenges and chaos of listening.

5.3.1 Seeing/Listening: Representing the Self Representing the Other

Figure 9: Photographic series by Tar Isteach Youth from a workshop led by Ursula Burke, 1 February 2011, Tar Isteach, Belfast.
During my first workshop shadowing Ursula Burke on 1 February 2011, I did not take written fieldnotes. Doing so, I worried, could have been perceived as inappropriate and insensitive because the workshop was the initial instance of encounter with Burke, the young people and their youth worker Finbarr Kelly. This initial act of co-presence or being-with was a somewhat apprehensive observant-listening – a kind of silent “listening only listening” – to evoke the performance of 2007 by artist Paul Couillard (see page 86). This listening through presence was a quiet method of reconnaissance on the ground that would pave our future co-creative work. (I remember anxiously thinking, would they authorise my presence?) My reflection on this workshop, therefore, is based on remembering that is imperfect. It is reconstructed by reviewing residual photographs taken by the young people with Burke. Herein, these images will serve to index and re-assemble embodied, shared experiences of collective cultural production.

Upon my arrival at Tar Isteach, certain protocols of etiquette were used to make me feel more at ease; for example, prompted by Kelly, we shared tea and biscuits. This may seem like an insignificant detail; however, as a recurring ritual every time I entered in, I do think it was important in setting the conditions for a hospitable welcome. (After all, as I have already noted,
“Tar Isteach” means “come in.” Their attentiveness to me, by the intermediary of gifting and sharing food, made further listening possible.

Figure 9 and Figure 10 above show a sequence of images retained from this workshop. In each photograph, a young person is pictured using a camera to make images. An implicit, invisible eye has captured another through the camera lens in a double act of viewing. A clash of glaring flashes colliding, there is a competitive tension between “representer” and “represented.” The camera, a prosthesis that skews and directs a powerful gaze, is now caught in a ricocheting, dialogic circuit that is non-verbal. The author/image-maker/photographer is both subject and object of these images. Their portraits are mutually constructed (two for one) through simultaneous acts of representation (photographing you photographing me). The eye of the camera listens to its other as it attentively captures what it sees. This allows for synchronistically “reading self, reading others” to borrow a phrase from artists Jay Koh and Thomas O’Connor (c.2010) from their exhibition press release.

DDTWs’ mission is a pedagogical one, where the transference of skills, here photography taught by Burke, is a means of co-identification and co-representation. Burke also taught the young people to critique, curate and read their own images. This integral knowledge, including manual and analytical learning, can relate to the precepts of “cultural democracy,” where all – in this workshop young people without previous access to self-imaging in this way – can share and obtain creative skills.

Picturing the other/self is a method of reading that other/self might, where picturing/reading are always acts of representational authorship/analysis, and, in this case, co-creativity/interpretation. Through the reflexes of the finger triggering the camera, these resulting photographs might be seen to image “the active and dynamic process” of “attending” and
“responding” that Purdy (in Purdy and Borisoff 1997) defines as listening. Here, picturing and reading are interconnected practices that also help produce self and other by attesting to representation acts of cultural production.

5.3.2 Play and Spatial Politics

Such images were constructed through play by activating the young peoples’ imagination, where acts of play transformed the function ascribed to their physical environment, wherein objects quickly came to signify quite differently. Referencing a second set of activities led by Burke during the same workshop (1 February 2011), I witnessed how acts of performing for the camera could incite play, physical proximity and attentiveness to the possibilities of transforming space. During this workshop, my role shifted to a more participatory role, where I became directly involved in the cultural production.
Burke had engaged in a preliminary reading of the room in order to reinvest (and reinvent) the space. A grey backdrop was used as a transformational device to make the kitchen a studio and platform for co-creative expression. Therein and against this backdrop, we defied conventions. A teenage girl sat under a table, knowingly altering its function; a duo of younger girls lay on the floor, using it as their canvas. They placed dishtowels beside their heads to define the space of speech bubbles as shown in Figure 11 above. Burke encouraged the young people to activate the everyday objects at their disposal. A dolly stored under the stairs became a vehicle
for human transportation. Kitchen chairs were no longer merely structures for sitting; we managed to fit our bodies within their negative spaces.

These young people were communicating to one another through their bodies and props in performative ways that exceeded words. There was tremendous laughter. By encouraging play, Burke stimulated a reconfiguration of the spaces of the kitchen, entrance and hallway. She encouraged the forging of new associations between the objects therein as well as promoting ownership over the spaces of *Tar Isteach* and over these ordinary objects, which had become contexts for performances and signifying performance props. Play, as an act of resistance to social decorum, allowed for co-creating the conditions for listening – for being attentive to space and to how it is constituted as a container holding limitless potential. Herein, possibilities for expression and representation were multiplied (*un répertoire de possibilités*) through bodies and everyday objects as they managed the temporary unsettling and rerouting of space (*un « détournement »*).

We might ask the obvious question, how do objects communicate? This necessitates our attentiveness and observant-listening to the multiple possibilities of expression within our material world. These possibilities go beyond the socio-cultural regulations that fix the function of objects and “normal” behaviour. To use our spaces, objects, and bodies differently can reveal transformative potential and is part of setting the conditions for new verbal and non-verbal statements to be made, embodied and decoded.

How, in practice, do we create the conditions wherein to listen to embodied messages by being attentive – to the details of movement, stillness, posture, touch, closeness and the face? The boundaries of the premises of *Tar Isteach* are fixed (the immovability of the walls of the physical building on the Antrim Road) yet they might also be deemed elastic and expandable insofar as
Burke teaches us that we can shift the function of the space and the way its contents works through performance and play. Burke allured the young people into a process where performativity and art in action with others make change. If we consider the highly marked territory and spatial politics of the north of Ireland, and of north Belfast specifically, we might understand how the détournement of space through performance, even behind closed doors, is powerfully subversive. « Détournement » informs an attitude that was subsequently transported outdoors through other art experiments that put to practice further instances of shared performance art.

Burke’s recurring use of superlatives such as “brilliant” and her suggestion to “up the ante” functioned as high praise to encourage such instances of performative play (fieldnotes by the author, 8 February 2011, Belfast). These are documented acts of congratulatory speech that signal the artist’s attentiveness to their experience – a kind of listening through words.

5.3.3 Listening to the Self through Art

The subsequent two workshops led by Burke on 8 February and 15 February, 2011, prompted further crossovers between visual and listening practices. Briefly, I would like to return here to David Beard’s (2009) acknowledgement of the role of listening for the constitution of an ethical subject, where the author is interested in the function of (auditory) listening beyond the communicational acts of language in conversation. Refocusing this suggestion slightly for our purposes, I would like to show how the community-centred art itself – as a multisensory/sensitive, corporeal and material practice – also aided the formation of this ethical subject by encouraging other “types” of listening.

Experienced with other co-creators during these two workshops, this included practices of “listening to the self” that generated visual utterances and other (self-) representational texts.
Through the images below, and the processes through which they were generated, I will ask, how did “listening to the self” – to embodied (sensual/sensatory), yet psychosocial, utterances – help form an ethical subject in ways that can be complementary to Beard’s sound-bound discussion?

A number of images (Figure 12, Figure 13 and the image on the right in Figure 14) chosen from these two latter-mentioned workshops picture youthful faces covered with drawings, symbols, words and markings – like temporary tattoos – revealing (hidden) aspects of identity that are significant to each young person (see below). Congruently, in a chapter entitled “Inscriptions of Love,” Les Back (2007, 71-96) has examined how permanent, inked tattoos speak vivid truths for their subjects. In similar ways to the art of tattooing, perhaps, these young persons’ images have been produced through proximity and touch, allowing one another to enter spheres of mutual intimacy. This closeness, it would seem (note the use of cautious language, which takes us back to Chapter Four; see page 97), promoted a strengthening of friendships by entrusting the other with ones’ (self) representation, where “self” and “other” overlap through acts of representation (imagining/tattooing/imaging). These are actions that built trust. The markings continue to signify through prosthetic images that beg to be listened to and decoded with our eyes, turning us to Back’s (ibid.) book once again, but to another chapter about the eye’s ability to sense the other, as I explain below.

Burke had explicitly asked the young people, “What aspects define your identity? Who are you?” (fieldnotes by the author, 8 February 2011, Belfast), as if inviting them to listen in to themselves.
Figure 12: Photographic series by *Tar Isteach Youth* from a workshop led by Ursula Burke, 8 February 2011, *Tar Isteach*, Belfast.

These images were generated out of self-questioning that was turned inwards, yet externalised through art – turning the inside out – by literal inscription onto the body. These are introverted assertions of identity (*replis identitaires*) that constitute the Catholic/Nationalist/Republican discourse of “community” through both specificity and separatedness. These acts of mark-making were also practices of meaning-making (definition) and confidence-building that can relate to cults of self- and collective-identification. While the similarities across inscriptions (the recurrence of iconography: the shamrock, the tricolour flag, the characters and basic phrases written in Irish) reinforce particular defining “community” values bound by ideologies of Irishness, which strengthen group identification through the ethno-cultural, the variances can signal the persistence of personal values and tastes, which complexly layer identity as both psycho and social.
The photograph of a boy, Séamus, with a rectangle drawn in one-point perspective on his face, asks us that we listen to his perspective: his viewpoint matters (Figure 13). Séamus reminds us that all claims are a matter of perspective, and matter only from certain angles. Another boy, Kris, who seemed to resist the identity-related task (tâche identitaire) at hand, nonetheless took on the guise of Charlie Chaplin. Breandán’s cheek, painted with a worm emerging from a book (Figure 14, right), signifies for his love of reading: “I’m a book worm,” he proudly stated (fieldnotes by the author, 15 February 2011, Belfast).

Upon pointing to the photograph in Figure 14 (right) still affixed to the wall in his office many months afterwards, their youth worker, Finbarr Kelly commented that whatever happens to this boy in the future the image will always speak to who he is as a creative intellectual, no matter his ages, who lives and dreams through books. This brings us back into the image as an accurate holder of self-representational meaning and a way of capturing and listening to the self through
metonymy. Breandán is literally what he reads and possibilities (read “roles”) are as endless as his access will allow. Together, Finbarr and the young Breandán, I think, highlight the power of imaging creativity.

Coupled with a second image on the wall, a diptych had been previously curated (Figure 14). This diptych might serve to illustrate two key concepts. First, I hope it begins to concretise and show what kinds of knowledge a “peoples’ praxis” might reveal. By peoples’ praxis I mean to refer to a collective sense of praxes that integrates specialist views – even if they are not academic, official, or canonical forms of knowledge or art. (Covertly perhaps, most of what I have written in this dissertation speaks to this peoples’ praxis insofar as it is translated from the knowledge and experiences of colleagues and neighbours alongside and with whom I have lived and worked, where meaning-making has been a matter of community.) Second, the diptych can serve to introduce the reader to “co-creativity,” both as an alternative to standard models of artistic collaboration (see Chapter Two) and as a means of drawing new lines and making new images.
My work with *Tar Isteach* highlights particular circumstances when the term “artistic collaboration,” where the community is the “material” for the artist, is no longer sufficient to describe the work. What is needed, I submit, is a revised notion to better reflect the complexities and spectrum of ways of arting together that are experienced, what I am calling “co-creativity.” Like artistic collaboration, co-creativity might be understood to describe methods of working together, but I do not think that it specifies roles in the same way.

Here are two images (Figure 14) of creative gestures performed in two different contexts. The respective contexts of the artmaking do not need to be discussed to posit the conclusions that I will draw out. The image on the left pictures a performance (as in performance art) done by me in late January 2011. Improvisationally, I created this performance to explore my feeling of disconnection from home as a Canadian expatriate. It does not matter that the image on the right...
is not performance art. What matters is that the boy, who claimed to be a bookworm, performed a creative action in order to illustrate his love for books. These are both performances-of-the-self.

Clarity and accuracy, in representing that which is now our story, are effectively matters of collective responsibility. The process of crossing into other worlds (my crossing into theirs as much as their crossing into mine) is one that requires continuous listening, openness, as well as self-checking. Marking the face, it could seem, was as much about affirming a community of belonging as it was about learning to enact individual values/priorities and self-definition.

5.3.4 Feeling Listening: Self-Affirmation and Sensory Experience
The next workshop that I will discuss was led by artist Lawrence Molloy on 6 June 2011. The artist’s grandparents were born in Ireland, yet Molloy, who had been raised in England, spoke with an English accent. Because of this aurality, the young people immediately heard him as an outsider. Molloy, whose primary experience of community arts had been with children in schools, had relocated to Belfast from 2010 to 2012 to complete a Master’s of Fine Arts course at the University of Ulster.

Including storytelling, makeshift set design and performance, this workshop created the conditions for “empathetic listening” in Purdy’s (in Purdy and Borisoff 1997, 12) sense, discussed in Chapter Three. The following section serves to describe some of the elements that formed these conditions. I give an example of telling life stories, where remembering was performed through ubiquitous materials (material conditions) made malleable enough to take on the shape(s) of our stories via the body integrating the senses. Below, I want to relate how engaging the senses through a process of collective artmaking brought us to heightened senses of attentiveness to one another.
In an essay about dance re-enactments, following Martin Načbar referencing Henri Bergson, Maaike A. Bleeker (2012) maintains that remembering is “actualized in ways that involve not only the visual sense, but also hearing, touch, and proprioception” (13). “In this process,” she summarises, “Nachbar observes, our own body, with its movement knowledge and experiences, becomes the frame through which remembering takes shape, while at the same time this frame may be questioned and trained anew within the process” (idem.). Just as re-enacting a dance acquires bodily/sensory knowledge, I will describe how this workshop by Molloy allowed for remembering through a corporeal, collective re-enactment that, I believe, brought us to “listen” to Ailbe’s story by engaging our senses.

There can be pleasure and pride in the acts of telling a story, as in being the authorial subject of a story. This relates, perhaps, to realising that one’s story is important enough to tell and to be heard. Teya Sepinuck (in Upton 2010) of Theatre of Witness explains “there’s a lot of healing in hearing each other’s story and in connecting, and it may be that it’s on a personal level. [...] People generally do find it to be healing to hear; they find their own story in it [...]” (106). This, I think, is close to what Purdy (in Purdy and Borisoff 1997, 12) describes as “feeling with the other person” through listening. I am interested here in considering the kinds of empathetic experiences that were created in the process of reenacting Ailbe’s personal experience, a biographical story, collectively through our bodies and our senses. To get there, I will now describe the development of the workshop.

After showing the young people images of several constructed sets in which stories might be imagined, Molloy asked them to select and share stories that were interesting or significant to them. An unruly discussion ensued, where narrating voices overlapped energetically. However, we/sound did stop to hear those stories told by Ailbe and Cian. This brings me back to David
Beard’s (2009, 18) “to listen” or “not to listen” as a choice bound by ethics: Why did we choose to listen to their two stories in particular? What made these/their utterances resonate noticeably or above the others?

Cian narrated an adaption of the myth of *Cu Chulainn*. This story was well known within C/N/R and P/U/L communities alike (although differing and changing meanings are ascribed). Conceivably, the youth worker and young people listened because the popular story was part of their cultural memory. The story was familiar to all in attendance (except me); their listening here seemed to be anchored in shared folklore. Indeed, everyone proceeded in the negotiation of a suitable common version by consensus: of making-meaning and art in-common. This involved adapting the story and quickly (as not to lose momentum) constructing a milieu wherein to perform it with what we had in our immediate environment: cardboard boxes stood in for wood, a milk jug for a cow, a sheet of paper folded into a crown and another hanging from the angled attic ceiling became a hurling net. Cian ran home to grab his hurling stick. Molloy had proposed that the young people employ any and all material resources at their disposal, inciting them to rummage the storage room at *Tar Isteach* and letting them decide for themselves what materials they deemed appropriate. He was inviting them to transform the space and to enact their stories through their own bodies by activating materials in/and environment.

In Ailbe’s case, it was, I think, the assuredness of her voice while delivering a story of personal nature that was so compelling. She told us about her near-death experience, when a “freak wave” had almost caused her to drown in “[t]he cold waters of Donegal” (*Tar Isteach* 2011, n.p.). We were seated around the office desk that now acted as a collective work surface repositioned at the centre of the upper floor office space, rather than tucked away in a corner under paperwork. (Months earlier, this desk had become a material support taking on new
meaning when it had been incorporated into our art during a cultural mapping process.) Amongst the cacophony, Ailbe stood up and spoke, commanding our attention. The seriousness of her delivery begged that we pay attention. In part, our respect for the speaker’s words was a question of social decorum, etiquette, and turn-taking conventions of occupying the conversational floor.

We took up both Cian and Ailbe’s invitations to listen. Although both stories were enacted, my focus here is upon Ailbe’s. At this point, I want to proceed through a thick description of the art/work, an account that is based primarily on a close reading of, and careful listening to, photo- and video-documentation from the workshop. The re-enactment of Ailbe’s freak wave incident involved listening on multiple registers and in different sensory ways. The table below attempts to identify some of the sonorous, tactile and visual aspects involved in this art of listening.

**Table 2: Sonorous, Tactile and Visual Aspects of the Re-enactment of Ailbe’s story**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sounds</th>
<th>Touch and Proprioception</th>
<th>Sights</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The movement of crate paper by Colm and Julie produces the waves, producing subtle sounds.</td>
<td>This production of sounds involves the tactility of the crate paper through which we “touch” and interconnect one another and “by prosthetic.”</td>
<td>The coloured paper in motion evokes the memory of “raging waves” (Tar Isteach 2011, n.p.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All of the activities are centralised around the desk, which we all “touch” like the carpet below our feet, what Rodaway (1994) explains as generalised touch.</td>
<td>Mutual visual acts of seeing one another reenact.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sounds</td>
<td>Touch and Proprioception</td>
<td>Sights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawrence gets a boy’s name</td>
<td></td>
<td>Colm smiles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wrong.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ailbe screams, “Help!,”</td>
<td>Proximity of bodies and</td>
<td>Bronagh’s eyes are wide open.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>portraying the drowning</td>
<td>closeness</td>
<td>She makes eye contact and smiles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>incident, to which Bronagh,</td>
<td></td>
<td>She gestures with her hands to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the reenactor, answers, “I</td>
<td></td>
<td>get validation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>can’t do that.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another young person</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>answers, “I wouldn’t help</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you Ailbe.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronagh gargles.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bronagh’s hands are prominent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>as she points to herself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bronagh’s shoulders are turned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>inward and her downward eyes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>seem to indicate shyness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The group is silent upon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>concentrating.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laughing, Ailbe exclaims,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Move out of my way; get</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>out of my set!”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D: “Julie, are you supposed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be in it? Do you want to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>be in it?, to which Julie</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>replies, “Just cut me out.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When Ailbe told her story, the act of our re-enacting it materially (through colour, line, sound, objects/props) and bodily (through touch, movement, voice, proximity) was not only a means for
us to listen to her. It was also our “choice to listen together” (Beard 2009, 19): an opportunity to listen to ourselves collectively while listening to her listening to us. As Beard writes: “I do not, as an ethical being, listen only to you; I listen with you, as well. Some acts of listening create community. The choices we make in selecting what we listen to can create a community. That can be a community of fans of a favorite musical band or of citizens sharing common political interests at a rally” (ibid.). The stories and overlapping sounds that we heard as part of the re-enactment created the soundscape for that now shared experience of our listening together in time/space.

Figure 15: Photo-montage by Tar Isteach Youth from a workshop led by Lawrence Molloy, 6 June 2011, Tar Isteach, Belfast.
5.3.5 Listening and human connexion: Reinvigorating community

On June 14th, 2011, I invited the Québec-based aboriginal sociologist of art, Guy Sioui Durand, to develop and provide a workshop for the young people of Tar Isteach. Knowledge of C/N/R activism inscribed in the global civil rights movement of the 1960s, my encounter with mural imagery nearby Tar Isteach and a conversation with Finbarr made me aware that their struggle for civil rights was strengthened through parallels with histories of resistance worldwide. Therefore, attentive to this interest, it seemed appropriate to invite Sioui Durand to Tar Isteach, basing that invitation on a desire evidenced and manifested within that community for understanding resistance across contexts that they deemed to be parallel.
Using the theme of the previous workshop as a starting point, Sioui Durand’s workshop responded expressively to the account of Ailbe’s near death experience. Hearing the confidence and pride that emanated through her personal story, Sioui Durand decided to take the idea of the near-death theme in a different direction. Through a conceptual analogy, he proposed a collective game of *exquisite corpse*, which combined words in Irish and English, explaining the game’s basis in Surrealism. We arrived at imaginative phrases that pushed the boundaries of sense and non/sensical communication. The humorous poetry that resulted grew from a collective effort – a coming together of words to co-create utterances. We laughed together.

Sioui Durand also spoke about the outside and the inside, about what it could mean to inscribe ourselves in the physical world and to allow new ways of being and seeing/sensing together. Re-emphasising the idea of perspective brought forward by a young person in a previous workshop (see Figure 13) he invited the young people to go outside: to change their perspective. Once outside, Sioui Durand invited them to stand in a circle and asked me to weave a giant dream catcher-like web to interconnect them. This was another way of being together differently in proximity now at street-level. By the prosthetic of gold ribbon, we could feel ourselves interconnected, mutually responsible to maintain the tension that held us together.
Afterwards, Bronagh spoke about that experience of full concentration that brought them to share that moment. I could tell by her smile and by her statement that this was an enjoyable experience. I think one can discern this concentratedness in the photographs that document this process, which were taken by the youth worker, Finbarr. I would argue that what the dream catcher achieved could be well described as a performance of “community” that emphasised our interconnectedness, an instance of “radical relatedness” (Gablik 1991, 131 and 178). The proprioceptive tension necessary to perform this dream catcher and hold it in place necessitated a listening with our bodies and a heightened attention to the other that could be read in their eyes

Figure 17: Photo-documentation by Finbarr Kelly from a workshop led by Guy Sioui Durand, 14 June 2011, Tar Isteach, Belfast.
and body posture. Their laughter signalled surprise, openness to artful experimentation and happiness through the common experience of making community in novel ways. How did this experience of listening make further experiences possible?

Figure 18: Photo-documentation by Finbarr Kelly from a workshop led by Guy Sioui Durand, 14 June 2011, Tar Isteach, Belfast.

5.3.6 Listening and Situated Sound

By “situated sound,” I mean sounds as we perceive them with/in space and through our cavernous bodies (Nancy 2002/2007). Based in Belfast, the sound artist Caroline Pugh has related the way sound sounds, or resounds, in a particular sized and shaped room or, conversely, the way a room sizes, as in amplifies or appeases, that is, the way it shapes sound, as its “acoustic signature” (9
May 2012, *Music Improvisation*, workshop, Open Source Belfast Festival, Sinclair House, Belfast. To “hear” the situatedness of sounds necessitates “listening” for the ways that spaces shape and affect sounds, and likewise, for the ways that sounds alter our experiences of/in spaces (Rodaway 1994, esp. 82-114). Because we are also physical, corporeal beings taking up space(s), this situatedness is also heightened by what Paul Rodaway calls our “haptic geographies,” which connect us to place through touch with our immediate environments (ibid., esp. 41-60). Whether we are standing or seated, with or without legs or hands, fingers or toes, directly and by prostheses (like a wheelchair or cane), as we touch the ground it “reciprocally” (ibid., 44) touches us back like the air in a room is in contact with our skin. We are, therefore, always in-touch.

Our ability to listen, I think, is affected by how we feel (feeling as both touch and emotion) a space, by how safe, secure or unsettled we are in that environment.

The workshops led by Burke in *Tar Isteach* were held within the kitchen and adjoining hallway, apart from the workshop of 15 February that took place at the Golden Thread Gallery, and excursions to nearby parks. Kelly, who hesitated, had permitted these “deviations” outside of the space of their everyday. When I started leading workshops with them from March 2011, I decided intently to concentrate activity in the upstairs office space of their repurposed house.

Months into working with the group, in June 2011, I remarked on the acoustic signature of the spaces where the workshops were held:

One aspect discussed with Ursula over a drink and food after the workshop was the benefit of the kitchen space as a workshop space, over the office space upstairs. This is a central factor that tremendously impacted on my performance as workshop leader. The incessant buzzing to gain entry to the house and the constant telephone calls (especially during the overlap with regular working hours) competed too easily with the demands of leading activities. [Limits of the self as listener]. Plus, on the practical side, this sound made it more difficult to have concentrated and focused dialogue, immediately shifting attention. This is not
 incidental, but has real implications on the listening that is possible. *Just listening* requires a fullness of attention. Perhaps what I am realising is that any theorisation of listening must account for and find ways to manage “problems” (*des contraintes*) which are situational, yet which could be easily omitted from [the account of] this research project. These acoustic distractions are always in the backdrop. They are in direct competition with the communication in the room (competing sounds); they are part of our communication situation and weekly reality. I am not sure if I should say that listening is made difficult, or if it’s better to think that we are being exposed to the limits of listening and the challenges of inadequate or inappropriate [spatial] resources. *Tar Isteach*, as a multi-function organisation, is not just a youth club. I am recalling that the idea to use the office was actually my idea in order to reclaim a space as theirs and to transform it. (Fieldnotes by the author, 20 June 2011, Belfast)

The idea of reclaiming space is important if we consider the wider spatial politics of North Belfast, which is, as I have previously described, a deeply fragmented part of the city divided through (peace) lines on the land dividing communities that live side-by-side. Having concentrated my fieldwork in the New Lodge area, I was deeply aware of the lack of safe recreational spaces nearby, and of the need to work with/in this space, to appreciate it, with all of its gifts and limitations. I felt that this was a question of ownership. I wanted to participate in processes of making it theirs. Chronologically, from May 2011, the actual practical methods implemented were the following:

- Utilising the desk as a surface for mapping their geography and culture, and for finding out what matters to them, which revealed itself as larger-than-life Irish tricolor flags on council estate towers, the identification of one girl’s grandmother’s house, selected place-names and roads (sometimes at the right geographical places, sometimes not). 204

- Placing this desk in the centre of the space and leaving it there for some time to see how it would affect our workshops. Would we get annoyed? Would the youth worker use it as a desk space? Would the lines be erased over time?
Storyboarding the space, literally, turning it into a set for live activation or “actuations” (Watson 2003; discussing terms coined by McLennan). I am referring here to reenactments of the drowning scene and from Irish mythology.

- Using the space as a multi-function production space; a homework space; a visual backdrop for performance art activities; a space for screening their images and films; a site for interviews and talks – for thinking “in” and thinking “out” of the space and for bringing the “in” outward and the “out” inward.

Creative actions were developed and shared with others. However, tucked away in the attic upstairs, there was a reinforced feeling of intimacy, retreat, respect for privacy and freedom of space.

**5.4 Modes of Listening**

In this section, a number of “synecdoches” – sensorial, linguistic, bodily, psychological, social, cultural – are foregrounded to help describe a set of “modes of listening,” already anticipated in the previous section. By “synecdoches,” I mean to acknowledge my choice of a particular family of figures of speech or poetic concept to formulate the analysis that follows. “Synecdoche” is a concept whereby a part signifies for the whole, the material for the matter. While the “synecdoche” is a figurative concept, in poetic rhetoric/language terms, we can also speak more exactly of the “metonymy.” Therefore, when I say/write “listening with the eye,” the “eye” functions as a metonymy, establishing a synecdochal relationship as a part of the whole body: it signifies for the whole. The eye is not just *like* the ear that listens: the eye stands in for a more fully embodied process.

By outlining these synecdoches, this study hopes to influence the theorising and making of community-centred art differently, that is, in ways that are ethically-mindful but also attentive through the corporeal. To be sure, such practices of mind and body extend beyond claims linked to personal methods of artmaking, documentation and interpretation. Once again, starting from
this art as a discrete, theory-building practice, claims drawn from my observations and experiences are verified using evidence from interviews and intersected with bodies of literature in the wide-spanning knowledge fields proposed in Chapter Three.

Although example-specific (rather than universally applicable/useful for describing all-and-every example of community arts), the suggested modes are the footing for an invitation to think community-centred arts otherwise. Although not discussed in any detail within the pages of this dissertation, these modes of listening were verified against assertions made by twenty-two practitioners of community arts who responded specifically to a directed question. During face-to-face interviews, I asked them if they could think of any other ways to listen beyond what is possible with the traditional ear, citing Les Back’s example of “listening with the eye” (2007, 97-115; discussed further below in section 5.4.1).

To synthesise, I have nonetheless categorised their responses as follows: reading body language and listening with the eyes (15 interviewees); listening with the body and intuition (4 interviewees); listening through proximity (2 interviewees); listening to and for difference (2 interviewees); listening through touch (2 interviewees); listening through verbal and written language (5 interviewees); and listening through prosthetics and artistic media (5 interviewees).

Other adjacent issues mentioned during these interviews related to interconnections between listening and sound (3 interviewees); listening and time (5 interviewees); listening, space or context (10 interviewees) in relation to sectarian geo-politics; listening and emotions (3 interviewees); listening and intention (1 interviewee); listening and unsaid/s; (1 interviewee); listening and presence (2 interviewees); listening and attention (2 interviewees); as well as listening and empathy (3 interviewees).
Methodologically, the analysis below incorporates the techniques of conversational analysis and textual coding, yet the overarching analytical lens is a “Barthian” one, where I propose a possible “rhetoric of the images” (Barthes 1977a),\textsuperscript{210} in order to “look” for sounds within them, but also, for determining elements of context. While I introduce other modes of listening, the process of image analysis is always also an invitation for listening to these images with our eyes. (In the next section, I go on to discuss the phrase “listening with the eye,” which I attribute to Back (2007).)

The images are primarily photographs taken by others or myself, as credited. They are displayed in a choreographed sequence of my organisation. As “texts,” too, they are telling our story, where there are many other stories that could also have been remembered, told and written. These figures are selected from different sources of performance and community-centred art, as well as day-to-day life that often is, as we can now identify, just as “artful.”

5.4.1 Listening with Our Eyes

Les Back’s (2007) “case example” chapter, entitled “Listening with the Eye” (97-115), has been particularly important in thinking through this research and its questions, and it is especially relevant to the content and ambition of the current section.\textsuperscript{211} Back’s chapter aptly uses the phrase “listening with the eye” to describe the ways that the camera (here a large format camera in the process of street photography) served to capture and represent the identities of its subjects (ibid.). Back introduces his chapter with the section titled “About the Street” (ibid.):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What follows is an account of the use of street photography as a means to open up a space of exchange and engender a form of reciprocity between research subjects and observers. It centres on the About the Streets Project facilitated by photographer, film-maker and cultural sociologist Paul Halliday whose work was included in the</th>
<th>Notes below:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The media and equipment of photography are counted numerous times (6 counted).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The author’s language resembles that of community arts, which frequently</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
previous chapter. In February 2001 he invited his students at Croydon College, south London to try to **produce a visual story reflecting** the ebb and flow of metropolitan cultural life. The setting was Brick Lane in East London, a place that Paul had **photographed** many times over a period of twenty years. This part of East London harbours the trace of many migrants who have made it their home, from the French Huguenots to European Jewry and, most recently, Bengali communities. Brick Lane is also a magnet for weekend migrations from other parts of the capital. On Sunday morning people converge on its markets from the suburbs, often crossing the river to buy everything from leather goods and the fruits of the ‘rag trade’ to cheap cigarettes. Paul took his students to Brick Lane and set up **large format cameras** in the street. On successive Sunday mornings, with the market in full swing, they invited people, often laden with shopping, to give their portraits. […] **Over a period of two years** the group returned most Sundays with their large **ancient-looking equipment** to Brick Lane and literally set up in the street. […] **The large format sheet negatives** were prepared before each shoot as if polishing **cultural mirrors to reflect and hold the life of the city** (98-99; my emphasis in bold).

| previous chapter. In February 2001 he invited his students at Croydon College, south London to try to **produce a visual story reflecting** the ebb and flow of metropolitan cultural life. The setting was Brick Lane in East London, a place that Paul had **photographed** many times over a period of twenty years. This part of East London harbours the trace of many migrants who have made it their home, from the French Huguenots to European Jewry and, most recently, Bengali communities. Brick Lane is also a magnet for weekend migrations from other parts of the capital. On Sunday morning people converge on its markets from the suburbs, often crossing the river to buy everything from leather goods and the fruits of the ‘rag trade’ to cheap cigarettes. Paul took his students to Brick Lane and set up **large format cameras** in the street. On successive Sunday mornings, with the market in full swing, they invited people, often laden with shopping, to give their portraits. […] **Over a period of two years** the group returned most Sundays with their large **ancient-looking equipment** to Brick Lane and literally set up in the street. […] **The large format sheet negatives** were prepared before each shoot as if polishing **cultural mirrors to reflect and hold the life of the city** (98-99; my emphasis in bold). | describes “a space of exchange,” where exchange ideally centres on “reciprocity.” | Metaphors and terminology evoking the mirror and the eyes’ ability to see are used frequently: “observers,” “visual story reflecting,” “cultural mirrors to reflect.” | The author provides a detailed description of the context, both currently and historically, emphasising the ways that the social landscape is made up of migrants. He also introduces the markets as the site of the photographic encounters. | The project was sustained over time. | The term “cultural mirrors” suggests cultural diversity, while the idea of “hold[ing] the life of the city” not only suggests that these people are its life, but that the process of photography can somehow capture this “life.” |

| **Table 3: Textual Analysis of an excerpt of Les Back’s (2007) chapter titled “Listening with the Eye.”** |

Even from this partial and relatively light textual analysis we can begin to appreciate how Back constructs his “thick description” (Geertz in Back 2007, 21) of this street photography project. We will assume that, not unlike my analysis above, Back’s account is “selective” in presenting those details that matter most to him and his research. Although neither the word “listening” nor language explicitly evoking the auditory (apart from “story”) are used in this particular passage, specifics such as the tools and processes of photography, and the committed trips to the markets over a sustained period of time, do impart some believability to Back’s bold ambition “to reflect
and hold the life of the city” (2007, 99). To be sure, these specifics evoke the idea of “listening with the eyes.” They also instil tremendous confidence in the processes of photography “to produce a visual story” (ibid., 98; as shown above).

Back’s chapter, like the remainder of this one, develops through a series of photographs aided by descriptions. Street photography, here resulting in a series of portraits of apparently different individuals, is reproduced as evidence of meaningful exchange.212 Further explaining how photography “listens,” in a section entitled “Speaking into the Lens” (100-106), Back convincingly submits that “To see photography as merely a governing technology misses the instability and complexity of the drama that unfolds on either side of the lens.” Quoting an interview with Brazilian photographer Sebastião Salgado, Back continues his argumentation:

[...]’People come to you, to your lens, as if they were coming to speak into a microphone.’213 [...] The figures in these portraits look back. They stare back at us. Cameras in this context are like windows that look out onto the street, and through which the street looks in. Perhaps windows are a little like lenses. While we may pass by each other in cities and refuse eye contact, these portraits announce a kind of eye-to-eye recognition, even though the subject looks into the dark void beyond the aperture, as if looking into the retina of the eye itself. (Back 2007, 104)

Back’s emphasis on the reciprocal aspects of photography as well as on the acts of looking are important here. This process of close observation through the lens extends the capacities of the eye through what I would call “the prosthetic” device of the camera.
In Figure 19, two girls stand face-to-face. They wear what appear to be identical forest green uniforms. Because of the crest at chest-height they are likely to be school uniforms. Having lived in the north of Ireland, where this image was produced, I know that uniforms are mandatory for all school children. Therefore, I also confirm with certainty that these girls are school goers.

Already, what is evident is that it is near impossible to describe the image without disclosing a personal relationship to that particular context, a certain proximity of lived experience to these two girls, in this place, framed by its political history and on-going struggle for the self-determination of their “two solitudes.” Yet this is not a meeting between two girls from families of opposite religio-political sides. Anyone familiar with this particular crest would know that the girls are students at a specific Catholic school in North Belfast.
The mouth of the girl on the left is slightly open, as if she is about to speak. The facial expression of the girl on the right is ambiguous; her lips are edging between the laughter she holds back and concentrated stillness. Still, the motion blur indicates that their hands are flapping. We see the movement, but if we listen closely we also hear it with our eyes. We can hear another story: that of happiness, friendship and play. Clearly, I am describing this image through “situated” signs within its visual coding. It is my knowledge of the specificity of context that enables me to ascribe signification – to listen – in this way. These are schoolgirls but they are also participants in a specific social history and narrative of place.
Returning to our visual analysis, if we reposition the detail represented by Figure 19 above within the multiple images taken by us in sequence (shown in Figure 20) to capture their performance in the context of a workshop, we see and we hear the rhythm, synchronicity and consonance of their bodies as they move swiftly, harmonising with one another – attentive, listening for one another’s agile manoeuvrings.

Figure 20: Back cover from the bookwork, Where We Meet (2011), Belfast: Tar Isteach.
5.4.2 Listening with the Body and Intuition

Figure 21: Performance by workshop participants to Crossings, Confederation Park, Ottawa (Canada), 19 June 2010. Photograph by Stefan St-Laurent, then Curator of Saw Gallery.

Figure 21 pictures a collective performance, which was the culmination of a three-day workshop held from 17 to 19 June 2010 in Ottawa, Canada. The federal capital of the country some of us call “Canada,” the officially bilingual city of Ottawa, is located in Ontario. It rests at the border with the city of the old/le vieux Hull (renamed Gatineau in 2002) in the adjacent province of French Québec. The workshop was led by Alastair MacLennan, a “veteran,” Scottish-born performance artist living and teaching in Belfast since 1975. Along with two younger generations of Belfast-based artists, Sandra Johnston and Sinéad Bhreathnach-Cashell – all members of the performance art collective Bbeyond based in Belfast – Alastair MacLennan had been invited to Ottawa by the local Galerie Saw Gallery, as part of the performance art exchange called Crossings.²¹⁶ (I would later join the Bbeyond collective as a member during my time in Belfast.) Appropriately, the programme was split territorially and temporally into instalments: June 2010 in Ottawa, followed by October 2010 in Belfast. Admittedly, the Ottawa instalment was anticipatory and pivotal for two reasons that are personal to me. Firstly, this was the first
time that I would experience the continuing effects of the Northern Irish conflict, albeit by proxy at a distance. Secondly, this would be an opportunity to create a sense of community “crossing” (post-colonial conflict) zones with strangers in Ottawa, my place of origin.

For the extended moment of the performance, we were one whole as we moved together, slowly but surely, as pictured above in Figure 21. Here, within this organism, we were sensitive to one another; we felt one another’s pokes and prods; we listened precisely. This was an ideal, coherent, community of sorts. It was the time/space of the performance that allowed for that. In a review written following the closing chapter in October at Belfast, recalling Jean-Luc Nancy (1991) I described how, “[b]lindfolded, we move together as a single organism, connected by bamboo sticks that required us to communicate through subtle shifts of pressure. This was a poetic, shared experience of actualizing community” (Fiala 2011, 44).

A founding member of Bbeyond, I interviewed Alastair MacLennan in Belfast, more than one year after this shared moment in Ottawa. McLennan’s first interview statement is revealing:

If a human being is sufficiently sensitive to other/another person/persons, he or she can listen with the whole being, not simply use one or two senses, but try to feel the existence of the being who is in front of him or her. Sometimes you can sense something about someone, and it’s not only what one hears or sees or, or, whatever, it can be what one intuits from the presence of the person. (Interview with the author, 16 August 2011, Belfast)

Spoken language was not part of the action shared in Ottawa. We had moved in the relative quiet of a collective action that was silent to words. Perhaps we were trying “to feel the existence” of the other, as McLennan stated during this interview, but, I would add, in relation to the self. The self must be open to receive the other.
The bamboo physically interconnected us. By memory and metonymically through visual and language traces (quoted just above and below), it connects you the reader to me now in our duo, where your thoughts follow my words on these pages: moving, backtracking and pausing.

Later during the interview, McLennan deepened the idea of intuition, mentioned in the first quoted passage. He sites “intuition” expressly within,

this incredible instrument of the body, you know, which helps [inaudible word]. It’s incredible. One can actually, even just in a movement of an arm, convey something to someone, whereby they can intuit the condition of this person, without it having to be languaged verbally. ‘How one does what one does, not just what one does.’ (Ibid.)

In my mind, the core of McLennan’s formulation arrives closest to Tomatis’ full-bodied sense of listening, cited and explicated at some length above (starts on page 88); and possibly also, French philosopher, Jean Luc Nancy’s idea of the body as a sonic/cavernous space contained by its skin, a corporeal architecture of sorts (« une telle colonne creuse sur laquelle une peau est tendue ») (Nancy 2002, 82). Nonetheless, a noteworthy difference is McLennan’s integration of the “body”/“instrument” with “intuition” to suggest the doing of one through and with the other and vice versa without splitting the hairs of a Cartesian subject or privileging body over mind (or “intuition” here).

From another interpretive angle, this experience could be described as a performance of critical, collective pedagogy, that is, of non-competitive teaching and learning through relational bodies in action and in tuition/learning (and also “intuition”).

Most of us performing at Confederation Park / Le parc de la confédération on 19 June 2010, were from Ottawa or Gatineau, living on the fine line between English and French Canada/s at the bridge where the provinces of Ontario and Québec meet. This is the National
Capital Region or l’Outaouais, two descriptors for the same place that in fact signify very differently.²¹⁹

That performance in Ottawa allowed for “crossings,” for building corporeal bridges that were enabled because of the ideological bridges that we had developed progressively during the intensive three-day workshop. Remarkably, I had not scrutinised my own cultural and familial heritage growing up at a border region until I came to Belfast.²²⁰ It was by discerning these types of homologies/intersections (what I later called crossing over into other worlds), that I would be able to understand, articulate and conceptualise my (representational) relationships differently than before, beyond the basics and problematic of a representational politics of whom could speak to, and also for, whom.
5.4.3 Listening to the Sectarian City

Figure 22 is one of many photographs documenting one of six collective performances that I experienced and contributed to as part of Bbeyond, during my stay in Belfast. This is a complex image. When we look closely we can discern many “individual” performances, happening simultaneously and in relation to one another. (This is a familiar motif for Bbeyond “performance monthlies,” where, at best, individual actions over a few hours merge and respond more closely with those of others in the group.) On this occasion, I had invited a friend and colleague, Eve Vaughan, to perform with Bbeyond. Together, while within the group, we performed in duo. At the end of June 2011, it was particularly important to do our groundwork. The Catholic Short
Strand in East Belfast, and the adjacent Loyalist community, were experiencing incredible violent tensions, in the form of riots. Almost simultaneously, these were being reported through official media (such as BBC Northern Ireland and other more local presses on both sides of the divide), as well as talk at more elemental, community levels. It was felt widely, it seemed, that this level of violence had not been seen in decades.

We, who had initially planned to contribute to the monthly performance meeting with less politically-directed actions, were now deciding to respond to the demands and questions arising within the current social and media contexts. Anyone who has lived in Belfast, or visited, is wary of summer month parading and accompanying displays of nationalism and loyalism. These political ideologies, interwoven with religious partisanship, pronounce themselves visually through colour (orange/gold, white and green; blue, red and white) and acoustically through slogans (in English or Irish, official or unofficial) and instrumentation (the fife, the land bag drum, the pastoral sounds linked to Irish nationalism; see Paul Moore’s essay on sectarian sounds in Michael Bull and Les Back’s reader, *The Auditory Culture Reader* (2003)).
These signifiers are leitmotifs that appear again and again on the city in the form of bunting (see Figure 23), gable end murals, as well as parades and other celebrations.

Figure 23: July 2011, Shankill Road, Belfast; photographs by Julie Fiala.

It was my immersion within an ex-prisoners’ Republican organisation in North Belfast that enabled me in part to “do” this groundwork through particular relationships. My knowledge of Loyalism was also primarily experiential, but it came from academically-framed sources and experiences provided by the Irish School of Ecumenics, where I was a visiting student.222

Let us look deeper into the photograph (Figure 22). It is sited in Buoy Park, Cathedral Quarter, in the north of Belfast’s city centre. The image is both visually and sonorously striking. In the background we see Belfast Cathedral and we can “hear” the carillon beckoning on this, as every, Sunday morning. In the middle-ground, sculptures by the architects W. J. Cairns and Partners (Craigavon-Edinburgh), which have come to have an iconic resonance in front of the...
college of art, harkening Belfast’s maritime history. Positioned at the foreground, artists Eve
Vaughan and I are divided by the British red, white, blue, and the Irish green, white, gold. We are
two performers attached by our own politics; separated, yes, yet held in physically tense
relationship to one another: a mutual interdependence. Considering the political climate, the use
of such bunting/flags as a predominant prop would be interpreted by street-audience within the
local context as a political gesture. The use of the bunting brought residential concerns for
neighbourhoods (such as those at Short Strand in East Belfast) into this more neutral city-centre
location where it is usually safer to speak and question. The bunting, again, as a visual referent
adorning the streets, marking the start the parading season in Loyalist communities across “the
North.”

Through changing postures, Vaughan and I were trying to maintain tension (and
attention) between our bodies, using the bunting as a mediator and keeping it parallel to the plane
of the pavement. At the same time, we were trying to synchronise/mirror our bodies - to adjust
our (two) selves to one another. In this respect, Vaughan has spoken about soft focus, which she
describes as a dance/theatre technique where one attempts to be always alert to the other by
intentionally stretching our scope of vision. This beckons listening with the eyes to the body: my
movements as much as hers.
Figure 24: 12 July 2011, sidewalk vendor selling Orange Day parade paraphernalia, near Donegal Pass, South Belfast. Photograph by the author.

5.4.4 Listening through Language

Figure 24, taken at the Orange Day parade on July 12th, “tells” of the espousal of the British tricolour and English white and red flag bearing St-George’s cross. It also displays popular signifiers such as the red hand of Ulster in celebration of Unionism and more militant forms of Loyalism. Not coincidently on the 12th of July (2011), the young man shown passing in the foreground sports the same white and red on his Adidas jumper. These colours and symbols are part of a visual iconography and common language that presents Unionism as “essentially” British. This culturally-specific iconography serves to maintain community pride, but through the systemic exclusion of other/ed colours, flags and symbols, the Irish tricolour and Irish Gaelic, with its fada, being obvious examples.
Nevertheless, some symbols can be heard but not as easily seen. Figure 25 is part of a complex multi-image sequence, created on the same afternoon as the series in Figure 19 and Figure 20. I will examine the textual components that it contains. Out of the three words – “WHAT?” - “QUOI” (with a heart dotting the ‘i’) - and “CAD É” (barely visible on the right) – it is the “curious” latter that interests me here. A Canadian speaker (whether Anglophone or Francophone) would likely recognise the accent on the capitalised letter “É” as an acute accent, like the French “É,” pronounced /É/. Although CAD É is not French, one might hazard a guess that it combines phonetically with the preceding ‘d’ as /de/ (sounds like dé, French for dice). In
Ulster Irish, however, a “d” before an “e” should sound more like the English “j.” Hence, although the difference may not be seen by looking at the words within the image (unless one is a tri-lingual speaker of French, English and Irish, like this girl who had a basic working knowledge of all three languages), it can certainly be heard and listened for. I understand this as the converse of Jacques Derrida’s (1967) “différance,” where the difference (la différence) between “e” and the “a” (of his neologism, “différance”) could be seen, but not heard.) This discrepancy is not only a matter of mis/interpretation or pronunciation; it also reveals quite simply one way that this image literally speaks beyond what the visual-text (or the text-as-visual) can communicate. While our discussion surrounding Figure 19 started on page 189 invited listening by corporality (through an analogy between sights and sounds), the later discussion in relation to Figure 25 invites listening by orality.

5.4.5 Fieldnotes as Listening: Thickening the Description

There are limitations to “isolated” visual analysis, if we want to deal more profoundly with the processes of the artmaking and research. I have found, however, that the methods/research practices of gathering and analysing written fieldnotes, as well as reflective journaling, can constitute additional ways of listening – to others, but also to the self. They allow us as researchers, like artist-researchers, to record our hunches, hypotheses, and any other detail that seems significant “within” those moments of co-presence in research. Yet this type of documentation also serves to extend the processes of reflection beyond physical co-presence so that we can continue to be-with the others of the research while we are (with our) writing. Here, I reproduce a segment from fieldnotes written after the workshop held from 3:00 to 6:00 pm on 24 May 2011.
Smaller group interaction always for more fluid learning and more comfortability. [Maebh is timid at first, but content] to learn the manual settings on the camera. Aoibheann, [who is relatively fearless,] chooses to be the model and performer. When I suggest red on red, offering red clothing as a prop, Aoibheann opts to retain her green school uniform, but to put on my little red jacket. I explain that anything white, such as her skin, will be most visible in the photograph. Maebh silently takes control of the photographic process, but it is clear through her getting on with the task that [she is comfortable not only with the task but with the group dynamics]. Although the first sequence of photographs focuses on Aoibheann’s performativity, the second involved them both moving and dancing in front of the camera. Aoibheann takes the initiative to envelop Maebh of coloured crate papers as she moves and shakes her way out. *In my mind, this process enabled Maebh’s transformation, from a young timid girl, hesitant to engaging in a process, to a producer and performer. Aoibheann, who was already at a high level of comfortability developed through previous work, seems more comfortable moving/performing outside of the script of conventionality. Perhaps she was listening and is enacting some of my teachings about creativity outside of creative norms. The choice of the trio of words “What?”/Cad é in Irish, Quoi in French is interesting. We had been speaking about the fact that they find Irish easier to learn in school than French. The first form that was written, “What?” seems to presage that something incomprehensible is about to happen. (What the fuck is going on?) I also understand it to signal a readiness on behalf of the girls to engage in such activities before myself and the camera.*

Table 4: Excerpt from fieldnotes by the author written 25 May 2011, Belfast.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes applied to left:</th>
<th>Italic = Reflection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ ] = Inference</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LP = Listening by prosthetic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I = Intuition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LD = Listening through dialogue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T = Transformation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LE = Listening through the eye</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L = Listening</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LL = Listening through language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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By my coding of the fieldnotes above, it is possible to draw out new meaning from the same figures discussed in Figure 20 and Figure 25. We can see and hear them differently. For example, it is significant that the photograph in Figure 25 was taken by Maebh, rather than myself as might have been assumed by readers/viewers. Such procedural details (who did what and how we got there) are especially important to understanding the workings of co-creativity, as well as social transformation (in the form of learning and the development of confidence here). I would like to argue that these are both indicative of self-confidence and learning that effect social change. From this coding, I have also added the mode of “listening by prosthetic,” by which I mean to refer to the ways that objects from the material world (here the red coat and crate paper) have physically mediated our interrelationships and have helped create the “conditions” for listening.

5.4.6 Listening to and for Difference

The language trio in Figure 25 is interesting to us for yet another reason. It can serve to elucidate the politics called to mind in Figure 19 and Figure 20. From my vantage point as a Franco-Ontarian female artist-researcher carrying out this interpretation, it reminds me of our history of colonisation as women and linguistic and cultural minorities. This includes not only the ways that this history of Canada is gendered, but also of the ambiguous positioning of those, like myself, born within the territorial limits of “English-Canada” as both colonisers (not quite “English/Anglo”) and colonised (while not quite “French/Franco”).

The problematique of “differe/ance” (Derrida op. cit.) in many senses of the word/concept, requires another kind of listening, that of listening through and to difference(s). It would perhaps be easy to interpret the document or visual trace of a child wearing a paisley-patterned scarf reminiscent of William Morris or of a “colonial” design element – here turban or quasi-burka – as a cultural misappropriation through child’s play, a playing with an Other.
However, I do think that there are more important aspects that this “moment” shared might denote. First, the materials, or props (if we are to read this as a performance of selves), a coming together of English motifs (the paisley) with the Indian or Pakistani scarf. But, used in such a way, that is, performed by the young people, it enacts difference and is reduced to a cultural “typology” of Other than them. It would be easiest to claim that these young people do not understand this cultural (religious) “type.” This rudimentary or fundamental kind of othering even by children at the same time describes the homogenous “nature” of their own “community” and reminds me of its political coherence. By highlighting their coherence, difference becomes a question of whose difference in difference to them as the cultural (religious) norm. Listening to difference, then, or for difference in these senses is done by reaffirming sameness, where playing with the other is a means of grappling with difference in its cultural (and gendered) forms. But these young people are clever and brave – this, I would submit, is a courageous image to be making – as gendered and sexual politics, which are maybe the lesser ones comfortable in Northern Irish society, are superimposed to the cultural and religious ones. They are comfortable with this sense of themselves. They challenge the fixity of identity (Irish, gendered), unafraid to explore it. This brings Ursula Burke and I, as artists-mentors, to push them further beyond uncomplicated stereotypes of “Irishness” through this remaking of life within art.
Conclusions: Effects, Recommendations, Implications – Ethical Research and Listening Praxes Toward a Community-Centred Art

Through the writing and assembling of this thesis, I have hoped for *rapprochement* of the conceptual realms of ethics and listening, believing that the “aesthetic” – the art – resides incompletely in each of them, insofar that one can serve to complete the other. To close this discussion, I would like to begin by suggesting some of the possible effects the discussion of ethics in this thesis may have on the field of “community-centred art” both as an artistic and emerging scholarly field of research. This prompts me to return to the thesis’ subtitle, which announces the thesis as an “examin[ation of some of the] methods and praxes [that can be deployed] towards a community-centred art.” In describing the intricacies of practice, the cases explored put forward a set of ethical questions and stipulations that practitioners of community-centred art – in the inclusive sense of a “peoples’ praxis” – might further test out through embodied practice. My hope is that the articulation comes close to offering a set of methods for the co-creation and analysis of a community-centred art that incorporates methods of ethics self-regulation.

As exemplified in Chapter Four, such methods helping to maintain an ethical stance involve considerations of complexly relational factors such as

- Precautions relating to meaning-making (linked to language, the privileging of certain sounds, a sensory hierarchy of seeing over listening, the observer bias, and partiality and situatedness);
- Anecdotal details and responsibility for accurate description;
- Self-regulation (linked to issues of privacy and consent, empathy, a spectrum from directive to more collaborative processes, reading non-verbal, developing alternatives to co-production when appropriate, and curatorial and representational rights);
- Miscommunication and not listening;
• The passing of time and its effects on what counts as ethical;
• How and whose motivations are generating the different creative, research and social outputs;
• The creation of alliances and networks;
• The non-fixity of subject positions and social locations and the potential transformation of social relations, community relations, self and community;
• The structural hierarchies pre-existing the research and their impact on obtaining consent;
• What details to omit from our accounts of the research.

The first two, the fifth and the last factors are particularly significant when developing accounts of the social dimension of the work. These factors relate to how we “witness” community-centred art and to the onus of responsibility in relation to description and authoethnography. From Chapter Four it should also be clear that this ethical stance is a complicated self-reflexive one.

How do we reconcile the intentions of “art” and those of “research” in practice? If the degree of “responsibility” is similar in art and in research, a key difference is to whom we are accountable in different instances of art and research, as I have attempted to exemplify in Chapter Four. In two columns below, I attempt to compare and contrast what does it mean to “do ethics” as an artist and free-thinker and what does it mean to “do ethics” as a researcher?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist and Free-Thinker</th>
<th>Researcher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intuition</td>
<td>Prescription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serendipity and co-creativity</td>
<td>Structure and singular site of power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative approach</td>
<td>Directive approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-questioning and -reflexive</td>
<td>Self-questioning and -reflexive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Artist and Free-Thinker**

- Generative and evolutive questions
- Continuous forms of informal and formal consent
- Privileged proximity
- Representational politics
- Self and community-regulation

**Researcher**

- Predetermined and fixed questions
- Formal consent at start of research
- Objective distance
- Representational authority
- Institutional regulation

If anything, the process of ethical (and self) scrutiny has increased my anxiety about how to balance what is right and wrong with how to care and when caring itself is overbearing and restricts aesthetic freedom. However, there is a residual, constructive consequence: I am more sensitive to the “micro-social-political” subtleties of interaction, the possibilities of miscommunication – the gray-zones that makeup community-centred art. It may be in those “ethical” gaps that changes happen and that art works.

At best, I hope that the effect of the interrogations about ethics in this study would be not only to influence the way that art is made, but more importantly, to change even if incrementally the social relations of/in this art and our conceptions of our selves within and in relation to the art. I believe that by prompting ethical reflexivity through articulated questions and enquiry, we are also potentially changing how we move through art and navigate the social with precautions, which, I hope, are less prohibitive than empowering.

The influence and recommendations in Chapter Four could extend to the fields of art practice, art history, art education and art therapy, as well as the wider social, fieldwork and research praxes in areas of sociology, ecumenics and policy development.
Specifically, I would like to suggest three recommendations for Research Ethics Boards (REBs) for work at the intersection of community, art and research. Overall, I think it is useful to caution that the genres of “community-centred art,” because of their hybrid and elastic configurations (as described in Chapter Two), maintain a tension between “the artistic” and “the social aspects” of the work. This, I believe, necessitates a particular type of ethics scrutiny that forces us to compartimentalise “the social” from “the art” of the work in ways that are inconsistent with an integrated praxis. However, I do believe, as I have illustrated herein with the case of Tar Isteach, that this kind of artificial division is one possible approach to ethics review. It may allow us to scrutinise the social aspects in order to attempt to free the art. With this in mind, I would recommend that –

(a) REBs reconsider – if not expand – their definitional framework pertaining to “creative practice activities.” I hesitate to posit a direct and inflexible recommendation here in realising that this potentially limits artistic freedom as well as what counts as art. However, REBs should consider expanding the glossary of adjacent terms and developing more adequate definitions of “art” and “artistic practice” to better reflect “community-centred art” as a highly hybrid, mutable and elastic practice that is “artful,” “ethical” and “oppositional” (as described in Chapter Two). This should also include a definition of what in this case potentially constitutes “community.”

(b) REBs allow for an “exit clause” that allows for community groups and organisations and other “human subjects” directly involved in the artistic or social aspects of the research to decide by consent not to be regulated by external institutions such as REBs at any point during the process of the research. This would enable them to purposefully abstain for reasons of their choosing and potentially confer authority to the artist or/and the community themselves to foster the development of mutual trust.

(c) Potentially, (b) would allow for the community organisations to co-determine the conditions and parameters for “ethics review” if desirable from within. How might this be achieved? What kind of consent is necessary? What structures are in place already?

The more authority we give to external regulators like REBs, the less community-centred the trust (direction) for what counts as ethical becomes. It is not that the “art in action” is less responsible,
merely that it does not heed responsibility in the same ways. A problem with “institutional” ethics is that a focus on keeping the (external) “regulators” out to maintain sense(s) of aesthetic freedom may take the focus off the actual ethics at play in the community context. This threatens to move us away from “community” politics and listening, and towards bureaucratic mechanisms. REBs also present ethics procedures as universal standards. It is, I believe, “unethical” to purposely inflict hurt, yet what does this mean in a pre-post conflict society where both sides are still hurting? In projects such as Where We Meet with Tar Isteach, incredible energy and anxiety were expended on how to strategise in order to maintain aesthetic freedom, which ultimately detracted from time that could have been spent negotiating the ethics and art with community groups.

This may have as much to do with working integrally with community, to being true to community as it precedes us and exceeds us, as with arts-based research. Although empirical, social science research (the “community” part of community arts) might be ethically reviewed, the art in action, which is always generative, requires the freedom of continuous transformation in order to be artful. This art is afraid of policy that fixes it in place. Therefore, in community-centred art, again, the research creator feels a counterproductive tension between “community” (responsibility) and “art.”

One of the intentioned effects of this dissertation is that more attention to ethics, but also to listening, might effectuate such change. Therefore, I would further posit a second set of praxes, a framework of “grounded knowledge” evolving from examples of practice that relate to aspects of critical pedagogy. In summary, I would like to extract the aspects of critical pedagogy pertaining to the workshops and examples of practice described in the cases in Chapter Five. I do so in the hopes that these praxes might usefully be carried out in wider areas of applied
community research including the above-mentioned fields of potential application. The praxis (grounded theory) described herein promotes:

• Grounded practices of research and artmaking to understand contexts;
• Critical forms of cartographic practices;
• Listening as a means of information gathering and data analysis;
• Listening in order to help build and foster communication, trust, empathy and community.

I propose an articulation of praxis for art education, research that conceptualises listening-as-attentiveness, and a listening in practice or in action that is relatable as a cross-sensory experience of synaesthesia. To do this, the praxis foregrounds the following modes of listening:

• Listening with our eyes;
• Listening with the body and intuition;
• Listening to the sectarian city;
• Listening through language;
• Fieldnotes as listening;
• Listening to and for difference.

This typology, I think, may resemble what the specialist of communication ethics and rhetorical theory Pat J. Gehrke (2009), citing the words of Richard Cytowic, explains as “the rare capacity to hear colors, taste shapes, or experience equally startling sensory blendings whose quality
seems difficult for most of us to imagine” (5). Gehrke aptly writes, “I consider synaesthesia a salient analogue or metaphor for the practice of listening because it represents a crossover sensory phenomenon that is not merely additive nor even truly integrative” (ibid.). For me, this could be like one sense chasing or wrapping another through complex forms of inter-sensory engagement, and, of sorts, conversation. Gehrke (2009) continues his explanation:

While synaesthesia is an intriguing way to think about the unavoidable multi-sensory function of listening, it may also represent something of the relationship between ethics and listening. If ethics has traditionally been in the eye and listening in the ear, perhaps this is exactly why we have had such a difficult time with both […] we cannot simply decide to pay attention to one and not the other. Each is always crossing over into the other” (5-6).

Future research into the senses might more aptly consider and articulate such sensory blendings.

This study is timely considering the recent launch in May 2015 of the online journal of socially-engaged art criticism entitled Field.225 Founded and edited by Kester, working with an editorial board of experienced practitioners, the journal calls for new analytical approaches and underscores the value of descriptions of practice that are based on direct observation and lived experience of the art and social relations of the art and activism.

The value of the case studies presented lies ultimately in the thickly descriptive account that allows readers who are practitioners of community-centred art to reinterpret and adapt the methods and praxes in multiple and varied ways for their purposeful implementation in contexts of community-centred art and beyond. Therefore, this writing holds the potential spark of a “slow activism,” insofar as it may encourage further action (Heim 2003; see endnote 79 of this document). This dissertation documents rare details of practice from the “inside,” providing unusual examples of praxes, which are useful for learning through example by being privy to the intricacies of experiences of community-centred art. These details are embedded within the
moments and minutia of being present to the art, social relations and life of the projects described. They have theory-building potential but they are also examples that can be replayed, mimicked and altered – like re-enacted stories – again and again. Not only the praxes of critical pedagogy and artmaking themselves, but the richness of analysis/interpretation proposed and the ways that these steer us to particular methods of artistic research and meaning-making that, if not always faultlessly ethically sound, are continuously ethically-mindful. With this in mind, I hope that this material can be usefully incorporated in training for practitioners of community-centred art.

The philosopher Gemma Corradi Fiumara starts her book *The Other Side of Language*,

> Among the widespread meanings of the Greek term *logos* [footnote 1 defines “logos”] there do not appear to be recognizable references to the notion and capacity of listening; in the tradition of western thought we are thus faced with a system of knowledge that tends to ignore listening processes […] Perhaps we could start out by admitting that there could be no saying without hearing, no speaking which is not also an integral part of listening, no speech which is not somehow received. (1995, 1)

Although Fiumara’s claim reconnects speech to verbal language, I do think that we could also say that there would be no self without the other, no silence without sound – not because they are opposites but rather because one is contained within the boundaries of the other so that, like John Cage’s *4’33”*, sound is “silence” and “silence” is sound.

With my investment in a peoples’ praxis in mind, I would like to cite a final statement by youth worker Finbarr Kelly about the evaluation of community-centred art. Kelly convincingly turned us to the object/subject of the artwork:

> But they’ve never done anything like this! And it’s very easy to look at something and say, ‘What has had a positive impact?’ The piece of work that they’ve [the young people] done is their – that’s their yardstick. You know, the message is in that there. If you’d of did that, the message is in that there. That’s what they
I can hear Finbarr through these words on this page, which take me back to my context of research-creation and fieldwork when I lived within divided society of the north of Ireland in 2010-2011, and to Finbarr’s desire for change and the role of aesthetics. Listening again to these words for what they say, Kelly reminds us that the artwork itself holds evaluative potential. It is embedded with signifying indicators that inherently and on-goingly measure “the work” that is being achieved. This theoretical statement was an unexpected example of a “peoples’ praxis,” which highlighted the young people as producers of art, not just learners who build confidence and skills.
ENDNOTES

1 Coined in Québec City (Martel 2001), “art action” means to re-formulate the language and discourses around performance art in relation to the body and the encounter as the site for developing an art through action (un art en actes). Following this logic, “art in action” means to hark back to this ethos while extending to practices of co-creativity and collective cultural production. Also see Pierre Restany’s essay (in Martel 2002), “L’art en action», which invests a similar meaning to the phrase “art in action.”

2 Fitting here is Sioui Durand’s (2011, 21-5) categorisation of “micro-political art” emerging at the turn of the 21st century, which includes art made through intimate, interpersonal processes that develop an “art of the living” (ibid., 21) within small groups and communities. At the other end of his spectrum, Sioui Durand (ibid., 17-21) identifies examples of “macro-political art,” where art connects and contributes to broader protest and social movements.

3 For example, see Brooks (1988), Braden (1978), Dickson (1995), and Fitzgerald (2004).

4 I relate my neologism, “peoples’ praxis,” to the “peoples’ theatres,” urban development plans and museums that are produced by and for the people, and expressly named as such throughout Britain.


6 Bourriaud’s ideas were later consolidated in the book, Esthétique relationelle (1998), which was translated for anglophone readers only in 2002. Inspiring my research in its beginnings, these composite propositions have allowed for theoretical development in the practices of community-centred art.

7 In the north of Ireland, C/N/R and P/U/L are commonly used acronyms: C/N/R is for Catholic, Nationalist and Republican; and P/U/L is for Protestant, Unionist and Loyalist. Although a useful shortcut, they suggest a certain “ethnographic” fixity that in fairness cannot represent the complexities of Irish identity.


10 I attended the workshop for voices, instruments and found objects, Music Improvisation by Caroline Pugh, presented in the context of the Open Source Belfast Festival, 9 May 2012, Belfast.

11 Instead of the term “disposition,” I choose “attitude,” which is closer to the French usage of the feminine une attitude. This concept is one that I derive from art discourses through sources such as the catalogue for Arts d’attitudes (Martel 2002). In the early 2000s, at a time when theories from France were establishing discourses on relational practice, this major event presented a programme of “action art,” artistic interventions and symposia, of contextual art practices in situ, melding French perspectives – from Québec, as well as France – in Québec City.

12 The latter desires are usually omitted in such discussions, which, I think, misrepresents the theorising on community collaboration and reduces the possibilities for shared learning.

13 Pedagogy of the Oppressed was first published in Portuguese in 1968, and then translated into English in 1970.

14 From Brazil, Wendell was a visiting postdoctoral student at UQÀM (University du Québec a Montréal) in 2013. I attended his insightful presentation entitled « Éducation et Culture: Formation selon Paulo Freire » at UQÀM on 5 March 2013.

15 See Appendix A for a copy of my initial GREB ethics clearance letter from Queen’s University, granting permissions for this research to take place. Ethics clearance was first granted by GREB on 26 January 2011. This clearance was renewed and granted annually on three occasions in January 2012, January 2013
and January 2014, meaning technically that the research was officially “cleared” by the committee until January 2015.

16 Governed by three Canadian research councils, CIHR (Canadian Institutes of Health Research), SSHRC (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council) and NSSRC (Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada), this policy, which is updated on an on-going basis, is called Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans. This study uses the 2010 version, although the newest version is dated 2014.

17 This is the case for the Departments of Gender Studies and Cultural Studies. Informal advice was sought from the latter department before submitting my application for research to GREB.

18 Ethical approval from Trinity College was provided by a sanctioning and internal ad hoc committee in Dublin and granted on 31 January 2011 (See Appendix B).

19 This essay (Fiala c. 2005; written in 2001) was subsequently translated into French. The original and the translation were published online at http://www.engrenagenoir.ca/levier/ressources/textes?lang=en (English version) and http://www.engrenagenoir.ca/blog/en/ressources/textes (French version). This essay is also cited and discussed by White (2011).

20 Entitled Map of You & Me, the first edition (Fiala 2004) was revised with a second co-authored edition (Fiala and El-Masry 2006).

21 For discussion on approaches to fieldwork by artists see Foster (1996) and Lacy (2008).

22 I have been influenced by definitions and practices of “grounded theory,” such as Strauss and Corbin’s (1997), which argue for theory grounded in practice and real world research.

23 Brewer (2000, 60-61) discusses changing research positions between “involvement and detachment.”


25 6-10 December 2010, Training Sessions, Corrymeela Community, Ballycastle.

26 These dates, however, should not be interpreted as signalling abrupt starts or sudden paradigmatic shifts. Instead, each leaves a high tide line, ebbing into, while giving rise to, the next.

27 Here “community” takes on changing meanings from recreational communities to those that are geographically-circumscribed, to communities of interest that are bound by tastes, ideologies or concerns (ecological, social, and economic).

28 Selected sources from the U.S. are included where appropriate to support historical examples or to introduce influential concepts emerging there, which have import beyond.

29 The distinction between published and non-published is important in a field where a large part of the knowledge is oral, visual or circulating in “unofficial” forms.

30 Williams (1976, 76-82) describes cumulative and unsettled senses for “culture” over time and the meanings it takes on in different European languages: from “tending” to processes of “civilization,” to claims such as “culture is music, literature, painting and sculpture, theatre and film” by the late 19th and early 20th century. Culture (or cultured) also eventually evolves in difference to “popular art,” where it maintains a hierarchy of value between “high” and “popular” (ibid., 82). These meanings collapse, where some senses are “forgotten” and others take on increasing significance, to inform our understanding of “culture” into today.

31 Gordon (1965) presents the history of the Medicine Hat Community Art Club from 1945.

32 Freedlander Gibans (1982) surveys the history of community arts councils in the US, with roots as early as the 1920s.

33 By the time the community arts movement took form, the meaning of “community” had broadened, or, as Condé and Beveridge write (1995, 210): “Later, this movement began to define community beyond simple geographical terms to include communities of interests.”

34 By contrast, Hall and Whannel (1965) consider popular arts to include genres of popular entertainment such as popular cinema and jazz produced for the people. The incongruity between definitions of popular arts, it would seem, parallels the previously discussed tension between the democratisation of culture and
cultural democracy. Although Hall and Whannel’s understanding is at a distance from what I mean by popular arts – which under my definition necessitates the by – still, the meaning they propose is useful because it adds a recreational dimension.

35 As Tippett (1990) documents, to name a few, this includes the Toronto Mendelson Choir from 1894, the Shakespeare Reading Class started in 1906 at Charlottetown, the Ottawa Drama League from 1913, the Victoria Little Theatre from 1929, and the Community Players of Winnipeg.

36 The terms themselves have unstable and, at times, competing meanings. See, for example, Gary Alan Fine’s discussion of “folk art,” “outsider art” and “self-taught art” in his book Everyday Genius (2004, 29-33). In addition, well-known Canadian art historian J. Russell Harper’s discussion of the application of “primitive,” “naïve,” “provincial” and “folk” in A People’s Art (1974, 5-8) qualifies “vernacular” painting in early Canada as different than European painting, differing from the British book with the same title, People’s Art by Emmanuel Cooper, which focuses on the art of working class people from 1750 onwards (Cooper 1994).

37 Read’s pedagogy is perhaps best laid out in his books Education Through Art (1969; first published in 1943) and The Redemption of the Robot (1970). Read was also influenced by the writings of social anarchist Kropotkin and by Jungian psychology. Read’s idea of the artist is based on the following bold claim: “The aim of education is therefore the creation of artists – of people efficient in the various modes of expression” (Read 1969, 11). Read believed that all people could potentially develop into artists, that is, that the right education could transform persons into artists, regardless of social, cultural, economic and most other differences.


39 For a discussion of early arts labs and arts centres, see the first chapter of Lane’s study (1978). In 1969, the Arts Council of Great Britain appointed its first committee to deal directly with community arts: the New Activities Committee (see Hope 2011, 16-7).

40 This short-lived committee of 1975 to 1977 was called the Community Arts Committee. From 1981 to 1986, the Greater London Council was also recognised for its exemplary support of community arts. See Mulgan and Worpole (1986).

41 McGauley (2006) mentions sources of funding available since 1997, leading to what is now the Canada Council’s Artists and Community Collaboration Fund. The Canada Council’s Explorations program has previously funded community arts, although haphazardly (Condé and Beveridge 1995, 215). At the provincial level, similar Ontario- and British Columbia-based programmes have been in place since the late 1980s (ibid.; also, see Forbes 1990).

42 These are evident, for example, in the writing of Kelly (1984), Phillips (1983) and in the conference report by Wales Association for Community Arts and Clwyd Library and Museums Services (1983).

43 More than any other advocate of community arts encountered in this study, Phillips’ article, I stipulate, would have served to remind his peer community artists (who were likely reading this article published following their Friends and Allies national conference) of the authoritative meddling of the State in community arts’ affair. For details pertaining to the conference themes, see the report Friends and Allies (Greater London Association of Community Artists and Shelton Trust 1983, 3).

44 By the time of Kelly’s book in 1984, the responsibilities pertaining to the British State’s support of community arts were being devolved to the regions through the then Regional Arts Associations. Gosse’s (2002) aforementioned study, in particular chapter “3 Public Section and Community Arts” (esp. 96-100) provides a detailed account of this process. Devolution from the central funding body seems to suggest that community arts were no longer of national import.

Cultural Democracy” (ibid., 151-5), can serve to extend and update debates keeping “democratisation of culture” in tension with “cultural democracy.”

46 Tipett’s (1990) book suggests that the instatement of state arts subsidy reshaped what counted as culture in Canada.

47 This included a number of Regional Arts Associations (subsequently called Regional Arts Boards), the national Association of Community Artists (ACA), which in 1980 became the Association for Community Arts (AFCA) and began to function on a regional basis alongside the Shelton Trust, the new national agency. For a brief history of the ACA and the Shelton Trust, see Sally Morgan’s chapter “Looking back over 25 years” (in Dickson 1995, 17, 21-6).

48 For instance, among them was community artist Elizabeth Leyh, who was affiliated with the Camden branch of the multi-city organisation Inter-Action, U.K. (see Leyh 1980).

49 Throughout this chapter, I insist on the generalised qualifier “state” as opposed to “public” because of possible discrepancies of meaning across British and Canadian understandings.

50 This includes the following: Community Arts Working Party (1974; Arts Council of Great Britain); Community Arts Working Party (1975; Camden Borough Council, U.K.); Arts Council Community Arts Evaluation Working Group (c.1977; U.K.); Forbes (1990; Ontario Arts Council); City of Ottawa (1993); Saskatchewan Municipal Government (1995); Policy Action Team 10 (1999; Department for Culture, Media and Sport, U.K.); Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2000; U.K.); Arts Council England (2002); Arts Council England (2003); McGauley (2006; Canada Council for the Arts); Canadian Heritage (2007).

51 For more concerning the development of state social inclusion policies in the U.K., see Safe (2001) and Gordon Nesbit (2005). The visual arts journal Engage also dedicated issue 11 of 2002 to this topic. From a different vantage point, Éve Lamoureux (2008) explores the impact of cultural mediation policies in Québec.

52 In this handbook, Biren (1975) profiles a number of U.K. community video projects, including Cardiff Street Television, Benwell Community Project, Bath Community Video Project run by Bath Arts Workshop, Albany Community Centre’s Community Video Project, Inter-Action’s Community Media Van and Community Media Division, Graft-on!, Goldsmiths’ College AVE Centre, Islington Bus Co., the Community Resource Centre run by Cleator Moor Community Development Project, and Brent Family Services Unit.

53 Also see their organisational website at http://www.welfare-state.org/index.htm (accessed April 22, 2014).

54 Also see their organisational website at http://www.interplaytheatre.co.uk (accessed June 25, 2015).

55 Also see their organisational website at http://www.tinderbox.org.uk (accessed April 22, 2014).

56 Also see their organisational website at http://www.derryplayhouse.co.uk (accessed June 25, 2015).

57 The Irish reader (Fitzgerald 2004, 249-67) ends with a useful historical timeline, which documents the emergence of key community arts organisations and projects namely in England and Ireland (north and south).

58 Also, I will mention that this U.K. publication not only presents a brief account of the National Film Board’s Challenge for Change (Nigg and Wade 1980, 19-21), but that filmmaker John Greyson’s review of the book in the pages of Fuse magazine (Greyson 1980) is further testimony to intersections between histories of practice at geographical distance.

59 This lineage could also include the Mexican muralists and the Russian Constructivists of the 1920s.

60 Most of this production is framed by the unscrupulous government led by Margaret Thatcher from 1979 to 1990.

61 As the politician and professor of business George Cabot Lodge has cited, quoting verbatim an article of 1968 in the journal Science: “The morality of an act is a function of the state of the system at the time it is performed. […] A hundred and fifty years ago a plainsman could kill an American bison, cut out its tongue for his dinner, and discard the rest of the animal. He was not in any important sense being wasteful. Today,
The rise of interest in animal ethics with the rise of the animal rights movement of the 1970s, for example, gains significance alongside other civic advocacies and ecological debates, and signifies differently according to changes in the food market, epidemics and styles of eat (for instance, the upsurge of pescetarian, vegetarian and vegan diets linked to particular ideological standpoints, or the fear spread by the Bovine spongiform encephalopathy (Mad Cow Disease) because of poor treatment of livestock). From this rudimentary example, it is easy to understand how, here, to kill an animal is not just a moral question of right or wrong doing. This “performance” takes on particular significance in ways that are contextual and timely. Yet this system is not just time-bound, as the above quotation emphasises. It is, I would argue, affected by other factors such as place and conflict (where, for example, in the context of civil war, we might accept certain acts of violence that would not otherwise be tolerated), as well as power-laden issues of class, race, gender and economic relations (that function according to fragile structures of hegemonic order privileging certain people/positions/places).

Joe Egan (2004) puts forward the following precepts, dividing her essay in five parts: “1. A strong basic concept”; “2. Pairing the right artists with the project needs”; “3. Clarity about levels of engagement and roles”; “4. Time” – that is, allotting the necessary time; and “5. A commitment to keep asking questions.” The latter is further divided into four subsections: “Red Adair syndrome”; “b. Emotional avoidance”; “c. Repeating the same old mistakes”; “d. Disowning our own practice” (ibid., 144-7). An underlying theme seems to be responsibility over others and self.

For example, see Bishop (2004, 2012) and Beech (2004, 2011).

The extended 1996 definition adopted by OAC after Vital Links is cited in Fernandez’s article as follows (2005, 9): “an arts process that involves the work of artists and community members in a collaborative creative process resulting in collective expression. It provides a way for communities to express themselves; enables artists, through financial or other supports, to engage in creative activity with communities; and is collaborative – the creative process is equally important as the artistic outcome.”

This essay was published by Levier / Engrenage Noir (Neumark and Chagnon 2011) within the important reader, Affirming Collaboration, discussed on page 55.

The re-ascribing of roles and functions through praxes will interests me more in later chapters of this thesis.

White likely encountered this essay because it was also published by Levier / Engrenage Noir.

Such thinkers have contributed to discourse in Canada, Britain and Ireland. For instance, in 2003, Mary Jane Jacob was the keynote speaker at Community Arts Ontario’s annual conference Kick it up a Notch, which I attended. Also, in 1996-7, Suzanne Lacy delivered a project in Vancouver. The resultant collaborative performance, Under Construction, is described by Miller (2003).

The editorial group was composed of Daina Augaitis, Lorne Falk, Sylvie Gilbert and Mary Anne Moser.

Three of these communities were defined ethnographically and one was politically-coherent.

The chapter, “Notes on Collaboration” (in Augaitis et al. 1995, 179-89) is a collaborative essay by Carole L. Beaulieu, Melanie Boyle, Sabrina Mathews, Solomon Tzeggai and Martine H. Crispo. The essay consists of five short, subtitled sections, which present reflections on the concept and working practices of collaboration. With the exception of Beaulieu, the authors’ emphasis is upon collaboration as a practice developing through acts of dialogue that include listening. They discuss collaboration as linguistic and embodied. Of particular relevance, in the section “Creating Conversations,” Matthews cites Bakhtin on the importance of fostering “response” (rather than hindering it) for progressing “a dialogue between artist and audience and between communities” (186). Beaulieu’s concluding comment that “We must leave our egos
outside” (182) approximates Suzi Gablik’s (1995a) invitation to let the ego-self surrender through a connective aesthetics.

*Footnotes*

74 Hope (2011, 181) claims that this is the earliest published instance of the term.

75 This includes specialised courses and degrees at California College of the Arts; Portland State University; Queen’s College, City University of New York to name a few.

76 For example, see Lisa Steele’s (1982) article in the feminist quarterly Fireweed. As Lisa Steele explains (1982): “The trouble comes when Chicago becomes insistent about the collective or collaborative form of production of The Dinner Party while at the same time claiming ‘full aesthetic control.’ It simply cannot be done” (31).

77 In particular, the contribution by artist Ayesha Hameed (in Cronin and Robertson 2011) is a relevant example of self-reflexive writing about detailing a performance art, urban intervention that she co-produced with Anita Schoep in Montréal.

78 The authors seem to equate political art with activist art. Their argument has a historical basis. They describe their “wish to bring together action and art is by no means new but rather is an echo of a nineteenth- and twentieth century avant-garde ideal (found in the work of the Russian Constructivists, the Lettrists, the Situationists) – to dissolve the boundaries between art and life and between revolutionary politics and art” (Cronin and Robertson 2011, 10). The editors argue: “On the one hand, writing about political art, particularly within the discourse of art history, has tended to contain, dismiss, or redirect the goals of political, oppositional, resistant, and activist art. On the other hand, this is a very leaky container, and the role of art history cannot and should never have been seen to be all-encompassing” (ibid., 11).

79 In particular Wallace Heim provides an insightful account of Platform’s work, which intersects with many themes of this dissertation. In “Slow Activism: Homelands, Love and the Lightbulb,” Heim (2003, 183) discusses the intricacies of what she calls “one work of social practice art: HOMELAND” by the East-London based collective, who have been active since 1983. Her reference to “The family of social practice art” locates with works within a discourse of “loosely associated” practices (ibid., 185), which includes the theorising of Kester, whom she references in footnote four along with adjacent bodies of thought such as Lacy and Barber, although she does recognise significant differences (ibid., 200). The site for HOMELAND was a lorry parked at different sites in London to incite conversations about “home” between members of Platform and public. Of particular relevance for my study, Heim formulates a theorisation of the concept of listening in the context of Platform’s practice, describing their conversational method as “a medium and skill developed through practice within the collective and ‘listening’ actions” (ibid.,184), later using the term “ethos of listening” (ibid., 197). She also comments on their “skill in creating equitable, dialogic situations in creating public spaces for conversation imbued with the aesthetic,” and citing Newton and Helen Harrison, relates their work to the “non-argumentative” practice of “conversational drift” (ibid., 187). Introducing the concept of “slow activism” she also clarifies, “There is another dimension to ‘drift’ I would add, which is that the artist creates the conditions for conversation to continue beyond the reach of the event. [...] An experience of conversation which is transformative is also a practice, a rehearsal for another” (ibid., 187). She continues, “This is slow activism. [...] The activist potential for change develops in the time it takes to speak about something, and for it to be ‘listened’ into existence” (ibid., 187). Among others, Heim’s concept of listening, and the closely related “hearing,” are clarified by citing Hannah Arendt, H.-G. Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, and Seyla Benhabib (ibid., 187, 191-94). Also, Heim elaborates upon Aristotelian terms regarding spoken word rhetoric and persuasion, following P. C. Smith’s interpretation of Martin Heidegger’s reinterpretation of Aristotle, relating theoretical threads back to the narrative modes of HOMELAND (ibid., 195-96).

80 This theme reappears often in Will Bradley and Charles Esche’s (2007) edited book Art and Social Change, which includes essays expanding on ideas of social change through art, such as a commissioned essay by the feminist art theorist Lucy R. Lippard.

81 Interestingly, Williams (1981, 70) classifies three types of “external relations” in cultural formations: “(a) [s]pecializing,” “(b) alternative,” and “(c) oppositional.” The oppositional relations are those “in which the
cases represented by (b) are raised to active opposition to the established institutions, or more generally to the conditions within which these exist.”

I first encountered Engrenage Noir in 2003 through the project *Heart-to-Heart*, which I coordinated at Modern Fuel Artist-Run Centre in Kingston, Ontario. They later translated and published my essay, “Collaborative Ethics,” written in 2001. In 2009, I regained contact with them upon consulting their specialised library on community art, and later gave a talk as part of the intensive two-day training session, *Collaborons, Casserolons!* in June 2012. Over the years, I have followed their activities closely and this relationship continues.

Levier is Engrenage Noir’s main mobilising/programming arm.

This is the bilingual translation employed in the publication’s “Foreword” (Nawrocki in Neumark and Chagnon 2011) and prioritised in the 2012 training programme materials.

In an electronic message sent out to its listserv in January 2014, Engrenage Noir / Rouage writes: «Nous allons continuer à soutenir la pratique de l’art communautaire ...activiste, mais nous tenions à vous informer que dorénavant, nous allons remplacer le mot «activiste» par celui de « militant ». Outre le fait qu’il a été porté à notre attention que le mot « activiste» est un anglicisme, nous souhaitons utiliser le même vocabulaire que celui des organismes communautaires avec lesquels nous collaborons. Ainsi, désormais, nous parlerons d’art communautaire MILITANT » (Email, 14 January 2014).

Other relevant areas of theory and practice include feminist linguistics and notions of connected knowing, and community-based research methods based on action research, qualitative analysis and autoethnographic models.

The primary theoretical protagonists are Suzanne Lacy, Suzy Gablik, Grant H. Kester, Claire Bishop, Mary Jane Jacob, and Pablo Helguera.

Lacy (1995, 28-9) also suggests four contextual factors from the 1980s onwards that accelerated its development: (1) racial issues and discrimination; (2) gender politics; as well as (3) the rise of the censorship of culture; and (4) growing health and ecological troubles.

Lacy (2008) herself reiterates this emphasis in a more recent article, “Time in Place: New Genre Public Art a Decade Later.”

I have endeavoured to show the longevity of community arts in Chapter Two, although most early examples are drawn from community theatre, choirs and popular associations. However, labour arts commissions in Canada and the Works Progress Administration in the U.S. do constitute early precedents for this work as early as the 1930s. For Canadian examples of labour arts, see Donegan (1987, 1998), and Beveridge and Johnston (1999). A brief introduction to the U.S. Works Progress Administration is provided by Goldbard (1993).

For starters, Lacy herself (with the collaborative project entitled *Full Circle*) was one of the featured artists therein (in Jacob 1995, 64-75).

Developed under the auspices of Street-Level Video, the video installation *Tele-Vecindario* was the culmination of a year of arbitration and training workshops in videomaking that involved members of four rival gangs living in one Chicago neighbourhood (in Jacob 1995, 84-7).

The work of Inigo Manglano-Ovalle and Street Level Video is considered by other authors, namely Kwon (2004, esp. 130-5), who analyses many aspects of this Sculpture Chicago programme, and Kester (2004, 117-8). Still running by 2002, Kwon notes that the project was incorporated in 1995 as a non-profit arts organisation that had started its activities in 1993 (2004, 135).

A different version of a similar article was published in 1992 under the title “Connective Aesthetics” within the pages of *American Art* 6 (2): 2-7.

Did Lacy interview Glassman or speak with him on this issue?


Specifically, Kester (2004, 10) has been influenced by Bakthin’s idea “that the work of art can be viewed as a kind of conversation.”

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relations governing social relations. At best, “relational aesthetics” offers a framework for considerations of relational practice hinging on collaboration. As such, “relational aesthetics” is no more than a “reparative” practice of British community artist Loraine Lesson can serve as a staple example of an ethnographic writing particularly useful: Condé and Beveridge (1987), Slater (2003), Murphy (2004, 2010), Marriot (2008).

This was made especially clear to me during a series of workshops, which I was fortunate to attend at Saw Gallery in Ottawa as part of a performance exchange programme entitled Crossings / Traversées (17-20 June 2010). Leading the workshops, Belfast-based performance legend Alastair MacLennan spoke extensively about the discrepancy between what is conceptual or ideated and what is actually lived through experience.

In a note, Foster (1996, 275 n6) heeds that “ideological patronage” needs to be differentiated from what Craig Owens has phrased “the indignity of speaking for others.”

Likewise, Kester (2000, 2004) has written about a tension between empathy for and the negation of the represented subject.

In addition to Miller (2003), I have found the following existing examples of self-reflexive research and writing particularly useful: Condé and Beveridge (1987), Slater (2003), Murphy (2004, 2010), Marriot (2008).

This is not just a matter of an artist’s writing about her own work. It is a matter of self-reflexive and self-analytical writing that brings new insights that are unavailable without this intimate proximity.

In addition, although Foster (1996, 190) does get into the “dialogical” (using the phrase “dialogical fieldwork” following Bourdieu, he does not literally write about “listening.”

As a counterpoint to the frameworks presented thus far in this chapter, the oft-cited “relational aesthetics” presents some problems of interpretation and application. It should be mentioned that critic Nicolas Bourriaud’s major theoretical contribution, the well-cited book Ésthetique relationelle (1998), has often been usurped to frame collaborative, activist and community arts. Bourriaud’s theory (ibid.) does provide an entry to discuss art that hinges on, and allows for, new modes of sociability, which he describes as “un art prenant pour horizon théorique la sphère des interactions humaines et son contexte social [...]” (ibid., 14). With examples ranging from Rirkrit Tiravanija’s public meals to Sophie Calle’s anonymous interventions into social space, the degree of ethical consciousness we are dealing with varies greatly from one example to the next. Installations such as Felix Gonzalez-Torres’ Stacks, where the audience is invited to take (and consume) a candy (described in Bourriaud 1998, 39), present his relational theory as wide enough to incite other kinds of interaction. In Stacks, a human exchange is suggested only metonymically. Work like this has less to do with actual interpersonal exchange in a dyadic person-to-person sense, although it might evoke a bodily transaction on an analogical level. To my mind, the loose application by other critics of this framework to actual contexts of community-centred art, such as in Ardenne (2004) and Doherty (2004), is usually problematic. Kester (2005, 70-4) has overviewed, for example, the recent American and British criticism around this seminal book. He reveals some of the tensions and problems within Bourriaud’s framework of “relational aesthetics,” attempting to shift our understanding of relational practice (ibid.). By means of illustration, and against Bourriaud, Kester (ibid., 76-87) suggests that the “reparative” practice of British community artist Loraine Lesson can serve as a staple example of an ultimately relational practice hinging on collaboration. As such, “relational aesthetics” is not useful when applied to artwork that is concerned with representational ethics at a deeper level of actual human relations and interpersonal mindfulness. Alongside critics such as the British Claire Bishop (2004), I understand this projection to be a mis-stretching of a theory that can only deal superficially with person-to-person relations. Bishop (ibid.) has convincingly argued that Bourriaud’s idealist theory omits considerations of the power relations governing social relations. At best, “relational aesthetics” offers a framework for considerations of
art in/as social space. The problem in applying this theory to community-centred art is that it is not specific enough to allow for rigorous analysis along methodological or ethical lines.

108 Leeson had previously worked in duo with Peter Dunn under the auspices of The Art of Change, based in London, England.

109 As I will demonstrate in Chapter Five, “listening through language,” verbal and extra-linguistic, as well as “listening by prosthetic” devices, such as “images” and “objects,” are methods that can help fill the translation gap in language communication.

110 Respectively, these descriptors are excerpted from the subtitles of the cited books.

111 As I will explain further in Chapter Five this involves a locational and contingent listening to community, to context, and to the details of site.

112 The latter cited statement is important in terms of “empathetic insight,” which Kester (2004) explains can be developed on at least three “axes”: (1) between the artist and collaborations; (2) between the collaborators themselves (“can enhance solidarity”); and (3) between the collaborating community and wider, viewing audiences/public (“communities of viewers”).

113 It is no coincidence that the dialogue moved to listening. It is through an interview led by me that Leeson arrives at this articulation: this knowledge is co-created. Joanna Thornborrow’s book, Power Talk, on the subject of institutional talk, discusses how (all) interview speech, even “open” interviews, is directed talk (Thornborrow 2002). In this sense the interview is strategic discourse.

114 Kester finally gets to Koh’s work after a long set up section presenting the work of other artists in relation to ideas of “dialogical exchange,” not listening per se.

115 Koh’s writing can be found online at http://www.ifima.net/ (accessed June 25, 2015). Articles self-published online on this website, available in full, include a working version of “Are You a Spy?”, which was further edited and published in the Irish Visual Artists’ Newsheet (2010a), and “Artist’s Research Text on Methodology” (2010b). Much of the work documented on this website, called “International Forum for InterMedia Art,” is produced in duo with artist and researcher Chu Yuan Chu. Both Koh and Chu have recently completed doctoral studies at the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts and at Robert Gordon University, respectively. Chu’s doctoral thesis is available online (see Chu 2013).

116 My conception of linguistic listening is derived in part from feminist discourse analysis such as Cameron (1992), Thornborrow (2002), and Butler (1997).

117 Jonathan Rée’s book, I See a Voice (1998), has been useful in grasping some aspects of sound in relation to a profoundly visual culture.

118 Nancy makes the useful distinction between “to listen” (« écouter ») and to hear/understand (« entendre »), claiming that they are two types of audition: « Non cependant sans se trouver livré, d’emblé, à la mince incertitude tranchante qui grince, qui claque ou qui crie entre « écoute » et « entente » : entre deux auditions, entre deux allures du même (du même sens, mais quel sens au juste? c’est encore une autre question), entre une tension et une adéquation, ou bien encore, et si l’on veut, entre un sens (qu’on écoute) et une vérité (qu’on entend), bien que l’on ne puisse, à terme, se passer de l’autre? » (Nancy 2002, 13-4).


120 As well, we find an English translation by Charlotte Mandell (in Nancy 2007) with two new essays “How Music Listens to Itself” and “March in Spirit in Our Ranks,” added by the author for this edition. The translation provided by Mandell is as follows: “Not, however, without finding himself immediately given over to the slight, keen incertitude that grates, rings out, or shouts between “listening” and “understanding” between two kinds of hearing, between two paces [allures] of the same (the same sense, but what sense precisely? that’s another question), between a tension and a balance, or else, if you prefer, between a sense (that one listens to) and a truth (that one understands), although the one cannot, in the long run, do without the other?” (ibid., 1-2).

121 This parallels the notion of “just listening” posited by Levin (1989).
incorpor and “The post following sections: “The emergence of reflexivity as an issue” (128–137)


123 Questions of “speaking for others” have been debated by feminist and postcolonial thinkers, including Gayatri Chakravorty’s Spivak’s influential paper “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (1988) responding to a conversation by Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault of 1980, and Linda Alcoff’s “The Problem of Speaking for Others” (1994).


125 I use “symbolic” because the image in and of itself, as a physical object or paper, may in actuality be silent (notwithstanding, of course, the sound of the movement of its particles or that of its displacement by air). Our mind’s ear can conjure sound through seeing (our mind’s eye).

126 Presented in the documentary by Grange, Sebestik, and Bidou (1992/2003), an interview with Cage, as well as his first authored book, Silence (Cage 1961), have been particularly influential.

127 While the current chapter touches on all of these four aspects, the last chapter of this dissertation will anchor them more profoundly.

128 Originally an address of 1957, a transcript appears in Cage (1961, 7-12).

129 This comment was made in the context of an open “Study Day,” organised by the activist art collective, Engrenage Noir, which I attended in Montréal on 13 March 2004. The Jewish and Anglophone, Montréal-based artist, Devora Neumark, was one of two event facilitators for “Ethics? Norms? Questioning Community Art Practices.” For a summary of the Study Day, see Neumark and Chagnon (2011, 51-61). Note, however, that their account does not cite this particular comment by Neumark.


132 In French it can easily be said that, « Ça n’a pas de (un) sens mais plusieurs », which could roughly translate into, “It makes no (one) sense but has many [senses].”

133 I am indebted here to my artist colleague, Lisa Figge, who never ceases to surprise.

134 Without a doubt “listening theorists” would benefit greatly from further exploration into the work of disability theorists in this area.

135 The sound artist and theorist John Wynne’s (2014) socially-engaged, research-creation about language endangerment constitutes another interesting example of artistic research at the confluence of ethics and sound. At this intersection, the 2010 International Conference of the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology was also themed “Ideologies and Ethics in the Uses and Abuses of Sound.” Panels and presentations are available at http://www.akueko.com/Default.aspx?p=WFAE%20Koli%202010 (accessed June 25, 2015).

136 Her definition of music is narrow in comparison to the notion of sound put forward by this thesis. In defining music and musical experience, Higgins (2011) connects music (embodied) to ethics: “My reason for using the category term music is that I mean to address possibilities available in our musical experiences taken collectively. I do not suppose that an individual’s musical experience in modern American culture is likely to be homogenous or of even quality. […] Because I am concerned with the average American’s musical life, I focus on the experience of listeners. I am convinced that more active, practical experiences with music – performance, composition, improvisation, and amateur music making – can similarly benefit ethics, but I focus on the more widespread phenomenon of listening. My point is that the typical American musical life, as already constituted, is potentially valuable to ethics” (19).

137 Chapter Four in Brewer’s (2000) Ethnography has been most useful on this topic, especially the following sections: “The emergence of reflexivity as an issue” (128-30), “Being self-reflexive” (130-132), and “The post-modern, reflexive text” (139-40). Feminist approaches to forms of action research also incorporate a useful definition of reflexivity; for example, see Frisby and Reid (2008, 100).
138 By “political” I aim to invoke a method of research that is intimate and proximal because it insists on building relationships with others.
139 Similar protocols are enforced by different professional and/or non-profit organisations (some examples of social entrepreneurship, private, public and corporate models of organisational structures, whether formally incorporated or inform and institutions of learning of different varieties both here and abroad. The fieldwork research presented within this dissertation has undergone “ethics reviews” both at Queen’s University in Canada and at Trinity College Dublin in the north of Ireland.
140 Here, “research” must be defined as a practice of the self, community, or of institution – not a practice of institutions only, or of universities. At best research pertains to all of the areas and perhaps others that are ignored in this comment, study, and my praxis more generally speaking.
141 For example, Ruth Graham interviewed by the author, 7 September 2011, Belfast; and Joanna Karolini interviewed by the author, 8 September 2011, Belfast.
142 Admittedly, my own reading/hearing caution through these cited examples is, to be sure, cautious as well.
143 Here I mean “performativity” in the sense evoked by feminist theorist Judith Butler (1997).
144 Whether on the ethnographic field or not, even the library can be a minefield.
145 From Kester’s (2004, 1-5) descriptions of dialogical art, we can ascertain that this afterlife can take many forms, including a women’s refuge (in the case of WockenKlausur’s Intervention to Aid Drug-Addicted Women) and a videotape for use by the Oakland Police Department in community police training (in the case of Lacy’s The Roof Is on Fire).
146 The full paper title is “TESTING TESTAMENTS: Reconsidering the Artwork TESTAMENTS against the Theory of Grant H. Kester.” This unpublished paper was originally written in 2009 as part of graduate coursework completed in the early stages of my doctoral studies. Unless otherwise indicated, the quotations and descriptions in this section are paraphrased from this paper. The formatting mimics that of the paper, which includes citations from the bookwork as they originally appeared therein.
147 Terms such as “asymmetrical,” “conversational floor,” and “turn” are commonly used to describe conversation empirically in conversation/discourse analysis. I have encountered such terms in books by linguists including Thornborrow (2002) and Cameron (2001).
148 These strands included the Red Coat Dinner Party (2004), the Map of You & Me (2004; first edition), the walking performance Red Coat Trail (2005), the Dear Tamsin bookwork (2005). Aspects of this work have been presented in 2005 as part of exhibitions including: Negotiating Us (Leeds City Art Gallery, U.K.); 36 Red Coat Trails (University of Leeds, U.K.); Interlude (National Centre for Contemporary Arts, Kaliningrad, RU); Hybida II (Bradford Gallery, U.K.; Cartwright Hall, Bradford, U.K.; Brno Gallery, CZ).
149 Admittedly, there is buoyancy and playfulness to this retelling of the live artwork that continues throughout this situated, autoethnographic description, in an attempt to communicate the eccentric temperament at the core of RCT.
150 Although under-examined in this study, there is ample literature in the relative areas of “art” and “life” as relational and overlapping concepts. Allan Kaprow’s (1993) Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life, a re-edited compilation of essays on art, education, and the everyday with writings as early as the late 1960s, is a noteworthy book. Vito Acconci’s Following Piece of 1969, where the artist followed a number of people until they entered a private space outside of his permissibility or access, may seem to present a more practical example, that is explored through practice, by which I mean the ritual and repetition of practice to “make perfect.” These « déambulations » influenced works of mine decades later, including RCT. Echoing Dewey’s earlier ideas, Kaprow (1993) argues for “The Education of the Un-Artist” (parts I and II were first written in 1971 and 1972 respectively), by which he means that as people we can potentially be educated into artists and that artists can learn new ways of doing and being outside of the traditional definitions of High or Fine Art. By my interpretation, Kaprow is suggesting that this can only happen if we challenge the very definitions that have made “art.”

225
Early on I realised that language, like the indistinguishable Styrofoam cups that I conserved as traces from a daily coffee break as part of the trail, cannot hold or describe the specificity of my exchanges with others. Whether structured or open-ended, the typical interview format tends to immediately set up a speech situation where the interviewer automatically listens to the contribution of the interviewee. Although, directed in part by the interviewee, the answers provided still inevitably serve as multiple perspectives to explore a path that has been strategically chosen by the interviewer. Therefore they speak along that discursive path, where deviations might not be deemed relevant to the research.

Entitled, “The Role of Listening in Community Arts,” this international study had three parts: interviews with professionals; conversations with key participants in community arts projects that I had previously organised; and participant-observation of community arts projects. Signed consent was obtained to authorise participation. The researcher automatically assigned false names (without surnames) to participants under 18 years of age in order to help maintain their anonymity. Most of the fieldwork took place in the north of Ireland and England in 2011. For more information on GREB, return to section 1.3.1.2.

One of the spectrums of value/judgement I had established through earlier writing was a gradient of directive to coercive processes that I understood as more (or as less) collaborative. In the interview format, we encounter a tension where the listening interviewer exercises a directive role. The more the questions are fixed, the less s/he is able to assume a responsive listening that follows unexpected turns into new discursive territories that might be epistemologically more significant.

Deborah K. Van Den Hoonaard has written, “Rather than contorting data to fit a theory or theories, you have an obligation to ‘listen’ carefully to the data, much of which has been generously donated by research participants” (Van Den Hoonaard 2012, 177). Interestingly, she suggests that the data is gifted from participant to researcher.

Tamsin aids in the running of the project called Ladybird, which supports emerging artists and creative practitioners in Leeds, U.K.

More detailed questions framed this analysis. In the first column, What were my “ethical” approaches and processes in doing this work? What am I assuming is an ethical process based on my values, needs and desires? Is this need a need for me or a shared need?; The following note was added, Use this conversation to prompt memory around specific points; In the second column, What can I admit to looking back, with the insight and experience I have gained? What might an emphasis on “being ethical” be disguising?; In the third column, What were the processes of listening?; In the fourth column, What else is there within my work? What else do I want to say that pertains to community arts practice?

I first visited Belfast in November of 2009, then relocated there from England in October 2010 to begin this research.

I also presented variations on these ideas publicly in March 2012, first at Queen’s University (14 March) and Concordia (17 March). Presented on St Patrick’s day, the synchronicity of the latter « conférence performance » (Sioui Durand 1997), seemed, and still seems, relevant when exploring ideas of situated research and arguing for the importance of experiential knowledge.

For recent information on interfaces, see the following study: “Belfast Interfaces: Security Barriers and Defensive Use of Space” (Belfast Interface Project 2011).

I should state that this is an alliance – an empathetic position – not a position of sameness.

“Remember, remember, the 5th of November.” The celebrated arsonist Guy Fox tried to burn down the British Parliament, which is ironically celebrated still today.

Nevertheless, some people might not feel comfortable entering the space for ideological or political reasons.

An interface can be either a physical separation barrier of an unmarked territorial divide, which is maintained through decisions such as where to live and where to walk.

The Golden Thread had relocated on the edges of the city centre to a more recently gentrified area called Cathedral Quarter.
The desires of the artist are often omitted in discussions, which I think is an unrealistic way of theorising a utopian engagement that does not, in actuality, happen on such terms. Finlay (2001, 65) insightfully reflects on the risk of “over-identification” with the research subject (which parallels Kester (2004)), the importance of self-awareness, and the constructions of the self by the other, which might not match self-constructions. Specifically, I attended a series of intensive social research seminars led by Dr. Ganiel and graduate students, including “Qualitative Approaches” (24 January 2011); “Researching in a Divided Society” (25 January 2011); and “Analysing Qualitative Data” (28 January 2011). As well, in December 2010, I attended a weeklong course organised by Trinity College, providing a certification in Conflict Resolution. This was held at Corrymeela, a faith-based organisation in the village of Ballycastle with a long history of humanitarian work around conflict. Other sources pertaining to different geographic contexts have been useful to my understanding of the challenges of research in divided societies, including Belousov et al. 2007.

I think that this claim holds true in all countries in which I have worked (including Canada, the United States, England, Scotland and Ireland), although I have noted some differences between these particular contexts.

Ardoyne is the home of the Holy Cross conflict that was extensively covered by the media in the late 1990s. See Ardoyne Commemoration Project (2002).

I resided on Deerpark Road from October 2010 to February 2011.

I had relocated to Rugby Mews, a cul-de-sac off Rugby Road.

During my first conversation with Breandán Clarke in December of 2010, he quickly ascertained that we were relative neighbours living side-by-side in North Belfast.

In preparation for the ethics review, certain sources were consulted, which may aid in framing the discussion here, including Connolly (2003), Hay and Israel (2006), as well as the Canadian Tri-Council Policy Statement (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada 2010).

Chapman and Sawchuk (2012) propose and discuss a complex variegated system of nomenclature in this area in an article aptly entitled, “Research-Creation: Intervention, analysis and ‘family resemblances’.” Drawing from Ludwig Wittgenstein’s notion of “family resemblances,” these classifications are: “research-for-creation”; “creative presentations of research”; and finally “creation-as-research” (ibid.).

Intently, I had withheld my research proposal and application to GREB for ethics clearance (until January 2014, after I had gained a better understanding of the demands of the post-conflict context of Belfast, including the cultural-artistic milieu.

Another useful article coming from Concordia University, Kathleen Vaughan’s “Research creation as material thinking” considers the definition of research-creation at the level SSHRC and FQRSC, Québec’s provincial Fonds québécois de la recherche sur la société et culture (Vaughan 2009). It should be noted that these definitions do not appear in existing versions of the Tri-Council Policy Statement. An article of the same year by Kathrin Busch (2009) defines different strands of artistic research in ways that would be relevant to the definitional gap for GREB.

This comment is immediately followed by an endnote (no. 5) about research participants and fieldnote codes: “In this case, E28-M refers to the twenty-eighth member of an REB who participated in my research, coming from a mid-sized Canadian university” (Van Den Hoonoord 2011, 7-8, n. 322).

McGonagle was a conference presenter at the Connect Seminar that I attended on 2 September 2011 in Donesgal, Ireland.

Throughout this dissertation, I use “the north of Ireland” as opposed to the statist (read nation-state) place-name, Northern Ireland, in order to restate an alliance with the Republican cause. As I will clarify, this is an alliance, not a position of full agreement or sameness.

A BBC News (Northern Ireland) reportage gives a brief history of the site and announces the opening of the gate (see “‘Peace wall’ gate to open at Belfast’s Alexandra Park” 2011).
Methodologically, this project shares similarities with the spatial and dialogical mapping that I coordinated with older and younger people in Belfast, using modulations on performance and dialogical aesthetics. *Give and Take* (2011) was commissioned by the Golden Thread Gallery as a consultation to determine the cultural wants and needs of older people in Belfast. Through dialogue and performance art, the project was developed as an exchange of objects and ideas between older people and younger people. Kester (2004, 6-8) provides an interesting account of the *ROUTES*.
For artist and curator Elaine Speight, “place listening” relates to the ways that socially-engaged art investigates the complexities of an urban site, as an alternative “to the superficial and cynical approach to the municipal commissioning of art within urban regeneration schemes” (Speight 2003, 26).

Born in Tipperary, Burke is a seasoned artist whose works explores the complexities of Irish identity through stereotypes and iconography using embroidery, porcelain and photography. Burke also has a wealth of experience in developing community-centred art both in the north and the south of Ireland, where he has worked with disadvantaged young people as well as adults with different degrees of ability in both single-community development projects and cross-community projects. Descriptions of Burke’s practice in-community can be found on her website (Burke 2013). Burke has led several workshops and projects using collaborative photography, such as the cross-border photography project documented in the catalogue *The Politics of Remembrance* (Burke and Driver 2005). Kester’s (2004, 3) *Conversation Pieces* includes a portrait of a busworker named Tommy, photographed by Burke as part of the ROUTES.

The process of shadowing Burke continued intermittently until June 2011. In total, I attended seven workshops led by Burke with *Tar Isteach Youth*. To better understand the Burke’s methods and working practice of art in community contexts, I also attended a number of workshops organised by New Lodge Arts, which are not documented in this dissertation.

Working predominantly in sculpture, installation and performance, Lawrence Molloy is an English artist of Irish descent. As well as working as part of artist collectives, Molloy has worked with young people in schools across Britain, where he has collaborated with young people and teachers to construct learning environments such as a multi-sensory play area and an outdoor purpose-built set to house experiments in performing arts. Descriptions of Molloy’s practice in schools, which he refers to as “integral art,” can be found online (Molloy 2012).

Working primarily with performance art and forms of orality and spoken word, the indigenous sociologist of art Guy Sioui Durand has been active within the artist-run centre movement in Canada as much as within the indigenous community, where he has worked with young people using forms of art in situ. His website is at http://siouidurand.org (accessed August 3, 2014). He has travelled to Belfast on several occasions since 2010 to work with the young people of *Tar Isteach* as well as the performance art collective Bbeyond.

Access to the project had been arranged by the Golden Thread Gallery and North Belfast Interface Network, lead organisations coordinating *Draw Down the Walls*.

As explained online, “Theater of Witness is a form of testimonial performance developed by founder and artistic director Teya Sepinuck in which the true life stories of those whose voices haven’t been heard in society are performed by the storytellers themselves as a way for audiences to bear witness to significant social issues” (Theatre of Witness 2015).

A much more ambitious dream catcher was created at the site of the contentious peace wall in Alexandra Park in May 2012. This *manoeuvre* brought together performers from Bbeyond and the young people of *Tar Isteach* who crossed the “peace” gate.

Paul Rodaway writes: “Touch is more than the action of the fingers feeling the texture of surfaces. Touch involves the whole body reaching out to the things constituting the environment and those things, or that environment, coming into contact with the body (Boring 1942). This is the basic reciprocity of the haptic system; to touch is always to be touched (Montague 1971) – though the intention may be the preserve of only one party” (Rodaway 1994, 44).

Cultural mapping is a method of visualisation that is frequently used by community artists, including Robin Pacific, but also by architects and town planners interested in more functional community consultations, which have been more or less tokenistic. In 2002, I was involved in a cultural mapping project called circulation, organised by Modern Fuel Artist-Run Centre in Kingston and led by Pacific.

About McLennan’s praxis, Watson (2003) summarises: “actuations,’ his own term for a combination of installation and live performance – a term which may be taken to imply, amongst other things, both that the
performance element ‘actuates’ the installation and that the whole work ‘actuates’ a process in the life of those people who see and experience it” (10).

This was, until recently, an “unconscious” choice, although with time I identified a rhetorical pattern. The synecdoche should be differentiated from the metaphor, where two things/entities are paralleled by comparison without “like” (this is *like* that), which would be a simile.

Of the twenty-seven practitioners who were interviewed in this study, twenty-two spoke directly to this question. Three of the interviewees chose expressly not to answer the question because they did not understand what I meant. Two interviewees did not answer the question due to time constraints, and the two others, who were interviewed as part of a group interview, let another interviewee respond. Admittedly, the interview question solicited a particular type of response by confirmation. It should be noted that, with the exception of two interviewees, the others had past experience with using the visual arts within community arts, although a lesser number also had other overlapping areas of expertise, for example, in the areas of trauma and conflict resolution, health and disability arts, theatre and music. The majority of these respondents had experience using the visual arts in youth work. To be sure, both the framing of the interview question as well as the respondents’ previous experience where likely to have influenced their emphasis on the visual aspects of listening.

In his essay, “Rhetoric of the Image,” Barthes (1977; originally written in 1964) develops a close reading of the composite signifiers/signifieds of an advertising image to propose a possible signification of the image, while in “Myth Today” (1972, esp. 116-19; written 1956) he uses a similar process of visual analysis to show how the image of a saluting young Black soldier in uniform, pictured on a popular magazine cover, contributes to a signifying system that maintains myths in order to uphold the imperialism of French society.

Part 1 (of 3) of the interviews, which I carried out with 29 cultural and youth workers in the late summer and early fall of 2011, was introduced as follows: “In a book called The Art of Listening, the author Les Back, a sociologist, titles the fourth chapter ‘Listening with the Eye.’ In this chapter he tells us about a photography project where an art teacher took his students to the busy market place at Brick Lane in East London to make photographic portraits of people carrying their shopping. These portraits (reference images in Back’s book (2007, 100-11)) reveal as much about their subjects as they do about the cultural diversity of the neighborhood. In this example, listening is a practice that integrates the eye (and the camera lens) to picture the personality, emotion and life of the subject. Part 1: Can you think of other ways to listen beyond what is possible with the ears?” (From a document titled “Sample Questions,” originally composed by the author for the purposes of GREB).

Another interesting aspect related by the author is the complexity of photography across race lines, especially in relation to a duo of Bengali women (Back 2007, 101). Note 17 in Back (2007) cites “Salgado: The Spectre of Hope.” Arena, BBC2, 30 May 2001. In the popular imagination and in popular media, Canada is divided conceptually and described as “two solitudes” with (two) distinct languages, yet (one) shared Nation-State.

This workshop was led by me on the early evening of the 24th of May 2011. Curated by the Ottawa-based independent curator, Christine Conley, Crossings sought to juxtapose some of the wider effects and artistic responses (both similarities and disparities) to the period called “the Troubles” in Northern Ireland, in parallel to the violent legacy of indigenous bloodshed on the territory of Canada. The programme featured performances by Belfast-based and First Nations artists, alongside workshops and discussions.

There are ways that the performance was less than ideal if we consider the overall programme theme; for example, as I mentioned in the above cited article, the workshop component of Crossings did not serve to enable a consideration of difference across the lines of Irish/indigenous conflict, although other aspects better dealt with this. However these are beyond the scope of my interest here.

These kinds of performance “workshop” activities have historical precedents in different artistic disciplines at least since the naming of “happenings” in the 1950s, namely theatre as well as visual and
sonic arts group exercises. Useful examples, highlighting group performance as somatic experience, are the regular collective performances of Black Market International over the last 20 years, as well as the Performance Monthly (PM) meetings of Bbeyond for over a decade in Belfast. Although most exercises continue to be transmitted through orality and sharing experience, that is, in real time-space, some activities have been documented in publications, including, to mention a few in my investigations: Black Market International (c. 2012); Bbeyond (2010); as well as Torrens (2014); and Howell (1999).

219 “L’Outaouais” is an aboriginal appellation; the other is British (i.e. not French).

220 Therefore, this is not an admission that developed through the performance or in the act, but rather one of the major learnings that I can draw from my working across cultures and Belfast: the fact that their experience of division would enable me to see myself as divided, both in my own person as a Franco-Ontarian, and territorially, as a resident of Ottawa.

221 For example, see “Belfast Riots: Two Men Shot in Short Strand Violence” 2011.

222 This included my participation in their “Loyalism summer school,” including talks by local historians, musicians, and other guest speakers invested or otherwise implicated in Orange Day.

223 Started c. 2008; “Orange Day” was rebranded as a more politically correct, family-oriented, derivative form of the Orange Order’s parade and other historically laden activities on every July 12th. The cartoon-figure (unveiled in 2007) of the historical figure, “Diamond Dan,” now a superhero disguised in orange and purple, is a good example.

224 Two books come to mind in the subject area of Canada as gendered: Kay Armatage’s (1999), Gendering the Nation: Canadian Women’s Cinema; also, Yasmin Abu-Laban’s (2008), Gendering the Nation-State: Canadian and Comparative Perspectives.

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Appendix A: GREB Ethics Clearance Letter 2011, Queen’s University

January 26, 2011

Ms. Julie Fiala
Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Art (Art History)
Queen’s University

Dear Ms. Fiala:

GREB Ref #: GART-016-11
Title: “The Role of Listening in Community Arts”

The General Research Ethics Board (GREB), by means of a delegated board review, has cleared your proposal entitled “The Role of Listening in Community Arts” for ethical compliance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (TCPS) and Queen’s ethics policies. In accordance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (article D.1.6) and Senate Terms of Reference (article G), your project has been cleared for one year. At the end of each year, the GREB will ask if your project has been completed and if not, what changes have occurred or will occur in the next year.

You are reminded of your obligation to advise the GREB, with a copy to your unit REB, if applicable, of any adverse event(s) that occur during this one year period (details available on webpage http://www.queensu.ca/ors/researchethics/GeneralREB/forms.html — Adverse Event Report Form). An adverse event includes, but is not limited to, a complaint, a change or unexpected event that alters the level of risk for the researcher or participants or situation that requires a substantial change in approach to a participant(s). You are also advised that all adverse events must be reported to the GREB within 48 hours.

You are also reminded that all changes that might affect human participants must be cleared by the GREB. For example you must report changes in study procedures or implementations of new aspects into the study procedures on the Ethics Change Form that can be found at http://www.queensu.ca/ors/researchethics/GeneralREB/forms.html - Research Ethics Change Form. These changes must be sent to the Ethics Coordinator, Gail Irving, at the Office of Research Services or irvingg@queensu.ca prior to implementation. Mrs. Irving will forward your request for protocol changes to the appropriate GREB reviewers and / or the GREB Chair.

On behalf of the General Research Ethics Board, I wish you continued success in your research.

Yours sincerely,

Joan Stevenson, PhD
Professor and Chair
General Research Ethics Board

c.c.: Professor Clive Robertson, Faculty Supervisor

JS/gi
Appendix B: Ethical Approval Letter 2011, Trinity College Dublin

31 January 2011

This letter confirms that a research ethics committee at the Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College Dublin, has reviewed and approved Ms Julie Fiala’s application for ethical approval for her doctoral fieldwork in Northern Ireland on 'The Role of Listening in Community Arts.'

Ms Fiala is a doctoral candidate at Queen’s University, Kingston, Canada and her fieldwork in Northern Ireland is being supervised by Dr Gladys Ganiel, TCD, in accordance with the terms of Ms Fiala's Michael Smith Study Abroad Supplement. Dr Ganiel agrees that Ms Fiala should inform participants that her research in Northern Ireland is supervised by Dr Ganiel.

The ISE research ethics committee requests that Ms Fiala inform the committee of any changes to her proposed research with human subjects.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Dr Norbert Hintersteiner, Director of Research

[Signature]

Dr Gillian Wylie, Director of Teaching and Learning Postgraduate

[Signature]

Dr Gladys Ganiel, Supervisor

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