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FINDING ONE'S OWN WAY IN DESIGN

REFLECTIONS
ON NARRATIVE
PROFESSIONAL
IDENTITY

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Aalto University

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Abstract

The motivation for this study derives from my professional background as a designer. Identity questions began to intrigue me after my graduation, since I felt it was challenging to create my own way in my design work. This guided me to explore how designers and design students create their professional identities and find their own ways in design.

Design students particularly encounter identity questions close to their graduation. This identity work emerges both on the personal and the professional level as both influence the developing design identity. The current work environment requires students and young designers to define and communicate professional identities in a clear way, which requires self-awareness concerning their own, distinct identity. Since design education consists of a variety of programmes from artistic, hands-on approaches to strategic and theoretical studies, designers gain different skills and expertise in design. These professional orientations may conflict with personal interests and cause an identity crisis in creative fields in which professional and personal identities are typically intertwined. Despite the necessity of identity work, it is not systematically supported in design education.

The aim of this study is to illustrate the most significant experiences in designers' lives and how design identity is formed through narratives. This aim is approached from a socio-constructionist perspective that builds on narrative psychology. The participants consist of design entrepreneurs, who have studied Applied Arts and Design (such as furniture and other material-based design), and design students, who have studied Applied Arts and Design and Industrial Design. The data consist of visual and spoken narratives that the participants have produced in the *Visual Narrative* workshop and creative process reports that the students generated in a course in Aalto ARTS. That is to say, the collected personal stories and creative process reports are treated as narratives that represent their makers' professional identity. The narratives were analysed through a *Narrative Design Identity* framework that was constructed in parallel to the workshops.

The most significant experiences show the importance of feedback, acknowledgement and the courage to do things in one's 'own way'. The narrative tone, linguistic expressions and visual organization influence the presentation and interpretation of one's own identity. Previous experiences and future wishes shape designers' orientation in design. This can be seen specifically in the design processes, which are navigated by different strategies, such as envisioning, visualization, discussion, and documentation. The narratives also reveal the significant role of individual beliefs, which form the most enduring concept of identity. The findings strongly suggest that design identity is

explorative, intrinsically motivated and agentic. Furthermore, emotions and making are significant aspects in the creation of a design identity and one's own way in design.

Tiivistelmä

Motivaatio tähän tutkimukseen on syntynyt omasta muotoilijataustastani. Aloin kiinnostua identiteettikysymyksistä valmistumiseni jälkeen, koska koin haastavana oman tieni luomisen muotoilutyössäni. Nämä kysymykset johdattivat minut tutkimaan, kuinka muotoilijat ja muotoilun opiskelijat luovat ammatti-identiteettinsä ja oman tiensä muotoilussa.

Muotoilun opiskelijat pohtivat identiteettiään erityisesti valmistumisen lähestyessä. Tämä identiteettityö tapahtuu sekä henkilökohtaisella että ammatillisella tasolla, jotka molemmat vaikuttavat kehittyvään muotoiluidentiteettiin. Nykypäivän työympäristö vaatii oman ammatti-identiteetin selkeää määrittelyä ja ilmaisua, mikä puolestaan vaatii tietoisuutta omasta identiteetistä. Muotoiluidentiteetit ja niihin liittyvät tiedot ja taidot eroavat toisistaan johtuen muotoilukoulutuksen laajasta opetustarjonnasta. Tarjonta koostuu sekä taiteellisuutta ja käsin tekemistä painottavista opinnoista että strategisista ja teoreettisista opinnoista. Opintojen suunta voi olla ristiriidassa omien henkilökohtaisten intressien kanssa ja aiheuttaa identiteettikriisin luovilla aloilla, joilla ammatillinen ja henkilökohtainen identiteetti ovat tyypillisesti yhteenkietoutuneita. Siitä huolimatta, että identiteettityö on tarpeellista, sitä ei systemaattisesti tueta muotoilukoulutuksessa.

Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoitus on havainnollistaa, mitkä kokemukset muotoilijat kokevat merkityksellisiksi elämässään, sekä kuinka muotoiluidentiteetti rakentuu tarinoiden kautta. Tätä tavoitetta lähestytään sosiaalisen konstruktionismin näkökulmasta, joka tukeutuu narratiiviseen tutkimukseen. Osallistujat koostuvat muotoiluyrittäjistä, jotka ovat opiskelleet taideteollista muotoilua (kuten kalustemuotoilua ja muuta materiaalilähtöistä muotoilua), ja muotoilun opiskelijoista, jotka ovat opiskelleet sekä taideteollista että teollista muotoilua. Tutkimuksen data koostuu visuaalisista ja puhutuista tarinoista, jotka osallistujat ovat luoneet Visuaalinen Narratiivi -työpajoissa, sekä luovien prosessien raporteista, jotka muotoilun opiskelijat ovat tehneet muotoilukursilla Aalto-yliopiston Taiteiden ja suunnittelun korkeakoulussa. Näitä tarinoita ja raportteja lähestytään narratiiveina, jotka edustavat kertojansa ammatti-identiteettiä. Kertomukset on analysoitu käyttäen apuna Narratiivinen Muotoiluidentiteetti -viitekehystä, joka on rakennettu yhtäaikaisesti aineiston analysointiprosessin kanssa.

Merkityksellisimmät kokemukset korostavat palautteen ja hyväksynnän tärkeyttä sekä rohkeutta tehdä asiat omalla tavalla. Kertomuksen sävy, kielelliset ilmaisut ja visuaalinen järjestys vaikuttavat oman identiteetin esittämiseen ja tulkintaan. Aiemmat kokemukset ja tulevaisuuden visiot muokkaavat omaa suuntautumista ja motivaatiota muotoilussa. Tämä näkyy erityisesti luovissa prosesseissa, joissa omaa tietä navigoidaan erilaisin strategioin,

kuten visioinnin, visualisoinnin, keskustelujen ja dokumentoinnin avulla. Kertomuksista käy ilmi myös uskomusten merkittävyys ja se, kuinka uskomukset muodostavat identiteetin pysyvimmän osan. Päätelmät viittaavat siihen, että muotoiluidentiteetti on tyypillisesti tutkiskeleva ja sisäisesti motivoitunut ja toimijuudessaan vahva. Lisäksi emootiot ja (käsillä) tekeminen ovat merkittävässä roolissa oman muotoiluidentiteetin ja oman tien luomisessa.

Avainsanat: *Ammatti-identiteetti, visualisointi, tarina, narratiivi, merkitykselliset kokemukset, muotoilukoulutus*

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Prologue

The motivation for this study comes from my professional background and personal experiences. I studied furniture and spatial design in Aalto ARTS, and art and graphic design before entering Aalto University. Immediately after I graduated as Master of Arts in Furniture design from Aalto ARTS, I became a young design entrepreneur and faced challenges and questions related to income and identity. Less than a year after starting as an entrepreneur, my decision was to quit working as a full-time design entrepreneur, since I had obtained a full-time position at a design-oriented company. I applied for this position, since at that time entrepreneurship seemed to me to be a risky, demanding, and complex option to make my living from. To keep a door open to the world of entrepreneurship, I continued utilizing my one-woman company for some projects I could manage alongside my main job. I still use this channel to do design work and other related projects.

One major influence behind my professional interest in identity derives from my experiences in Imu design. Together with two designer colleagues, Elina Aalto and Saara Renvall, we established Imu design[1] in 2002 to promote and exhibit young Finnish design in international forums. We started the work by organizing exhibitions for young talents in lively international design forums: London, Milan and New York. One of our main ideas was to question old institutional conventions and allow young designers and design students to be the driving force to define what is interesting in design. In other words, we wanted to give a voice and a free playground to young designers. The shows we arranged gained a lot of attention, and Imu's network started to expand. Since I got to know many designers who started their own companies after joining Imu's exhibition, I became interested in the phenomenon of identity development in design. I was curious about how these entrepreneurs created their own ways, their own design identities.

The question of finding my own way started to intrigue me also in my own work, since I faced challenges on nourishing my creativity and expressing my own artistic vision in the company I was working in. I felt it was demanding to manage and create my own way within the organization and in my small private business. In addition, after the birth of my child in 2008 I felt an internal pressure to discover and understand my life path and realize how different experiences have influenced my becoming who I am. Now when I reflect on that time, I can see how I struggled with parallel identities and different interests that pulled me in many directions. I hadn't really thought of my

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[1] Imu's concept was influenced by the way in which the Netherlands-based design collective Droog Design worked at that time. Imu's core idea was to offer an appealing exhibition platform that focused on unconventional and exploratory contemporary design.

professional identity, but instead only seized opportunities that came along without deeper self-reflection. To gain a better understanding of my own way and the ways of others, I began to develop this study in 2010 in Aalto ARTS at the Design Connections Doctoral School. When the school divided into different research groups, I continued my doctoral studies in the Empirica group[2] that focuses on research on art, design and culture.

Since the participants of my research have studied at the same school from which I have graduated and will also complete my doctorate, I consider my position to be one of an insider in the study. I know Aalto University quite well, I have studied under some of the same teachers that my research participants have, and I have been involved in the MA course I present as part of this study. The similarity of my background and position to those of the participants has made me reflect on my own story and *how I have found and created my own way*. My self-discoveries have influenced my interpretations and analysis of others, and, in turn, what I have found from others' stories has influenced my interpretation of myself. These aspects are discussed in certain places in the book, since my own identity work has had a significant effect on how I have interpreted and reinterpreted the data.

[2] The Empirica group approaches research with the attitude that making, acting and engaging are important. The group's goal is to develop exploratory methods in which art- and design-related practices are utilized in experimental ways as research practice. (http://designresearch.aalto.fi/groups/empirica/)

THE PROBLEM
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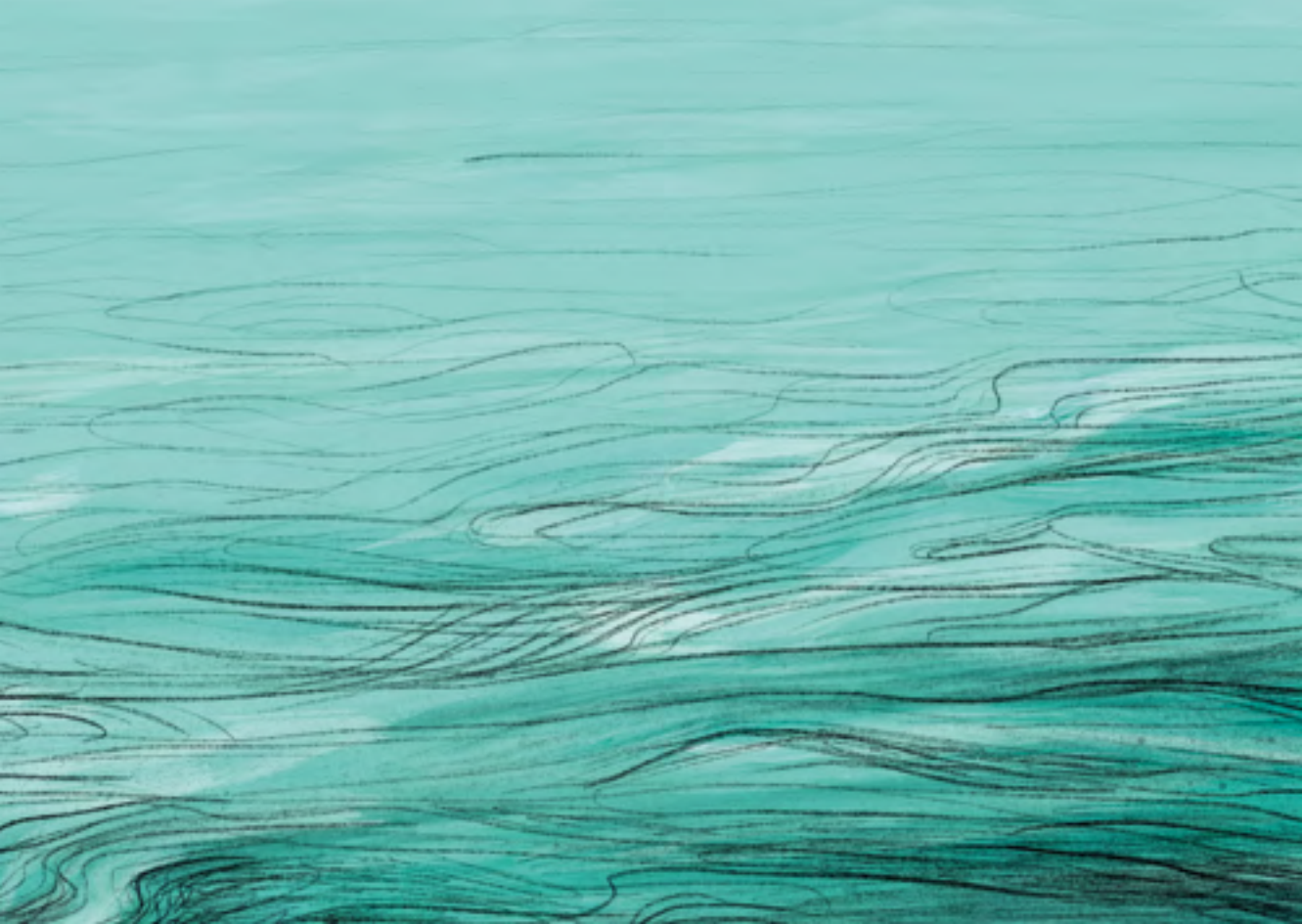
1 The Problem of Finding One's Own Way in Design

1.1 Design Students' Identity Struggle

Who am I as a designer and what designer do I want to become? What influences do I want to have in this world? What is important for me in life and how do I want to combine that with my work?

Oliver

The student who wrote these questions in his course report is one of the thousands of design students that struggle with the question of finding one's own way in design. The questions illustrate how both the discovery of one's current professional identity and the creation of one's future identity need attention. His last question reveals his wish to define what is important for him in life in general, and how he could integrate his personal interests with design work. The last question, especially, points to the challenge of finding and creating one's own way in design.

Identity questions in design are relevant specifically due to the nature of design, a field that calls for creativity[3] and innovative thinking, both of which relate to imagination and personal meaning making as a part of problem solving. The designer's own way of practising design with a certain approach and specific methods can be a key asset for her. In the more artistic side of the design field, individual expression and style are also essential parts of professional identity. A personal handprint can be a key element in a designer's work that she is known for. This combination of one's own voice (creative expression) and own way is thus an essential part of design identity, and creative identity in general. One's own way and own voice help creatives to differentiate themselves from other creatives (see also Taylor & Littleton 2012: 52).

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[3] In this study, I refer to creativity as an ability to explore ideas and take risks, to have the courage to keep options open and envision what does not yet exist, and to the ability to question, challenge and critically reflect on one's own and others' work (Sawyer 2017). For me everyone has creative potential, and creativity can also be practised (Simonton 2000: 152). Bayles & Orland (2001:100) refuse to use the term 'creativity', since they see everyone as creative: having ideas, dreaming, confronting problems, living in the real world and breathing air. McNiff (1998: 1) points to the license to create that applies to every person. The ways of living a creative life are infinite (ibid. 49). I agree with these notions, but still choose to use the term to describe situations in which we are innovative, feel imaginative, free and when our energy is directed into creative activities that reach towards change or development instead of when we live a narrow, mechanical life (see also Bohm 2004:3) or maintain the status quo.

In this study, identity is considered as negotiation with the personal and the social dimension. It is constantly constructed internally and via inter-personal communication in relation to past and future (see, e.g., Hall 1999; McAdams 1993; Eteläpelto 2009, Eteläpelto & al. 2009). Furthermore, identity is understood as taking the form of a narrative, being in constant movement, having both more consistent, stable phases and phases of change (McAdams 1993). The concept 'one's own way'[4] is closely linked to identity. *Finding one's own way in design* refers to the way in which one creates one's identity in a professional domain, which in this study is design. However, one's own way is not professional identity *per se,* but the way it is crafted.

Referring to a body of literature on teachers' professional identity, Vähäsantanen (2015:3) defines professional identity in the following way: "a work history-based constellation of teachers' perceptions of themselves as professional actors. A teacher's professional identity encompasses the individual's current professional interests, views on teaching and on the students' learning, and future prospects.*"* Thus, professional identity responds to the questions *who am I as a designer and what do I want to become?* (see also Beijaard & al. 2004). In artistic fields, professional identity is inseparably intertwined with personal identity (Hägg 2008: 145). This makes professional identity for a designer a deeply-rooted conception of self both as a person and as a member of the design community (ibid.). Hence, identity questions in design are holistic, including both professional and personal sides. Due to this, life history and significant experiences play an important role in the formation of a design identity (see also Mahlakaarto 2014: 57).

Usually, we start to think about identity questions when something triggers in us a need for this reflective work (Mälkki 2011). Many (design) students feel uncertain about the future and their position in the (design) world, especially when close to their graduation (see also Taylor & Littleton 2012:65). This approaching uncertainty may trigger a stronger identity reflection,[5] even though identity work takes place all the time in some way. In our everyday life, we define and redefine ourselves in our internal dialogues (Mead 1964), and negotiate our identity, for instance when we present ourselves to others and aim to give a certain impression of ourselves (Goffman 1956). Identity work is something we cannot escape, since even if we were to try, others will still define us. Further, the construction of a suitable identity can be considered an aspect of being professional (Coldron & Smith 1999). The awareness of one's

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[4] The definition of the concept "one's own way" is one contribution of this study, and it will be explained more thoroughly in Chapter 8.5.

[5] The word 'reflection' is used to describe the act of looking back and making sense of past events and experiences. Reflection is not purely a description of the experience. Instead, it requires an analytical dimension, a meaning-making process as part of the act.

own professional identity is increasingly required in today's work culture (Eteläpelto 2009:90-94).

Design students are facing an increasingly complex and uncertain world ahead of them after graduation. During the past ten years, the design field has been going through a radical change, which could be called an identity crisis[6]. The changes in design are complex, relating to societal, economic and political factors, such as integration, digitalization, immaterialization, democratization, fragmentation and strategization of design (Ruoppila et al. 2009: 8-10). As in several countries, in Finland, too, this identity crisis is strong in the field of 'taideteollisuus', that is, the art industry (Ihatsu 1998:31) – which in this study I call Applied Art and Design and includes fields such as furniture, textile, fashion and ceramic design, and other material-based design fields. The small national market, with expensive and diminished domestic production, and the increased quantity of imported low-cost products in Finland have created new challenges for designers. Many small and medium-sized manufacturers have closed their factories, and material-based design has begun to decrease critically in comparison to conceptual and strategic design.

These changes are reflected in design education. Relatively new areas in design, such as service design, sustainable design, and design activism have emerged to respond to topical societal concerns. From the point of view of Applied Art and Design, which typically enjoys hands-on work, a sensitivity to materials, and also manual skills and techniques, this change is enormous.[7] Aalto ARTS, like other art and design universities, seeks to juggle between the challenging combination of the needs of society and the values of cultural history. Art and design education at Aalto aims to meet the current changes in industry and society, but also hold onto the traditions in art and design, thus maintaining the cultural capital and traditional skills. Consequently, the university offers a variety of studies with different foci in design that are built on different traditions. Some programmes, such as Collaborative and Industrial Design, focus more on theoretical and strategic aspects of design, while other programmes, such as Applied Art and Design, emphasize the significance of hands-on work and developing artistic expression.

In addition to the curriculum design, design educators need to solve how to educate different students with different design profiles in becoming independent, mindful designers with a strong design identity. How can they nourish what is special and unique in each student but also teach according to the curriculum? Teaching – and learning – essentially, is about supporting

[6] According to Hall (1999: 9), 'identity crisis' is a condition in which old identities begin to decline and give space to new identities.

[7] Strategic, immaterial, and digital design work does not typically include the pleasure of hands-on making activity, with the exception of rough prototyping.

students in finding their way in their own manner (Winters 2011). Students do not enter the school as blank canvases: they come with their individual approaches, personal experiences and specific interests. These unique features and various dreams ask for discovery so that design education can better respond for students' need to create their own way and professional identity. Identity formation has been recognized as a critical focus in education in the 21st century: "academic learning cannot be separated from students' development of values, goals, social roles and worldviews" (Kaplan & Flum 2012:171). Despite the significance of identity work, design education as yet provides little support in this area (Falin 2011:96).

The problem of finding one's own way in design is evident in the societal and educational contexts, but it also emerges on the personal level. The discovery or creation of one's own way relates to personal experiences and dreams (see also Mishler 1999:45-50). It also requires understanding of one's own interests and goals – and how this personal vision fits with the planned design profile and its potential role in society. This understanding calls for self-discovery, which forms another essential part of finding one's own way. Self-awareness is acknowledged as a significant part of design practice and education (Campbell & McDonagh 2009; Margolin 1998 in Valentine & Ivey 2008), since it connects to mindful inquiry, strategic thinking and metacognitive skills that are valuable competences in design (Hargrove & Rice 2015; Hargrove 2011; Valentine & Ivey 2008).

For many designers, design is a lifestyle, a way to express oneself in the world, which makes the professional identity more fragile and dependent on personal identity formation (see also Taylor & Littleton 2012:31, 141; Hägg 2011: 81-82). The problem of identity arises since the student rarely has a strong personal vision, a clear idea of her desired design identity. The student period is the time to find that out, but at the same time it should already prepare the student to work as a designer in a desired, envisioned context. The fact that design itself as a field and activity is uncertain – an act of creativity concerning something that does not yet exist – gives an extra flavour to identity questions within this field. Design does not have right or wrong answers but is open to interpretation and its meanings are slippery and shifting (Winters 2011:93). Its essence is the creation of something new and unique (Hargrove 2011:7), which requires creativity and a high tolerance for uncertainty. Design is an act of exploration (Cross 2011:8) and creation, as can be identity.

1.2 Research on Design Identity

The identity questions presented are typical to research on creative identity. Part of this research grows from behavioural and social sciences, reaching towards design, craft and art (Tracey & Hutchinson 2016, 2013; Hyrsky 2012; Taylor & Littleton 2012, 2008; Mishler 1999), and part stem from design and design education (Orr & al. 2014; Molinet & Marín-Viadel 2014; Bridgstock 2013; Soini-Salomaa & Seitamaa-Hakkarainen 2012; Winters 2011; Falin 2011; Ghassan & Bohemia 2011; Finnigan 2009; Mendoza & al 2007; Hockey 2003; Rodgers & Strickfaden 2003) or other fields, such as entrepreneurship (Hägg 2011, Hägg 2008). However, discussion on designers' identity is still rather scarce among design researchers (Falin 2011: 58-59), even though design expertise and competence has been studied broadly (see e.g. Cross 2011, 2001, 1998; Lawson 2005, 2004). Before presenting the aim and focus of the present study, I will briefly discuss these other studies that have contributed to the presented problem space.

Taylor & Littleton (2012) have illuminated the nature of creative work, which influences creative identities. Creative work can be described as open-ended and associated with freedom and specialness. Creative work has a personalized nature, which also makes the work appealing to those workers who want to escape more conventional, 'non-creative' careers. However, creative work also contains difficulties, such as a heavy workload and an uncertain income. Taylor & Littleton (ibid.) note that since creative careers are not predictably structured, mentors and the models they provide are important for beginning practitioners. Support from family and friends is also important due to the insecurity of a creative career.

Taylor & Littleton (2012) have found that there are various images of a creative maker. In addition to the more established image of an individual, independent artist, there is the image of a creative worker that values networking and connections with other people. Even though doing one's 'own work' still remains an ideal, it is recognized that it depends on others (ibid.: 135). A creative identity, however, requires confidence to pursue interests that may seem selfish to others (ibid. 139). This confidence is specifically important due to the personalized nature of creative work, which also makes a creative identity more fragile.

Whereas Taylor & Littleton (2012) have presented these notions based on interview data from former or current students in art schools, Mishler (1999) has studied craftartists' narratives of identity. He has described, for example, how different contradictions and turning points have influenced identity development. Mishler presents how different craftartists claim and create their identities. He discusses polarities, such as continuity and discontinuity, to

illustrate how the protagonists create their identities through the narratives they tell of themselves. Mishler's participants have spoken about their "own way" and "own approach" (ibid. 49), "own things" (ibid. 74, 76), "own work" (ibid. 77), and refer to their "own medium" (ibid. 61) when they have referred to something that resonates with their interests and what they feel is their own and want to claim as their own.

Falin (2011) contributes to the design identity discussion from another angle, one in which "one's own medium" does not have that strong an emphasis. She has studied how experts in design organizations and agencies have spoken about their work and experiences. Falin (ibid.) has studied design as a domain of expertise from the point of view of professional identity. As one result of her study, she suggests a difference between the concepts 'design competence' and 'design expertise' that, however, are not opposed, but exist parallel to each other. Design competence is connected with an interactive position where the designer has a knowledge intensive task, whereas design expertise relates to a position that requires skills or artistry in design. Her notions point out that the professional identity of a design expert does not build solely on designing. Instead, design expertise and designing may develop individually without one another as professional identities. Falin's study reflects the previously presented changes in the design field.

Finnigan (2009) has shown that identity exploration during education can be very significant, for some students even a cathartic experience. She describes how some students struggle with identity issues, and have an internal need to express their identity in their work. Finnigan points out that it is important for the teachers to accept students' identities, specifically when the students come from minority groups or from another country, feeling homesick or as outsiders. Finnigan (ibid:141) notes that when students' identities are accepted and supported by their tutors, the students feel that they are being recognized and valued as individuals and develop a stronger sense of belonging. Further, the teachers get to know the students better and can establish a stronger connection with them (see also Campbell & McDonagh 2009; Smith 2002: 224).

Based on the study by Orr & al (2014), such support is rare. Their study shows examples of students who have felt that their studies demanded a high degree of independence and self-motivation. They report about students who have felt that the brief – assignment – sets them on a journey of discovery that they have to manage themselves. The students have also felt that they bear some responsibility for managing their own learning. This independence requirement illustrates some of the struggles related to finding one's own way.

Winters (2011) recognizes similar independence-related challenges related to creative work. She addresses the problem that the students

will face after graduation in design practice: the need for self-directedness, self-managed work that requires corresponding skills. Winters acknowledges the nature of design practice and the field, and thus does not suggest a more rigid or structured approach in teaching, since the field is neither structured nor rigid. Instead, she proposes teaching students meta-learning skills; ergo teaching students how to become aware of themselves as learners and apply this knowledge in their studying. With the help of these skills they can become better and more independent learners. Winters considers that the main purpose of design education is to support students to find their own ways, which puts the student and her core interest and vision at the centre.

Hargrove (2011) emphasizes the role of reflective, analytical skills in creative work. He highlights the importance of metacognitive skills, such as meta-learning. He notes a concern that if design students are not taught how to become more aware of their cognitive processes before they graduate, they will not reach their creative design potential in their work (ibid.). If, instead, design students are taught to explore their cognitive processes in a systematic way, they become better in managing their creative processes and developing their metacognitive knowledge (ibid. 9). When designers become more aware of how they think and learn, they can trace back where they failed and succeeded, and utilize this past knowledge more consciously in their work. I consider this meta-level understanding of one's own processes as contributing to the discovery and creation of a professional identity and one's own way.

These expectations for creative work are influenced by expectations of current working life (Mahlakaarto 2010:14-15). Work today challenges us in a new way and requires autonomy, an entrepreneurial attitude, flexibility and constant negotiations between individual and the working community (ibid., Eteläpelto & Vähäsantanen 2010:47; Julkunen 2009: 18-48; Bridgstock 2013:184-185). Mahlakaarto (ibid.: 14-17) notes that these skills are challenging and they require strong self-knowledge. This requirement of independence and self-orientedness also extends to free time and causes stress and pressure. To manage this pressure at work, Mahlakaarto emphasizes the significance of positioning oneself and finding borders and safety within this position. According to her this is not a voluntary task, but rather a necessity in current working life.

Even though the focus of this study is on the experience of the designer and design student, this experience is influenced by educational institutions and specifically their teachers. Teachers in art and design go through the same identity work as the students, and in this way their identity negotiations also influence students' identity work. Kelchtermans (2009) points out that teacher's sense of self influences her teaching. The way the teacher sees herself influences the way she teaches and the way the teacher wants to be

seen. However, the way the teacher teaches is also influenced by how the students see her. In this way, identity development and identity work are reciprocal processes. Self-reflection work is thus not relevant only for the designers struggling with their identity issues but also for the teachers trying to help the students to find their own way (see also Campbell & McDonagh 2009:597).

The studies presented in this work form the discussion field for the present study. This field is scattered and has multiple perspectives on designers and their identity. However, all the discussions contribute to the understanding of finding one's own way and developing a professional identity. As noted, this identity work takes place whether or not it is supported in design education. Identity work is required both during and after education, particularly in the current dynamic, global, rapidly changing multicultural society – and specifically in the field of design, which aims to create things that improve the current situation.

To contribute to this discussion, this doctoral study provides insights into designers' and design students' stories and presents a self-reflective method that has facilitated this storytelling. In addition, the study illustrates different strategies in creative processes. The stories are presented with the help of different polarities. These polarities, such as agency-communion, intrinsic-extrinsic motivation, and reflective-descriptive accounts, facilitate the investigation of designers' different individual configurations forming their 'own ways'. By 'own way' I mean the unique and personal relationship between the designer and her work, as well as her relationship with others and the environment – her identity and path through life. The analysis also shows how visual and spoken narratives correlate and provide a rich view on individual stories[8].

1.3 The Aim and Focus of the Research

The aim of the study is to increase our understanding of how designers find their own particular ways in the field. The study is positioned in between Design, Education and Social Psychology (Figure 1). In their studies on creative identity formation (Taylor & Littleton 2012; Mishler 1999), one's 'own way' and 'own thing' emerge from the data excerpts, but are not discussed beyond identity and narrative. I wanted to examine these paths that we create when we make our lives.

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[8] Even though 'story' and 'narrative' are sometimes used as synonyms in spoken language, they mean different things. The story is the content that is told, it is the event or series of events that have taken place, whereas the narrative is the representation, the structure and the way the events are told (Abbott 2008:13, 15, 19). Thus, the same story can be told in different narratives (Paley 2009: 18).

Design

One's own story

Social psychology

Finding one's own way

Creative process

Professional identity

Education
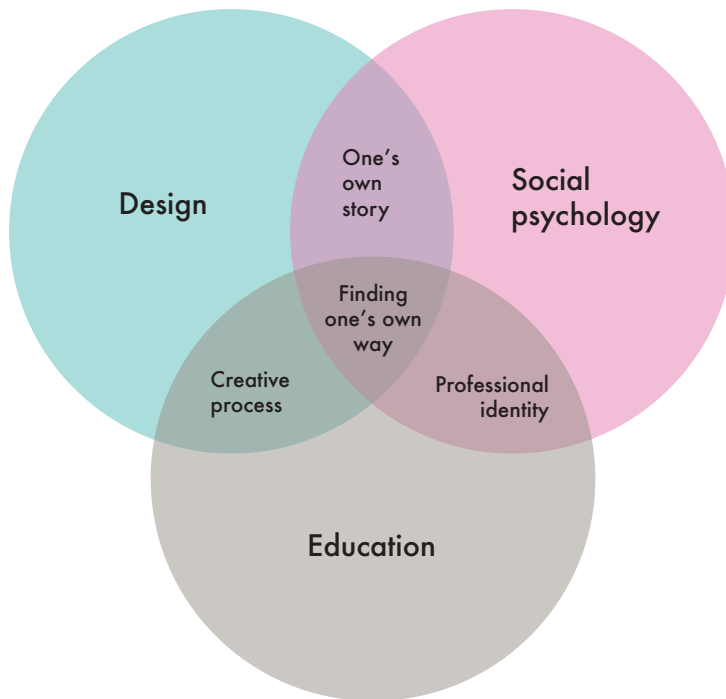
Figure 1. Positioning the research.

I understand *Finding one's own way in design* as a concept that illustrates the process that takes place in our search for our 'own place' in the design domain. Finding one's own way involves both discovering who one is as a designer and creating one's own design path. This process is about learning and change, as we grow and become more aware of the complex world within and around us. The closest concept to this pathfinding is identity; thus, the study leans heavily on literature on that topic. However, I did not want to commit only to the concept of professional identity, since I see finding – or creating – one's own way as something that goes beyond that. I believe that our lives are connected to a personal mission in life that lies on a 'deeper level' in us, giving meaning to our existence (Korthagen 2004:85). Regarding the participants in this research, we can obtain information about this mission – or lack of it – by noticing how the participants refer to it in their stories, and how they follow their passion, intuition or other driving force.

Here, finding one's own way is studied by examining designers' and design students' narratives and creative processes from the point of view of narrative professional identity. This means that I approach professional identity through narratives that the participants have created of their experiences. If

professional identity responds to the question of *who am I as a designer and what do I want to become?*, the narrative reveals *how do I present myself and my experiences?* Thus, in my analysis I focus on narrative professional identity – how a professional identity emerges in visual and verbal narratives and develops through storytelling.

The aim of this study – how designers and design students find their ways in design – is divided into three research questions:

> *1. Which experiences do design entrepreneurs and design students consider most significant in their study and work lives?*

> *2. What do designers' and design students' narratives reveal of their self-making and professional identity?*

> *3. What do the creative process reflections reveal of design students' developing professional identity?*

The questions begin with the significant experiences in designers' and design students' lives and proceed to deeper questions of professional identity and self-making through narratives. The questions are analysed by utilising a framework of narrative professional identity that I have created and which I have named 'Narrative Design Identity' (see Chapter 4). The questions will be answered by considering how the data-generating method and the settings in which the empirical data were created influenced the findings.

In addition to the research questions, this study discusses the relevance of visualization in research. The research process has shown that visualization is an effective tool to generate data and communicate research findings. The implications of using the Visual Narrative method as a data generating method will be elaborated upon in the Method chapter (3) and in the Discussion chapter (9).

1.4 Research Method

To address the questions presented, I have selected a narrative approach that methodologically grounds the study in narrative psychology (Murray 2008), and more specifically to narrative identity research (Baddeley & Singer 2007; McAdams 1993). The history of narrative psychology lies in the 1980s when researchers in the social sciences became more interested in language (Murray 2008:112-114). In narrative psychology, narrative has an ontological

status,[9] and narratives are seen as the way in which we construct our world with others. Hence, our personal narratives are social constructions that are influenced by other personal, cultural and social narratives (ibid.). This perspective relates to social constructionism and symbolic interactionism, which perceive knowledge as constructed in interaction (Burr 2015; Ashworth 2008: 16-18; Blumer 1986; Mead 1964; Strauss 1956).

Murray (2008: 115) notes that according to narrative psychology, narrative does not only bring coherence to our everyday life, but it also provides a structure for our perception of our selves. By telling stories about our lives to ourselves and others, we create our narrative identities. According to McAdams (1993), narrative is not just a way in which we create our identities, but equal to our identity. For him, narrative is the way in which we get to know ourselves and others (see also Baddeley & Singer 2007:177).

In this study, the approach to narrative stems from the history presented. Identity is understood as taking the form of a narrative (Singer 2004, McAdams 1993, McLean & Pratt 2006, McAdams 2008, Bauer & al 2008), and can be thus investigated through the narratives people create. However, the focus of the study is not only on verbal or written narratives, but also on visual narratives that complement and guide the linguistic narrative making. Visualization is a typical design activity and thus fits with a study that concerns designers' meaning making and identity. Designers are used to creating visualizations and visual stories that, as data, can be considered to be as relevant as verbal or textual storytelling. Banks (2007:119) notes, "Visual methods relentlessly particularize, highlight the unique, go beyond the standardization of statistics and language."

In this study, the previously mentioned connection to constructionist epistemology means that I see the created visualizations, presentations and stories as situated constructions that are influenced by several factors, such as internal motivations, cultural influences, the presentation situation, and the audience they are presented to (see also Burr 2015: 1-12). Consequently, the stories can neither be examined without the context in which they are created and presented, nor without the methods and tasks that have influenced their creation. This approach is typical to ethnomethodology, which emphasizes the role of the context, method and data gathering situation in the analysis of data (Lappalainen & al. 2008). In addition, since I have designed a method that has facilitated the generation of the data, I see my study as linked to constructive design research (Koskinen & al 2011:5-6).

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[9] Hevern (1999:301) has noted: "The narrative for human beings is analogous to the ocean for fishes." This approach does not see narratives solely as ways of seeing the world. Instead, it proposes that we "*actively construct the world through narratives and we also live through the stories told by others and by ourselves*" (Murray 2008: 112).

Even though this study has included a method design activity and the creation of an analytical framework (these are elaborated in the next sections: 1.5 and 1.6), the research does not hang solely upon these framing elements. The overarching method or *research strategy* is the curiosity and passion to solve the research problem as the research participants themselves unfold it in their practices. This intention is typical for ethnomethodologists, whose main interest is to explain how people themselves organize their actions in a certain situation (Garfinkel 1967; Lynch 1999).

This approach also relates to ethnographic research, which can be seen as a methodological inspiration in this study. As in ethnographic research,[10] the approach is data-driven, and proceeds in cycles of data collecting, analysis and reframing of the study. Accordingly, the theoretical and conceptual references selected are in dialogue with the data but not forced upon it. The selected references (concepts, theories and discussions) do not come from a certain coherent research paradigm; instead, they are adopted from various domains, since they are useful conceptual tools to explain the phenomena under study. This sort of eclectic and pragmatic, 'paradigm-unfaithful' attitude is supported by several ethnographic researchers, such as Delamont & Atkinson (1995: 205-206), who consider that ethnographic research should have the freedom to invent any tools, techniques and theories which work for the researcher as the best way to understand the social world (Kankkunen 2008:190). Consequently, the freedom to choose the methods and concepts also creates the responsibility to argue how and why the selected means serve the goal of unfolding the selected phenomenon.

1.5 Generating and Interpreting the Data

The main data of the study consists of 1) visual narratives and video recorded presentations of the visualizations that have been generated a) by 6 Finnish design entrepreneurs in the *Significant Experiences I and II* workshops and b) by 5 European design students in the *My Story* workshop. In addition, I have analysed 2) weekly and final reports by 26 design students produced for the Design Exploration and Experimentation course (Figure 2). Six of these students also participated in the *My Story* workshop. Thus, the participants of this

[10] Ethnographic research tradition values researcher's notes, observations and personal experience in the field (Lappalainen & al. 2008: 9-14). Descriptive of ethnography is that the data and methods are rich and varying, and the data gathering, analysis and interpretation happen simultaneously making the research process rather cyclic than linear (ibid.). In practice this means that the data guides the research, allowing the research frame evolve as the understanding of the phenomenon increases. An important criterion for ethnographic research is the way how the collected data is contextualized into the surrounding world: it's cultural, societal, political or economic situation.

study consist of 5 Finnish design entrepreneurs and 26 international design students[11]. In addition to this data, I refer to other workshops and data that have been produced during the study when they offer essential insights. These workshops and data are presented in Chapter 3.

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SPECIFICATION OF THE MAIN DATA:

- Visual narratives and video recorded presentations, created by 6 Finnish design entrepreneurs in the *Significant Experiences I* and *II* workshops

- Visual narratives and video recorded presentations, created by 5 international design students in the *My Story* workshop

- Weekly reports and final reflections, created by 26 international MA design students in DEE courses in 2011 and 2012

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Figure 2. The main data specified. In addition to this data, I refer to other data that has been produced during the study – such as installations created by the students (see Chapter 3.3.2) – when they provide essential insights into the analysis.

The Finnish design entrepreneurs were invited to participate in the study by attending a voluntary workshop. The six participants have studied furniture design, spatial design or applied art and design in Aalto ARTS and work actively in the field. Their ages varied between 31 and 37. I know the designers due to my role in Imu design, through which I had been able to create a broad network of designers.

The 26 students participated in the Design Exploration and Experimentation (DEE)[12] course over the period 2011-2012, during which I worked on the course as an assistant teacher. The students come from Europe, Asia and North and South America. After the DEE 2011 course, I invited six of the students to the *My Story* workshop to reflect on their experiences and generate data for the study. Participation was voluntary and the students did not receive compensation or study credits from the workshop. The 6 students who agreed to participate had all studied in Aalto ARTS for at least one year either as a part of their MEDes (Master of European Design programme) studies or as exchange students. The students were from Italy, Austria, France and Germany and their ages varied between 21 and 27.

[11] The participant selection criteria are explained in Chapter 3, which introduces also the participants and presents the workshops and the DEE course.

[12] The course is presented in Chapter 3.4.

	2010		2011
CONTEXT	Significant experiences I Visual narrative workshop	Significant experiences II Visual narrative workshop	Design Exploration and Experimentation Karelia & Identity MA design module
Researchers / teachers			
My role & actions	Designing cues & instructions for creating the visual narratives, preparing pre-assignments, and facilitating the workshop		Assisting in teaching, giving tutorials to students, co-evaluating the results
Participants			
	Design entrepreneurs from Finland		International MA design students
Data format			
Data	Visual narratives Video recorded presentations		Weekly reports Final reports
RQ's	Which experiences do design entrepreneurs consider most significant in their study and work lives? What do designers' narratives reveal of their professional identity?		What do the creative process reflections reveal of design students' developing professional identity?
Analytical foci	Key events & turning points Narrative content & structure Identity formation Interactions in Narrative Identity framework		Key events & turning points Drivers and methods Interactions in Narrative Identity framework Identity formation
Analytical tools	Narrative Design Identity framework VIsual analysis framework		Narrative Design Identity framework
Analytical processes	Notes from videos Coding transcripts Theme identification Writing descriptive accounts Comparison Visual analysis Writing interpretitive accounts Reconstructing		Coding the documents Comparison Mapping interactions Writing interpretitive accounts Reconstructing
Findings	CHAPTER 5		CHAPTER 7

Figure 3. The table presents the data and the context and purpose for which the data
were generated. It shows the number of researchers / teachers and participants in the
workshops/courses organized and describes my role in these events. It clarifies the format
of the data as icons and short descriptions. In addition, it presents the related research
questions, analytical foci, tools and processes and where the findings are presented in
this study.

2011	2012
My story 3-day intensive workshop	Design Exploration and Experimentation Espoo & Family MA design module
Designing the assignments, deep engagement throughout the workshop, facilitating and commenting	Assisting in teaching, giving tutorials to students, co-evaluating the results
European MA design students	International MA design students
Visual narratives Video & audio recorded presentations Photographs of the illusrations and workshop Video recordings of the workshop	Weekly reports Final reports
Which experiences do design students consider most significant in their lives? What do design students' narratives reveal of their professional identity?	What do the creative process reflections reveal of design students' developing professional identity?
Key events & turning points Narrative content & structure Identity formation Interactions in Narrative Identity framework	Key events & turning points Drivers and methods Interactions in Narrative Identity framework Identity formation
Narrative Design Identity framework VIsual analysis framework	Narrative Design Identity framework
Notes from videos Coding transcripts Theme identification Writing descriptive accounts Comparison Visual analysis Writing interpretitive accounts Reconstructing	Coding the documents Comparison Mapping interactions Writing interpretitive accounts Reconstructing
CHAPTER 6	CHAPTER 7

The participants' real names have been changed to pseudonyms. In addition, all the workshop participants were promised that any elements that would reveal their real identities would be hidden when reporting the findings[13].

1.5.1 The Visual and Verbal Narratives

To generate data for the study I designed a Visual Narrative (VN) method that produced visual and video recorded material in Visual Narrative workshops. The VN method consists of a pre-assignment and a workshop in which the participants first create visual narratives and then present them to each other. The visual narratives are created with the help of instructions and tools that vary depending on the workshop. The outcomes of the method, which in this study are also the research data, are a Visual Narrative and a verbal presentation made of the visualization created and video recorded *in situ*. (The method was first presented in Kosonen 2011a).

The main idea of the VN method is to create visual stories around the participants' most significant experiences in order to crystallize rich life history narratives around key life events. After the creation of the Visual Narratives, they are presented to the others verbally (Figure 4). This approach is typical in constructive design research, as it is "research in which construction – be it product, system, space or media – takes central place and becomes the key means in constructing knowledge" (Koskinen & al. 2011: 5).

The Visual Narrative method belongs to the group of other narrative methods that help to map the life story in order to understand how identity has developed (see Baddeley & Singer 2007: 177-178). The Visual Narrative method has some features in common with ID (identity) methods that aim to strengthen the idea of a person or a group (Mahlakaarto 2014: 48). The VN workshops, like identity workshops, provide an opportunity to examine professional identity through one's own life narrative and by looking at different sides of one's own identity (ibid.: 52).

During the workshop, the participants had time to reflect on their experiences and choose which experiences they wanted to share with others. They were told that the instructions to create the narratives were to be used only if the participants felt that they would help the narrative making. When the participants shared their stories, I, as a facilitator, ensured that I was non-judgemental and constructive. To gain personal experience of the making of a visual narrative, I organized a VN workshop for me and my friend, which

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[13] In 2010-2011, when I collected the data for the study, an agreement from each participant was sufficient permission to collect the data at Aalto ARTS. Recently, the instructions have been developed and a written consent form would be required from each participant.
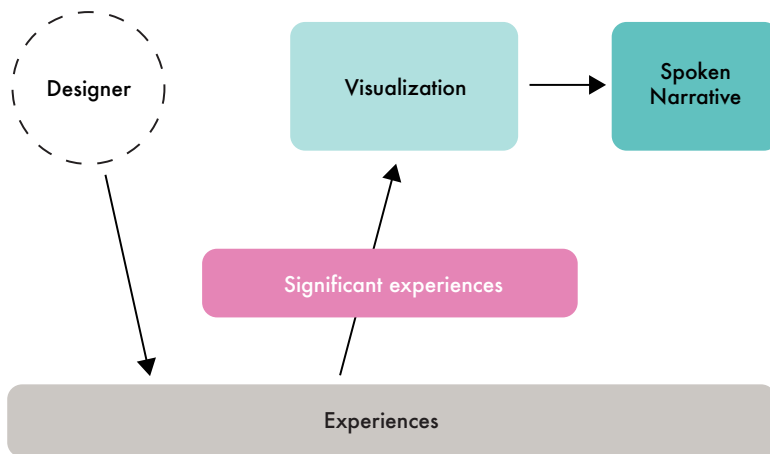
Figure 4. In the visual narrative framework, identity is approached by examining the most significant experiences as milestones of the narrative. The way in which the designer visualizes and speaks about her design path – the narrative she creates – can be considered an expression of her design identity.

further developed my understanding of the method and its implications (see also Chapter 3.6.3).

The visual narratives and their presentations have been analysed by beginning with rough data-analysis and the identification of central themes. Next, I created descriptive accounts of the narratives and only then proceeded into more interpretative accounts. To facilitate the analysis, I have created an analytical framework that I have named the *Narrative Design Identity* framework. This framework presents how design identity is born in interaction with others and the field of study/work in addition to the internal dialogue of the designer. The framework has a narrative approach that concentrates on the created and collected narratives and interprets them as representations of the life of the participants according to narrative psychology (Murray 2008:120-121).

The findings based on this data are presented in Chapters 5 and 6 by illuminating the main themes and key elements in the process of finding one's own way, and presenting both common and specific features across the participants in different life phases.

1.5.2 The Creative Process Documentation

Most of the data was generated with the help of the VN method presented. However, this data did not reveal how designers find their ways in their design work, so to illustrate how designers find their ways when doing design,

I also examined the design students' creative processes. Since I had been part of the DEE course and followed the creative processes in the course, I found it sensible to concentrate on these familiar processes. The DEE course required students to report their creative processes in weekly reports and reflect on the process afterwards with a final report; hence, also this documentation became my data (Figure 5).

The analysis of the creative processes differs from the analysis of the narratives that were created in the VN workshops, since firstly, I did not create the setting in which the data was created, and secondly, I was able to follow and discuss the creative processes and the course both with the students and the teachers, since I acted as a teaching assistant in the course. In that situation, my approach to the analysis of the data was partly guided by the Narrative Design Identity framework, but had also features of 'at-home ethnography' – that is, a study of one's own setting (Alvesson 2009).

The result of the analysis is presented in the seventh chapter, which is compiled from students' shared thoughts and experiences by focusing on the issues that illustrate each one's own individual way to navigate a creative process. The chapter presents the different drivers behind the work and the
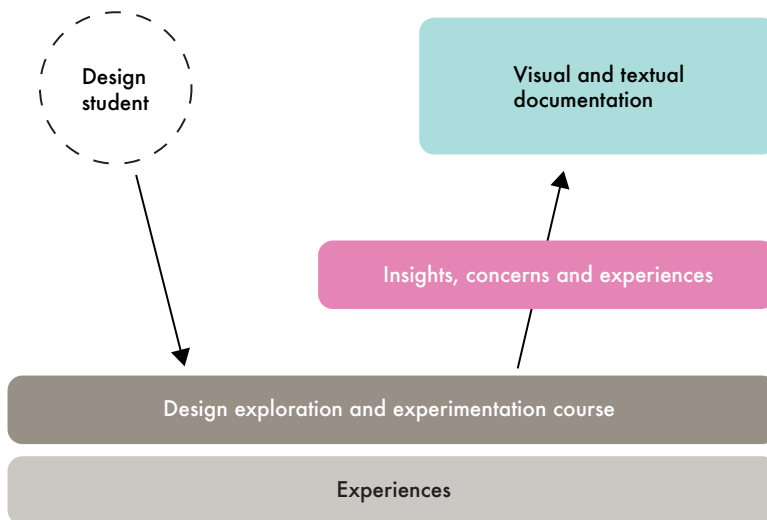
Figure 5. The documentation created by the design students was approached in a similar way to the Visual Narratives created. In addition, these documents are narratives that can be investigated as representations of the student's developing design identity. When writing the reports, the students refer to different experiences in the course and in their lives. The ways in which the reports are constructed and the creative process gone through reveal parts of their identity.

different methods for carrying out the interactions in the process. In addition, three creative processes are linked with their respective life stories, thus bringing more insights into the formation of one's own way.

1.6 About Interpretive Narrative Analysis

The main analytical focus of the study is on the participants' narration (self-reflection) of their own way, which comes through from their stories about their life and creative work. Even though narratives are seen as constructions, they are also based on facts and thus can be seen as representing the lived reality of the narrator.

In the analysis of the narratives, I have examined identity through both visualization and language, which connects me to the visual narrative research (see Bach 2007). The analytical process started in a data-driven way, with initial coding and theme identification without pre-existing theoretical framework. After writing a descriptive analysis, I started to enrich this interpretation with the concepts and ideas presented in narrative identity studies. This led to the development of analytical frameworks – *Narrative Design Identity* (see Chapter 4 for the presentation of the framework) and the analytical tool to interpret Visual Narratives (see chapter 4.2) – to provide concepts to focus on in the analysis. The *Narrative Design Identity* framework was developed through several data analysis rounds and redefinitions of the research focus based on insights from the data. Thus, my analysis proceeded by combining data-driven and theory-driven codes in a hybrid manner (see also Fereday & Muir-Cochrane 2006).

The deeper I got into the analysis, I the more I began to realize how intertwined the data collecting method, my research approach, the nature of the data, the nature of the concepts and theories I read and the way I wrote about the study were. *All these elements were in relation to one another and influenced the ways in which I could proceed in my work.* The intertwined nature of content and structure became clear to me both in the data and in the writing process. Thus, in the interpretation I have taken into account the influence of the data generating method and how its cues, tools and instructions have impacted on the narrative-making. I also discuss how the content and structure of the VN workshops and the DEE courses have influenced on and limited the narrative creation and paid attention to my different roles in these contexts. In addition to being a research scholar, my role has consisted of two design roles. I have 1) *designed the tools and methods for data gathering* and 2) *facilitated the events* in which the data is gathered. In these roles, I have been participating in the data gen-

eration and thus also influenced the narratives, which I reflect on throughout the study.

My commitment to the view of identity as narrative (McAdams 1993) has influenced the way I have presented the findings. The findings are presented in a narrative form on finding one's own way from the point of view of design identity. These reconstructed stories present the most essential elements that have emerged from the data in dialogue with theoretical literature on narrative identity and related studies. In the representation of the participants, I have paid attention to the ethical principles that guide narrative research (see the discussion on this in chapter 4.6)

The findings are presented by illustrating both differences and commonalities in finding and creating one's own way in design. This is done by different structural choices in the empirical chapters. The first builds around key experiences that are presented via different life phases. The second presents individual paths that are tied together with main themes that illustrate their similarities and contrasts. These structural choices have helped me to illustrate causal links between different episodes and themes that run through individual's entire life (see Baddeley & Singer 2007:183). The third chapter presents common features and individual paths that are tied together by presenting a model of Narrative Design Identity, which illustrates the main features in design identity. In this Chapter I provide examples of identity features that emerge both in life stories and in creative processes, thus representing the protagonist's identity from two perspectives. All the reconstructed narratives have been enriched and grounded in the data with the help of extracts and images.

Due to the small number and homogeneity of the participants, the findings of the study cannot be generalized to explain how designers in general find their ways in design. The participants represent designers and design students whose educational backgrounds are mostly in Applied Art and Design and Industrial Design and who value aspects typical to their domain. Hence, the findings build on this corpus of data and represent those features of narrative design identity that are typical for this specific group.

1.7 Structure of the Study

The study consists of nine chapters: introduction, theory, method, analytical frame, three empirical chapters that present the findings, summary and discussion. The following chapter, the second, discusses narrative identity, which forms the core of the analytical perspective and provides the background for the chosen research method. The third chapter presents the Visual Narrative

method, the VN workshops and the DEE course. The fourth chapter moves on to describe the analytical framework that has been used to facilitate the data analysis.

The first of the empirical chapters, the fifth chapter, presents findings from design entrepreneurs' narratives in order to illustrate how the study participants have found their ways in design. It presents an analysis based on narratives from six designers, focusing on the most significant experiences in relation to their professional identity. The sixth chapter demonstrates findings from students' stories, focusing on both the common significant experiences and narrative identity. The following chapter, the seventh, elucidates students' creative processes within a specific design course from the point of view of narrative identity. Furthermore, it links three of the creative processes with personal life histories. The empirical part is followed by the summary, chapter eight, which summarises the main findings in relation to the research questions. The concluding part, the ninth chapter, continues the discussion on the contexts in which the data has been generated. Furthermore, it offers suggestions on how students could be supported in finding their own ways. The chapter continues by evaluating the study, its limitations, quality, and contribution to design education and research.

NARRATIVE IDENTITY
AND SELF-MAKING

2 Narrative Identity and Self-Making

If you want to know me, then you must know my story, for my story defines who I am. And if I want to know myself, to gain insight into the meaning of my own life, then I, too, must come to know my own story.

McAdams 1993: 11

This chapter focuses on exploring identity as a narrative and how the narrative identity approach could be applied in the context of design. Narrative identity is a holistic view of human identity, which can be defined as self-making through narrative (see: Singer 2004, McAdams 1993, McLean & Pratt 2006, McAdams 2008, Bauer & al 2008). As McAdams notes above, we create and tell stories of our lives in order to make sense of who we are. In these stories, we reconstruct our past and give meanings to our experiences in the light of our past, present and anticipated future (McAdams 1993, McAdams & McLean 2013: 233, McLean & Pratt 2006). This meaning-making is essential to the development of narrative identity, since it takes us beyond the events we speak about, to articulate what we believe our stories tell about us (McAdams & McLean 2013: 236). Self-making is not affected only by our own interpretation of ourselves, but the interpretations others make of our stories (Bruner 1991a: 76). The stories we construct are our attempts to make sense of who we were, are, and imagine ourselves to be in our heads, bodies and in social contexts and culture (McAdams 2008: 242-243). The significance of narrative identity is its power to provide life with unity, purpose and meaning (Bauer & al 2008: 82; McAdams 2001:102).

In the present study, the view of self, narrative and identity is mainly based on – but not limited to – the ideas presented by Jerome Bruner (Bruner 1990, Bruner 1991a, Bruner 1991b, Bruner 2004) and Dan P. McAdams (McAdams 1993, McAdams 2001, McAdams 2008, McAdams & McLean 2013). In addition, the ideas put forward by Herbert Blumer (1986) and the foundational work by George Herbert Mead (Strauss 1956, Mead 1964) are taken into account while constructing the understanding of self, identity and narrative. These scholars have been influential mainly in the fields of psychology and social psychology; thus, the visit to these domains in this chapter is done to bring knowledge from the more established fields to the young field of design research. Also, since the study is more interested in designers than designs *per se* – though taking into consideration that designers' identity is formed strongly based on the artefacts designers produce – the involvement with human

sciences is necessary. Narrative identity in design is created in a similar way to any identity – in the social world in interaction between designer and other people. However, in addition to these, there is the third party, design (artefact, method, service, concept) that plays a strong role in design identity.

The chapter proceeds by first presenting a constructionist view of identity and self. Then, the chapter moves on to storytelling and narrative and to the concept of narrative identity. After this, the discussion proceeds to personal stories and narrative self-making, and the role of significant experiences and memory in constructing stories.

2.1 Identity

Identity is a widely studied theme in human and social sciences. The two major strands in identity theory studies can be identified as studies of (1) socially structured identities and studies of (2) internal processes of self-verification (Stryker & Burke 2000: 284). Identity has been explored from various viewpoints, such as professional identity, cultural identity, national identity, group identity, gender identity (Eteläpelto 2009:96) and narrative identity, of which narrative identity has become popular during the last two decades (Mahlakaarto 2010: 14).

Generally speaking, identity refers to people's experience of themselves and their belonging to their social environment and culture (Eteläpelto 2009: 96-97, Mahlakaarto 2010: 21, Taylor 1989:27); thus, it is formed through interaction between the person and the social world (McAdams 1993: 94-95). Identity is always linked to our past. Hence, identity is located in culture, language and history (Hall 1999: 16). Hall (1999: 20, 23) further notes that during the last decades identities have become fragmented due to the fragmentation of, for instance, class, sex, sexuality, ethnicity, race and nationality, which used to be more solid and therefore easier to identify with. We carry within us different identities that are in paradox with each other, drawing us in opposite directions.

We all are unique, having our unique life histories and experiences, but we build our identity in relation to and together with others. We identify with the stories of others, for instance due to a similar childhood environment, education, culture, social status, life situation etc., but we form our own conception of these environments and have our own personal experiences within these domains. Thus, we identify with several others, but also differ from others in various ways. Our identity becomes visible through this difference (Hall 1999: 9-13), personal unique configuration and perception of our lives among the lives of others. In contrast to being a fragmented concept, identity can be

also seen as an entity that ties different social selves together (see also Strauss 1956:219). These social selves, such as being a daughter, mother, sister and wife at the same time, are the characters of our personal stories. They can be, and usually are, also contradictory, which forces us to act and think in different, and also contradictory, ways (McAdams 1993: 117).

Identity is not a stable state, but rather a constantly shaping process that includes parts of the past and visions of the future (Eteläpelto & Vähäsantanen 2010:46). Consequently, identity development happens in phases. McAdams (1993: 95) has divided these phases roughly into exploration and commitment. During exploration, one revises one's story and explores and experiments with alternatives. In contrast, during commitment the story remains relatively stable.

The attempt to discover one's identity makes some of our constraints visible, leaving them exposed to investigation and redefinition. When external situations change, we may need to reconsider our idea of our identity, how we define ourselves and whether this definition matches with our current goals. Major changes in life may cause an identity crisis that forces us to ponder our situation profoundly. According to Hall (1999: 9), an identity crisis is a condition in which old identities are declining and giving space to new identities. Identity crises cause anxiety, since there are no objects / targets to identify with (see also Taylor 1989:27-28). In this condition, identity may become a problem, and rise to a conscious level for the first time. The problem is caused by a feeling that something stable and unchanged is being questioned, and the uncertainty does not go away through traditional arguments. In this period of identity change, the identity takes shape powerfully, since it is painful to live with a non-defined identity; thus, one wants to escape that state of being.

In this study, identity is seen, as suggested above, as a negotiation with the personal and the social dimension (see also Eteläpelto & Vähäsantanen 2010). It is linked to history, culture and language, and created in relation to both past and future. Furthermore, identity is understood as being in constant movement, having both more consistent, stable phases and phases of change. It is also noted that we are not able to show all of us to anyone, not even to ourselves, since part of us always remains on an unconscious level. In a way, we show fragments of ourselves and get to know others through the similarities and differences we have.

2.2 Self and Meanings

The pragmatist philosopher George Herbert Mead has studied self and the development of self in social interaction. He has presented a concept of the

social self that is built in interaction with others and through an internal dialogue (Mead 1964: 142-149, Strauss 1956: 212-260). According to Mead, we are first affected by others and only then by ourselves. Mead explains how we internalize others' ideas of ourselves and then have an internal conversation between these different internalized selves. Therefore, our inner response to our reaction to others is as varied as our social environment. Even as children we already learn to respond to ourselves as others have responded to us, and only later can this internal dialogue become the *forum and workshop of thought,* as we start to become aware of all those *roles* we play when we respond to ourselves. Mead proposes that a new self may arise only when the different interests of the conflicting selves have been realized and accepted. This allows the emergence of different and enlarged personalities that have reconstructed these selves into a harmonious entity – just as a scientist makes a better hypothesis by overcoming the observed conflicts in the previous hypothesis.

For Mead, the mechanism of thought is an inner conversation (Mead 1964: 146, 284, 288) and thus strongly related to language. For him, self is both subject and object, including the 'I' and the 'ME', of which the 'I' is free, responsive and creative, independent of social situation, whereas 'ME' exists only in memory as attitudes of others which one himself assumes. In our inner conversation, we take the roles of the others that we have faced in our social environment. We may take the roles of some people that are significant for us, but usually we converse with the *generalized other* that is an assumption we have made of the reactions of a certain group we belong to. The generalized other is the form in which the social process influences the individuals that are involved in it; hence, the community exercises control over its members through the generalized other (Strauss 1956: 232).

According to symbolic interactionism by Herbert Blumer (1986 : 2-5), *people act towards things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them.* Thus, the meanings that things have for people are a central part in symbolic interactionism. The nature of an object (for instance a physical object, another person, activity or guiding ideal) is different for each person (ibid. 2, 68-70). As Blumer (1986: 11) notes, *a tree will be a different object to a botanist, a lumberman, a poet and a home gardener.* Thus the meanings we give to the objects vary, as well as our actions based on the given meanings (ibid.: 14). These meanings arise out of the social interaction that a person has with his fellows; hence, meanings are seen as social products. They are creations formed in interaction. Furthermore, these meanings are coped with and modified through an interpretative process that happens in the person as an internalized social process. In other words, the person starts to communicate with himself, establishing an internal dialogue to handle meanings in order to produce an interpretation

(Blumer builds on Mead's thinking. For Mead's idea on meaning, see Strauss 1956: 177-184).

So, when we return to the development of identity, and look at it from the perspective of symbolic interactionism and from Mead's identity theory perspective, we may examine the things that have happened in the past and become meaningful for us – our significant experiences – as constructions we have built in social interaction. However, we do not build meanings only in social interaction but also subsequently as an internal dialogue, in which we have conversations with imagined others that are constructions of others within our minds. What is important to understand from Mead's ideas in this study is the construction of this internal dialogue and how it is revealed when we present ourselves. Hence, we may notice how we describe ourselves in terms of our own interpretations of the responses of our significant others and the generalized other we have defined according to our understanding.

Bruner (1990: 100) writes about a 'conceptual self', which is constructed by reflection in a similar way to that in which we construct other concepts. Self is a construction that *proceeds both from the outside in as well as from the inside out, from culture to mind as well as from mind to culture* (ibid.: 108). Self-making, like identity, is seen as a process that is built both in dialogue with oneself as well as in dialogue with others. As Bruner (1991a: 76) notes, self-making is not carried out alone, instead it is highly influenced by the interpretations that others make of one's story. It is also considered that there is no such a thing as an *essential self* that can be found in isolation – for instance, by medita-tion. However, as Taylor (1989: 27,50) has suggested, the self is seen as unique, having certain commitments and beliefs that one is not willing or able to let go of easily. These form the most enduring concept, the stable part of the self (see also Bruner 1991a:76).

This *most enduring concept* is highly relevant in narrative identity develop-ment, since this part of our identity construction we hold on to for one reason or another. It influences our actions holistically, since it is an embedded idea or belief that we commit to. It could be described as a core pillar of our identi-ty construction, and it guides our actions; thus, it contributes to our personal strategies, our ways of doing things in life.

2.3 Storytelling and Narratives

Storytelling is an ancient way to speak about our lives and experiences to others. Human beings are storytellers by nature (Murray 2008:111; McAdams 1993:27, McAdams & McLean 2013:233, Bruner 1991a: 4). We tell stories almost

as soon as we learn to speak, and we continue to construct narratives about human actions and intentions (Bruner 1990: 52). McAdams (1993: 27-28) notes that stories belong to every culture in different forms, such as folktale, history and motion picture. Storytelling is a fundamental way to express our world to others, create a shared history and link people together. The stories we tell are often less about facts and more about meanings. In design, stories form an essential part of communicating a design work, starting from idea presentations to scenarios and holistic presentations of human experience in a designed setting (for *Storied Design* see Liao 2016).

We tell stories to other people, thus stories are social phenomena that are mostly told according to societal expectations and norms (McAdams 2008: 245). Stories are created for a certain audience, and they seek to meet the demands of social roles and answer certain problems raised by the subgroups we belong to (Singer 2004:444). When we present ourselves to others, we take into consideration that our narrative should be comprehensible in our culture (Bruner 1991a: 71-72). This means that our story follows certain conventional aspects of our culture. Bruner (ibid.) suggests that our stories are partly canonical, consisting of certain set of 'givens' in a life. However, our stories do not plainly mirror our culture, but have also non-canonical, exceptional features that make our stories unique. One object of narrative is thus to demystify these deviances by locating them in a way that makes them comprehensible. Ergo, we create our stories to meet the demands of our culture. However, the influence is bidirectional: our sociocultural context has already shaped the way we tell stories. Our social interactions and the culture we have been exposed to influence both the way we create narratives of our experiences and the meaning we make of those created stories (Singer 2004: 442-443).

We can also use stories to guide our actions or influence others as a tool of persuasion or rhetoric (Singer 2004: 442). A story can be used as a tool to guide the discussion towards one's own aims, make an impression or also fake an impression (Goffman 1956:58-66). In design discourse, storytelling can be used as means to legitimate certain activities and strengthen a certain type of view as important within design (Julier 2008: 48-49). Stories have a power of their own when they are told in a credible way and bought by the audience despite their 'truthfulness'. Stories can start to live their own lives and provide comfort or faith as well as despair and fear, depending on what they consist of. From this point of view, the stories we carry in our minds have the power to make us believe in ourselves or lose our faith. Thus, they also influence our ways – and how we find our ways and our core interests in life.

When important people in our lives agree with the stories we tell of ourselves, we are likely to hold on to those stories and incorporate them into our understanding of ourselves (McAdams & McLean 2013: 263). Our agreements

and denials have an impact on others. This can be seen well in an educational context, where feedback shapes our understanding of our competence and challenges. A teacher or mentor in the art and design field may become a significant part of the building of professional self-esteem, especially when the student's family is not familiar with this specific field (Taylor & Littleton 2012:78-79). It is obvious that teachers and mentors have power over students due to their professional positions even if they aim to stay at the same level as the student. Particularly with younger and less experienced students, their words may be crucial and have a fundamental effect on the students and their motivation and faith in their skills (ibid.)

2.4 Personal Stories and Narrative Identity

The concept of identity and the concept of narrative have many points in common. They both discuss with the self, they are formed in social interaction, they position our selves and grow from the culture(s) that they have been exposed to, and they are dynamic and change over time. They both include past, present and future within them and they are more mature when they are more integrated. Further, they both can be revised and developed by discovering our current perception of our self-narrative, becoming more conscious of this construction and the powers that influence how we create it.

According to McAdams (1993: 11-13, 20, 95), a person comes to know who she is by creating a 'personal myth' – or personal narrative – in which she aims to bring together the different parts of herself and her life into a coherent, understandable whole. McAdams (1993: 34-37) describes this myth as a sacred story that embodies personal truth. The making of this myth is a psychosocial quest to define ourselves and figure out our way to live, since "our world can no longer tell us who we are and how we should live" (ibid.35). Through our personal myths we influence the stories of other people and co-create the storied world that also creates us. Today, when many people do not believe in the existence of a God or other powerful source that could guide, protect or help us, stories help us to define ourselves. These stories influence the stories of other people. "Through our personal myths, we help to create the world we live in, at the same time it is creating us" (ibid.: 37).

To create a personal myth is to fashion a history of the self, which includes our judgement of our past and present (McAdams 1993: 12, 102-103). One's personal myth makes one unique. Based on this, our stories of ourselves are only partly 'true'. They are what we choose or let them be, consciously or unconsciously. Some unconscious parts come from early childhood experiences, which also influence the *narrative tone* of our stories (ibid.: 47-50). This tone

can be seen in the way we talk, the words we use, the attitude we have towards ourselves and others (ibid.).

One attempt to arrange our experiences is to write an autobiography to present our lives and ourselves. In an autobiography, we present a view of our self and its doings, reflections and place in the world (Bruner 1991a: 67). Autobiographies are not just about the past, but also about the present, in which we evaluate the past and give meanings to the lived events (ibid.:70-71). When writing an autobiography, people usually aim to accomplish some kind of meaningful personal integration of different experiences they have faced (McAdams 1993: 32). Mahlakaarto (2010: 17) notes that what holds identity together is the feeling of continuity and integrity. This integrity can be achieved by constructing a narrative that combines the past, present and future into a credible and logical story.

Stories also heal. They may help us to organize our thoughts and move towards psychological fulfilment and maturity. McAdams (1993:11) notes "We each seek to provide our scattered and often confusing experiences with a sense of coherence by arranging the episodes of our lives into stories." The process of creating stories of one's life may become an experience of healing and growth. Due to this healing power that is hidden in creating personal histories, storytelling is used also in psychotherapy, where the therapist and client seek to revise the client's story and construct a vitalizing, healing story of the self (McAdams 1993: 11, 31-33.) Singer (2004: 442) proposes that once we have filtered our experiences through the narrative lens, we can utilize these stories to "raise our spirits, guide our actions, or influence others as a tool of persuasion or rhetoric". Even though we may be aiming to create a very personal story, it is always influenced by the sociocultural environment we live in (ibid.: 442-443).

As we tell and retell our stories, they develop and change. Our life story is dynamic (Bauer & al. 2008: 81). Since it is a social construction, it is affected by the responses that it gets and by our own developing understanding of it. Bruner (2004: 708) has noted that "life is not 'how it was', but rather how it is interpreted, reinterpreted, told and retold".

2.5 Significant Experiences as Part of Our Story

We craft narratives of our experiences and tell these created stories both internally and to others (Singer 2004: 438). When describing our experiences, we give meanings to them and may also ponder about their role and significance in the course of our life story. Bruner (1990: 64-65) believes that we

are able to interpret meanings and meaning-making only to the extent of which we understand the larger contexts within which these specific meanings are created and transmitted. Thus, our understanding of our selves and our culture, as well as our capability to identify with seemingly very different others (Csikszentmihalyi 1993/2006: 89, 311) influence our narrative making.

The stories examined in this study have been formed around the significant experiences that each author has selected for her story. Some of these experiences can be interpreted as turning points that have caused a remarkable change in the narrative. In this study, a 'turning point' is defined as an event or an experience that changes the author's path somehow. A turning point may be, for example, the birth of one's first child, being accepted to study at university or one's first design going into production.

Pillemer (2001: 127) defines turning points as concrete episodes that are perceived to suddenly redirect a life plan. Bruner (1991a: 73-74) describes these turning points as episodes in which the protagonist makes an "effort to *individualize* a life, to make it clearly and patently something more than a running off of automatic, folk-psychological canonicality". These turning points can help in discovering what is ordinary and expectable, and what is agentic and distinctive. They are representations of how people free themselves in their self-consciousness from their expected destiny.

Usually, we choose to speak about the most significant moments, which can be also called memories of specific life episodes or personal event memories (Pillemer 2001: 123). The things that we now consider to be essential and significant in our past also have an influence on us today. Regardless of whether we are aware of it, these memories continue to influence us and direct our beliefs and actions long after the experience they represent (ibid.: 124). In this way, they are still living inside us and guiding us. When we encounter a situation that is similar to the ones we remember, our memory is activated and discussed (ibid.: 126). Vivid, detailed and specific memories continue to command attention and evoke intense feelings (ibid.: 127).

When experiences are narrated, the narrator naturally emphasizes only something of these experiences, not everything in detail. In this study, the interest lies in this particular view of the experience, as the narrator experiences it at the moment she speaks. This reveals something of the significance of the event and also something of the narrator. Significant life experiences and periods vary from person to person, but usually also include the very basic life turns, such as moving away from one's parents' house, graduating, getting married or divorced, having one's first child, turning forty, changing job or losing a loved one (see also McAdams 1993).

When we present our experiences in the form of a story, we present a construction. It is impossible to describe the experience exactly as it was;

hence, we reconstruct the experience and present it in the light of our current understanding and goals. These selected memories of specific experiences support our beliefs and knowledge of ourselves and can thus always be seen as somehow biased (Conway 2005; Singer & Bluck 2001). The experiences are not narrated in a similar way in different situations, nor over time. Our autobiographical memory gets updated as our reasoning about life becomes more sophisticated (Bluck & Habermas 2001: 137). However, our self-selected memories have a lot of power, since they are often thought about and shared and thus retain their vividness in detail (ibid.: 138). Memories of significant events are most valuable when they are connected to a person's belief system, which is forward reaching and motivational (Pillemer 2001: 130). However, they can be also destructive if they keep warning us of potential danger or tie our understanding to the past in a way that prevents us from renewing our stories.

VISUALIZATION AND STORYTELLING AS REFLECTIVE METHODS

3 Visualization and Storytelling as Reflective Methods

3.1 Visualization and Storytelling

Visualization in storytelling is perhaps most apparently present in movies, where speech plays an important, but only partial, role in creating the story. Some children's animations, such as Krtek by the Czech animator Zdeněk Miler, present the story solely with visual language and sounds, without words or speech. Children's illustrated books also give considerable power to the images, which provides a visual world for the story that would otherwise be built up as mental images inspired by text.

This dialogue between text and image is strongly present in artistic fields, such as art and photography, where the work is dominantly non-textual. In these pieces, the name or description of the work has a lot of power to connect or ground the artwork with a certain discussion or tradition. This dialogue is also present in design and architecture, where tangible design artefacts, plans and visions are presented via photos and explained by text and graphics. Designs and artworks have stories behind their creation and purpose, and thus can be seen as vehicles for communicating a story, a function, or both.

Visualization and visual data are a strong part of design research due to the nature of design practice, which is built around the visual and material world. Visualization has also been a part of social science research for more than half a decade (Banks 2007). Visual data – such as photographs or films – as well as visualizations – such as charts, tables and diagrams – are used and created in both research domains to elicit, interpret and communicate information (ibid.). In the social sciences, and specifically in psychology, visualization has served as an efficient tool to capture experiences (Reavey 2011). In visual ethnography, the presence and impact of the visual world is already embedded in the approach (Pink 2007).

For some narrative inquirers, such as Hedy Bach, who uses photography as a tool to generate data (Bach 2007), the role of visuals is crucial in the formation of a narrative. Bach (2007: 281) notes that visual narrative inquiry is "an intentional, reflective, active human process in which researchers and participants explore and make meaning of experience both visually and narratively". The visuals bring another layer of meaning to the narrative (ibid.).

I consider myself as one of these *visual narrative inquirers*. I have used visualization in various ways, from data generation to presenting the key findings. I have been inspired by the work of Edward Tufte (2003, 2002), who has

presented and analysed visualizations in a beautiful way in his book *Envisioning Information* (Tufte 2003). At their best, these visualizations, such as maps, timetables and weather charts, can be multidimensional but nonetheless clear crystallizations of complex, interrelated information[14]. These visualizations are stories told with visual language.

3.2 The Visual Narrative Method – an Inquiry into Identity

Narrative researchers have employed several different methods to understand how identity develops through life (Baddeley & Singer 2007). For instance, to contribute to the growing understanding of narrative identity, researchers have investigated parent-child conversations, conducted life story interviews (see also Musson 2004), collected couples' memories, and examined autobiographical and biographical documents (Baddeley & Singer 2007:197).

To obtain valuable data from the participants, I designed a Visual Narrative (VN) method (Kosonen 2011a) that could capture life histories in a better way than an interview. Instead of asking the designers questions, I made them visualize their paths in design. Visualization, in comparison to interviews, allows freedom to the participants to explicate and structure their experiences before sharing them (see also the *River of experience* technique by Pope & Denicolo 2001). Furthermore, visualization is at the heart of design work and as a method easy to approach for designer participants, who are used to sketching, drawing and rearranging (e.g. Goel 1995: 128). The reason for designing a visual method was also to develop a mode of inquiry that would reveal tacit, bodily knowledge, and be more reciprocal and less exhausting than an interview.

The main idea of the VN method is to facilitate the visualization and naming of significant experiences that the participants consider relevant for their professional path. The focus is on the significant experiences for two reasons: firstly, I wanted to frame the task around concrete events instead of free storytelling, and secondly, I consider experiences as windows to look into the past and I felt that those events that the participants still hold in their memories would contain a great deal of significant information about how

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[14] Visualization can have an enormous impact when carried out in an insightful way. John Snow's visualization of cholera deaths during the epidemic in 1854 in London is a good example of this. Snow, who, against the contemporary common belief, believed that cholera was not spread by contaminated air, but via water, could communicate his research findings powerfully through statistical graphics that revealed the data. He drew a map of the places where people had died of cholera and revealed that most of the deaths happened close to the water pump on Broad Street. The pump handle was removed and the epidemic ended. The visualization that Snow had created served as a crucial element in the process (Tufte 2003: 27-37).

they have found their ways (see also Kosonen 2011a). Furthermore, via this approach I aimed to keep the focus on the participants' view and minimize my interference with their storytelling.

The VN method has a similar purpose to other ID (identity) methods that aim to strengthen the idea of a person or a group (Mahlakaarto 2014: 48). Mahlakaarto (ibid.) notes that the ID methods do not have a coherent theoretical grounding; instead, they apply theories that focus on identity, agency and empowerment. The methods consist of activities in which emotions, bodily expressions, mental images and visual experiences are central.

The VN method consists of a pre-assignment and a VN workshop in which the participants create visual narratives and then share them with others. The visual narratives are created with the help of instructions and the material provided, which varies depending on the workshop. The outcomes of the method are a concrete Visual Narrative and a verbal presentation based on the visualization. The term *Visual Narrative*[15] is generally applied to various forms of visual storytelling from still, illustrated story-books to dynamic motion pictures (Pimenta & Poovaiah 2010: 25). VN consists always of a story – a sequence of events – which is constructed into a narrative – the representation of the story (ibid. 30). Even though visual language can overcome language barriers, the visual narratives are however rooted in the cultural and social practices (ibid. :33) in a similar way to verbal narratives.

The VN method consists of approaches and elements that can be considered significant for its application (see also Kosonen 2011a). These include 1) the pre-assignment that stimulates memory and orientates the participant to the workshop, 2) an engaging space & setting for applying the method, 3) cues and tools to facilitate narrative building, 4) an emphasis on the participant's own expression, 5) instructions that frame the task clearly but allow personal interpretation, 6) voluntary participation, 7) selection criteria for the participants and 8) an empathic and conscious presence on the part of the facilitator. Next, I will introduce more closely the pre-assignment (1) and the instructions (5) that direct the narrative creation. The cues and tools as well as other elements will be discussed in the workshop presentations (see Chapter 3.3).

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[15] Pimenta & Poovaiah (2010: 29-32) have created a definition of a Visual Narrative. In addition to the key feature – that a VN consists of a story that is constructed into a narrative – a Visual Narrative has the following characteristic features: 1) "*the visual is constructed with the idea of communicating the story to the onlooker*", 2) there are one or more actors, characters in the story that perform actions, 3) "*the VN has a 'universe' of its own*" and 4) the Visual Narrative can be created in any medium.

Figure 6-7. The pre-assignment tool was a thread with magnetic lock. The assignment can be considered a sensitizing probe that provides information for research. The general idea of using probes is to provide toolkits for users to document their activities, thoughts and feelings, which make parts of the activities visible for design and research purposes (Mattelmäki 2006; Lucero & Mattelmäki 2007; Mattelmäki & Battarbee 2002). These probes have their roots in cultural probes (Gaver et al. 1999).

3.2.1 Pre-assignment

The pre-assignment consisted of a bracelet-type of reflection tool (Figure 6) that was given to the participants in an envelope with instructions one week before the workshop. The instructions advised the participant to wrap the bracelet around her wrist or otherwise carry it with her during the week prior to the workshop. The participants were asked to memorize the significant experiences along their design path and to make knots in the thread to represent each significant experience (Figure 7). They were asked to bring the bracelets to the workshop, where they would facilitate the creation of the Visual Narrative. (see also Kosonen 2011a).

The main purpose of the assignment was to stimulate the participants' memory. When I was designing the pre-assignment, my goal was to make a rapidly implementable but engaging tool that would evoke positive emotions in the participants. I paid special attention to its function and appearance. I ended up to design a jewellery type of tool, since it is easy to carry along, and people tend to give meanings to jewellery by storing memories in them (Ahde-Deal & Koskinen 2010). (see also Kosonen 2011a)

3.2.2 Instructions

The main idea of the instructions was to frame the visualization task so that the participants would have rough guidelines to follow when they build their Visual Narrative of the chosen significant experiences. The instructions were presented as suggestions, not as rules to follow.

The instructions consisted of two guidelines that are visualized in Figure 8. It was suggested that the significant experiences be presented in chronological order (for instance as a timeline), and in such a way that they formed a path or a curve that would have vertical variation. It was suggested that this vertical variation could consist of either emotional engagement with design (i.e. 'feeling curve') or professional development in design. An additional purpose of the instructions was to prevent the designers from concentrating on the appearance of the narrative instead of the content (Kosonen 2011a). I also mentioned explicitly that the purpose of the assignment was not to create an aesthetically pleasing, well-crafted and beautiful artefact but instead to focus on reflection.

The pre-assignment and the guidelines can be considered easily implementable and transferrable methods in the creation of the Visual Narrative. However, as noted, the elements (1-8) presented above also include the skills of the facilitator. The task, which is carried out to be presented to an audience, is a construction that is influenced by both the facilitator and the other participants, who will act as an audience when the narrative is presented. For this reason, the attitude, knowledge, presence and approach of the facilitator plays a crucial role in the formation of the narratives (see also Mahlakaarto 2014). Based on this, the method can be defined as a *competence* that is dependent on the skills and intentions of its user (see Keinonen 2009).

Next, I will present some of the key issues that influence the creation of the narratives. Firstly, the chosen group of participants influences both what and how much the participants want to share. The participants will all act both as presenters and members of the audience. It matters whether the par-
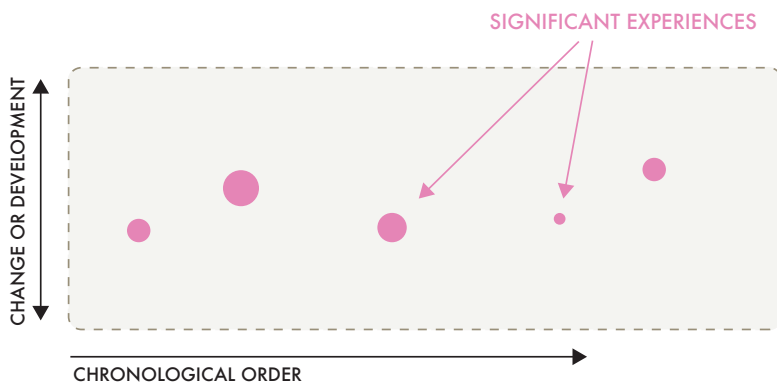
Figure 8. The illustration shows how designers were suggested to use two guidelines in the construction of their narratives of significant experiences.

ticipants know one another beforehand, whether they are friends, colleagues or competitors, and whether there are power or status differences within the group. The facilitator has a key role here, since she can influence the selection of the participants, consider how well they match with one another and evaluate the group dynamics beforehand. The amount of members in the group also determines how many stories will be shared and how many aspects each participant can find in others' stories that resonate with them. Too large a group may lead to the last stories being presented more briefly or receiving less attention since people get tired. Too few participants, however, will not provide multiple reflection surfaces for each story. Based on my experiences within and outside this study, 4-5 participants is optimal.

Secondly, the role of the facilitator influences how the workshop is organized, what material (cues, papers, tools) is prepared for it and how the workshop is run. The facilitator selects the workshop environment, creates the atmosphere and may make the participants feel safe and at ease rather than intimidated and nervous. She is also the one that the stories are mainly told to, so her reactions or non-reactions to the stories influences on participants. Based on her professional skills, the stories can become rich and varied or short and 'official'. The facilitator may help the participants to open up and share their experiences and also aid weaker voices to be heard. In addition, if something sensitive is presented, the reaction and support of the facilitator can be crucial. Her ability to be present, empathetic and support the presenter without interrupting her or making her feel too uncomfortable is essential (see also Josselson 2007: 546). Even though the workshop tasks may be framed around professional identity and work experience, people may construct stories around important personal experiences, and rejecting this would signify that nobody wants to hear the story, and this might be destructive for the presenter, who might be sharing her experiences for the first time. Thus, an approach that supports the agency of the participants is essential (Mahlakaarto 2014: 49).

3.3 The Visual Narrative Workshops

As other professional identity workshops, the VN workshop provides participants with an opportunity to examine their professional identity through their life narrative and by looking at different sides of their identity (Mahlakaarto 2014: 52). The VN workshops have the following structure: 1) a pre-assignment for memory stimulation, 2) visualizing and naming of experiences, 3) presenting one's own story and listening to others' stories and 4) free discussion. This order is quite similar to the sequence of events in ID (identity)

workshops that apply methods typical to psycho- and sociodrama (Mahla-kaarto 2012: 54). These methods also start with opening up and warming up, and continue with working, sharing and ending the session. This structure that starts with warming up in the form of the pre-assignment and ends in a free discussion is essential for the VN workshop, since a proper initiation and ending are considered essential for completing a self-reflective process.

The VN method or parts of it, in different versions, were used in the workshops and courses illustrated in the Data Mapping chart (Figure 3). In the following sections, I will present the *Significant Experiences I-II* workshops and the *My Story* workshop, which have produced the visual and verbal narratives that form the majority of my data.

3.3.1 Significant Experiences I and II

I arranged the first *Significant Experiences* workshop for two design entrepreneurs to pilot the VN method. I knew the designers beforehand and informally asked them to participate. Due to the success of the workshop, I arranged the workshop another time for 4 design entrepreneurs. For the second *Significant Experiences* workshop (Figure 9), the designers were invited by an email which also explained the purpose of the workshop. The email was sent to six designers, of which these four participants were interested in participating in

Figure 9. Design entrepreneurs creating Visual Narratives in the *Significant Experiences II* workshop.

the study. Those who volunteered to participate received an information letter and a pre-assignment to be completed before the workshop.

When I approached the designers, I paid attention to the group they would form, since the narratives they created would be presented to the others in the group. I approached designers that shared a more or less equal position in the field to avoid strong comparison and a feeling of competition between themselves. All the design entrepreneurs had gained some attention in the field and were practising design actively. To approach familiar designers was also a part of my research strategy, since I thought that my knowing them a little would make them tell their stories more openly.

The six participants that volunteered to participate in this study I have named Annika, Erika, Inka, Jiro, Sofia and Veera in order to protect their identities. The designers had received their Master's degrees from the Aalto University School of Art, Design and Architecture (Aalto ARTS) between 2000 and 2008, apart from one who had not yet completed her MA studies. The participants' ages varied from 31 to 37, and their major subjects were furniture design, spatial design and applied art and design. Both workshops took place in Aalto ARTS. The workshops were held in an art studio, since the studio space was considered to provide an inspiring atmosphere in familiar environment (Kosonen 2011a). The return to the familiar university was thought to enhance self-reflective work (ibid.). The workshops were video and audio recorded *in situ*.

The workshops began with an introduction of the research context and purpose in order to outline the value of the study to the participants, and continued with presenting the aim of the workshop and the provided materials (Kosonen 2011a). The designers were asked to create the Visual Narrative by utilizing the pre-assignment, cues, tools and simple guidelines, but not to limit themselves to those (ibid.). The cues consisted of words, pictures and icons that represented themes – such as education, people, exhibitions, awards and emotions – related to design education and practice that I created based on my experiential knowledge from the field. This combination of words and pictures offered a powerful 'language of design' (Lawson 2004: 88) for the making of the visualization.

The cues represented both facts and emotions (see Appendix A). This categorization was based on the premise that when creating the Visual Narrative, one would find it easier to start with facts, such as when she graduated, or worked in an office, and then proceed to emotions and feelings to describe her attitude and experiences related to those events (Kosonen 2011a). In addition to thematic cues, a set of photos and icons was also provided. These cues were participant specific, and they were based on the designer's curriculum vitae to help to better recall one's work history (ibid.).

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Figure 10. Annika presenting her Visual Narrative.

The tools included for example Blu Tack™, tape, glue, sticky notes and markers to enable fast narrative building. The participants were instructed to present the experiences in a chronological order and to have them forming a curve that showed either their emotional engagement with design or their development as designers (Figure 8).

The Visual Narratives were composed on a large sheet of paper provided to enable easy sketching and rearranging of the cues. The material provided, a combination of brown drawing paper and printed cues, was intentionally plain and simple to direct the designer's attention away from designing a visually pleasant artefact. After the creation phase, the illustrations were placed on wall and presented to the group (Figure 10). The presentations were followed by an informal group discussion. The workshops were intensive: the Visual Narratives were completed in 3-5 hours and each of them was presented in 10-40 minutes. (Kosonen 2011a).

The stories were presented in a voluntary order. The analysis of the stories shows how the presentation order influenced the storytelling. Both the first presenters in the two workshops kept the presentation rather simple, whereas the next presenters elaborated more on their story, and also referred to the previous presenter(s). The visualizations guided the verbal narration and facilitated it, for instance when the story started to develop and the narrator did not remember where she was in her path. When telling the stories, the presenters pointed to the visualization to show how their story connected to the illustration. (see also Kosonen 2011a).

Some participants regarded the method as therapeutic. Later during the research, I understood that this therapeutic aspect was already embedded in the approach that asks for reflection. From an ethical point of view, the method was empathetic. In comparison to the conventional interview situ-

ation, this method gave the participants more time to dwell on issues in the exercise. It gave time for the participants to consider what they want to say in the presentation and how they wanted to create the visualization. In addition, the method allows a lot of freedom, since the narrator can decide upon the perspective she takes and how much she reveals of the story. However, a setting where people listen to your story – and only your story – can be a very powerful experience if the story is told that way for the first time.

My role during the creation of the Visual Narratives was passive. I was there if anyone needed help, and I circulated a few times through the room to glance over the developing Visual Narratives. During the presentations, the camera was on a stand and situated rather far from the presenters. The camera had a wide lens to capture the activity from a distance; hence, I did not do close video shooting that would have probably affected the storytelling more strongly. While the participants presented, I listened to the stories carefully. I asked only few clarifying questions without judging or questioning any aspects of the stories. During the discussion after the presentations, I became a more active participant and elaborated on my own experiences, too. The workshop had made me reflect on my story and I felt the need to share some parts of that. My involvement generated more discussion.

3.3.2 My Story

In the *My Story* workshop, autumn 2011, I combined various data-gathering methods in a 3-day workshop for design students. The workshop was planned and organized by me, but also attended by my advisor, Jack Whalen, who participated in the discussions and supported me in video recording the workshop. The workshop was intensive and the atmosphere was intimate. The discussion in between the tasks varied from personal intimate topics to various issues such as politics, education and culture.

The students were invited to the workshop from the Design Exploration and Experimentation (DEE) course held during the same year (see Chapter 3.4. for the presentation of the course). I had got to know these students as an assistant teacher on the course. I had mentored some of them during the course and followed their creative processes from the beginning of the course until the concrete outcomes, the artefacts created were presented in an exhibition. We shared a 5-day excursion together and we had informal discussions in addition to the course-related meetings. Hence, there was an established, though not personal nor very close, relationship between the students and me. The invited students had also got to know one another better during the intensive DEE course.

Figure 11-12. Lierna, Italy (on the left). Students and my supervisor, Jack Whalen, sitting on the terrace of the workshop facility.

I approached the students one by one based on my experience of them in the course. I selected whom to contact based on their activity and willingness to reflect on both their work and themselves, which I had noticed in the course. The design students approached had all been reflective in their course reports; thus, I considered that they would all have the capacity to produce rich data concerning their experiences. In addition, the students were all in a similar position, studying abroad, and already knew each other from the DEE course. Furthermore, I paid attention to the group coherence so that the students would feel comfortable in sharing their stories with each other. All the students I approached agreed to participate in the workshop on a voluntary basis. To protect the participants, I have given them aliases: Emilio, Lauretta, Monika, Oliver and Yvette. The students were born in Italy, Austria, France and Germany.

The workshop was organized in a private, rented house in Lierna, Italy (Figure 11). The assignments were made in the house and in the near vicinity of the building (Figure 12). The place was selected since it was considered to provide an inspiring atmosphere and the peace to concentrate only on the given tasks. Two of the participants came from Italy, which was one reason to hold the workshop in a central location in Europe, where the other participants could come easily.

The workshop included two pre-assignments to be completed

Figure 13. Meal by Emilio.

before the workshop. The first assignment was the thread exercise, and the other was a new experiment related to food. The food assignment was simply to select one food ingredient that says something about one's identity and bring the ingredient to the workshop. During the workshop, each participant was instructed to prepare a meal for the group using this ingredient, and tell the story of why this ingredient was selected to speak about their identity (Figure 13). The students were also asked to take their own drawing and painting tools with them to the workshop.

The workshop began with an introductory speech that explained the research context and purpose of the workshop. Then, the aim of the workshop and the materials were described. The exercises were: 1) the Visual Narrative, which was followed by 2) preparation of dinner with the selected ingredient, 3) reflection on the selected experience, 4) body drawing, and finally 5) installation of the selected experience. The aim of the workshop was to create a safe setting for students to reflect on and share their experiences. Furthermore, the workshop was an opportunity for me to develop the VN method further by giving the participants more freedom in expression.

In this workshop, the students were given only simple instructions to illustrate their experiences in the way they preferred, a big sheet of paper and sticky notes. Some participants had brought their own tools, such as markers or water colours. The pre-assignment bracelets formed a sort of a skeleton, a starting point for the narratives, which were further developed during the workshop by methods typical for designers, such as sketching and drawing (Goel 1995).

The Visual Narratives were made in the house and on the terrace (Figures 14-19). The video shooting was done by recording small parts of the making

Figure 14-15. Monika creating her timeline. She consulted her personal notebook when deciding what to write on the sticky notes. She used both big and small sticky notes for making different categories that were like streams that went through the paper at different heights. Monika started to use symbols, since she felt that she could not express her experiences only with words on sticky notes.

Figure 16. Yvette used notebook to make the visualization of her story. She had smaller and bigger knots in her thread, the bigger ones being more significant. She had written a small story about all the knots in her pre-assignment thread in her notebook. Yvette made a timeline based on where she had lived during her life at the bottom of the paper.

of the narrative, after which the video recorder was placed on the terrace. Yvette, Oliver and Monika worked on the terrace and Lauretta and Emilio inside the house.

The video recording shows how the students were fully concentrated on the visualization assignment, working mostly silently and independently. Sometimes, they glanced over at their friend's work or visited one another and shared some thoughts. The group comprising Monika, Oliver and Yvette had a break from making the narrative at the point when most of the sticky notes were grouped and organized. They gathered as a group close to Yvette's table and talked about their work.

Monika, Oliver and Yvette all worked next to one another using sticky notes, personal notebooks and the pre-assignment thread to help the creation of the Visual Narrative. The sticky notes came in several colours, which were used to group notions under different themes or categories. The notes were easy to move around on the paper as they increased.

Figure 17. Oliver explained that his thread included facts, events and choices in addition to the most significant experiences. He repeated the word *'choices'* to emphasize it. He explained that he noticed that the experiences formed clusters, where many things happened and there were times that nothing significant happened. Oliver said that while making the Visual Narrative he also wanted to add the emotional aspect and background for his choices. He used pink notes for emotions and feelings.
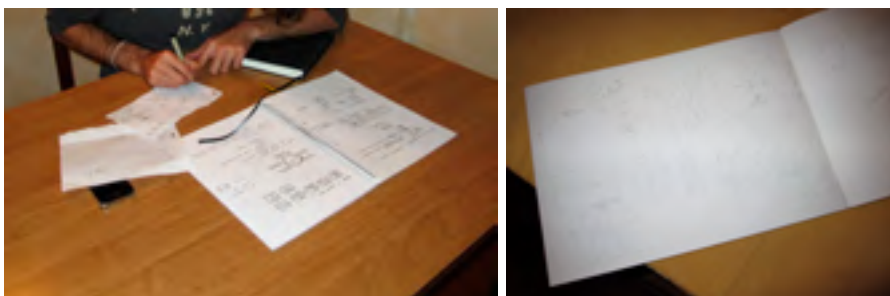
Figures 18-19. Emilio started the making of the Visual Narrative by writing notes, and Lauretta by sketching on a blank paper.

After the reflective visualization task, the Visual Narratives (see Figure 31 for examples) were put on the wall and presented verbally for the group inside the house. The presentations took 25-45 minutes. During the presentations, I asked the students some clarifying questions, and the students also commented and asked questions of the presenters. After each presentation, there was time for questions and free discussion, which was sometimes even longer than the presentation itself.

After the participants had made their Visual Narratives of the most significant experiences, I asked them to concentrate on one of them and make another task related to this experience, a sort of mind map (Figure 20). This mind map exercise served as stimulation for the installation exercise and it was not discussed during the workshop.

After the exercise, the participants were asked to make an installation in a selected spot outdoors to represent the experience they had chosen (Figure 21). It was proposed that the students use materials that could be found in the near environment, such as stones, sticks and other easily accessible material. The

Figures 20-21. Oliver's mindmap (on the left) and installation (on the right) of his experience in Aalto ARTS. The installation sought to convey how Oliver felt during this time and what he gained through this experience.

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students were also advised to pay attention to the location and place in which they situated their installations, since the place was supposed to provide the scene for the chosen experience. I also advised the participants to not to think too much, but rather act intuitively and in a 'quick and dirty' manner. The students were already very tired due to the heavy reflection assignments done before the installation. The installations were completed in less than 30 minutes. The creation of the installation was documented by video, recording a part of the making process and the narration that was given when presenting the installation.

The installations became very powerful representations of the experience. Some of them let the viewer *in* the experience, since they were multi-dimensional and included movement or participation. I personally felt that some of them went under my skin and provided a holistic experience of the experience, much more memorable and effective than the verbal narrations of experiences. The installations were able to convey the experience to the viewer on an emotional level. Even though these installations have not been thoroughly analysed for this study, two of them are referred to, and presented in Appendices C and D, since they provide a deeper understanding of the life experiences and approaches of the students.

3.3.3 Illustrating, Naming and Sharing Experiences

The workshops presented have shown how the participants created visualizations of their experiences with the help of the guidelines and tools given. Through this presentation, how the provided cues have influenced the visualizations has also become visible. In the *My Story* workshop, where cues were not used, the visualizations became more personal and represented the handprint of their maker better. The participants' experiences also differed, since the *Significant Experiences* workshops were held during only one workday, whereas the *My Story* workshop lasted three days. Consequently, the *My Story* workshop provided the participants with more time and tools to explore their own experiences and identity.

The VN workshops were originally built to gather data by providing a setting that would also benefit the participants. Thus, their goal was to function as platforms for light identity examination. Their intention was not similar to those of ID workshops, which provide a setting for identity work *per se* (see Mahlakaarto 2014). However, since the VN method asked for reflection, it involved the aspects of identity work.

The purpose of the VN workshops presented is similar to some of the purposes of ID workshops (see Mahlakaarto 2014: 54 for an illustration). Both

workshops aim to provide a setting in which the participants become aware of their stories, process their experiences and gain some insights into their lives. ID workshops, however, aim to go deeper than that, by providing, in addition to the presented goals, a place in which understanding, creating and practising identity related issues also becomes possible (Mahlakaarto 2014: 54). Hence, VN workshops work as initiators for reflection processes that may be deepened in ID workshops.

Mahlakaarto (2014: 48-53) describes ID methods as different cooperative methods that enhance reflection. These methods consist of uniting, structuring and functional working ways that utilize social interaction to support individual identity work. The VN method has similar features. It utilizes narrative creation as a structuring and uniting method in a social setting. The supporting aspect of the VN method is based on the idea that the activities of visualization, naming and sharing of the experiences themselves already function as identity-strengthening. However, VN workshops do not provide tools to work with obstacles, nor support for active identity work.

When working on identity and producing identity material in visible and audible forms, we also produce knowledge of what is missing and fragile in us (Mahlakaarto 2014: 63)**.** Thus, a constructive, approving approach that brings positive energy to the working process is important (ibid.). This requires an empathetic, nonjudgmental and emotionally responsive attitude from the co-producer of identity material (see also Josselson 2007). Even though the VN workshops are not designed for active identity work, but rather for the purpose of making visible one's own life experiences, their influence on the participants have some similar features to ID workshops. Thus, a safe and accepting atmosphere is an essential feature of a VN workshop as well (Mahlakaarto 2014: 55). In the VN workshop, this was achieved through empathetic listening and empowering commenting.

The workshops presented have produced the majority of the data for this study. However, to complement this data, I have analysed students' creative processes based on their course reports. This data has been generated during the DEE course, which I will present next. After this, I will provide an overview of the data used in this study, and proceed to discuss other activities that have informed the research.

3.4 The DEE Course – A Platform for Exploration and Experimentation

The DEE course is an annual 8-week course arranged at Aalto University of Arts, Design and Architecture. The course platform has been presented

thoroughly in an article that I have co-written as part of my doctoral study (Kosonen & Mäkelä 2012)[16]. The roots of the course are in studio-based practice, and it can be called an 'educational implication of practice-led research', since it helps students to gain insights into their work by documentation and reflection, and supports the intertwined nature of research, documentation and practice.[17] I participated in three DEE courses between 2011 and 2014 as an assistant teacher and a doctoral candidate, and examined both the weekly reports and the final reflections that students had written during and after the course. Over the course, I got to know some of the students a bit better, since I mentored some of them during the course. My first-hand experience of the course encouraged me to concentrate on analysing these creative process documents and use my experiential knowledge from the course, which had impacted strongly on some of the students (see also Kosonen & Mäkelä 2012).

The main idea of the course is to encourage design students to explore and experiment with a given theme. Each course has a specific theme and includes a 5-day excursion to a specific location and ends with an exhibition. Within this frame, the student can freely create and frame her own design task. In contrast to this freedom, the course setting also provides a clear weekly structure and consistent support. This support is implemented by weekly gatherings: presentations, discussions and mentoring sessions.[18] In addition, students are given tasks and asked to document the process and write reports for the teachers.

The main idea of documentation was to make the creative process visible for both students and teachers. The documentation tasks consisted of three parts: 1) A working diary (Figure 23-24) to be kept throughout the course, in which the students document, write, draw or otherwise work on their ideas, 2) Weekly reports (Figure 25-28) to reflect on and describe their progress, problems, insights and other relevant issues, and 3) Final reflection (Figure 29-30), in which the students reflect on the process as a whole (Kosonen & Mäkelä 2012: 229, 234).

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[16] Mäkelä & Löytönen (2015) have further examined the platform from the point of view of material experimentation and its meaning for students. Their article also illustrates specific educational aspects that the course setting provides.

[17] This approach is typical for practice-led research (For examples on practice-led research, see Mäkelä 2003; Turpeinen 2005; Nimkulrat 2009; Ings 2014).

[18] Kosonen & Mäkelä (2012: 229) describe how "the weekly structure forms a supportive follow-up frame for both students and teachers. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays are reserved for individual work. During these days, students develop their ideas, reflect on their process, and complete given tasks. Tuesdays and Thursdays are reserved for collective actions, including presentations, sharing sessions and group discussions. During the individual working days, there is also the possibility of having personal tutoring or mentoring meetings with the teachers. The aim of collective and one-to-one sharing is to enable critical discussion around each ongoing project."
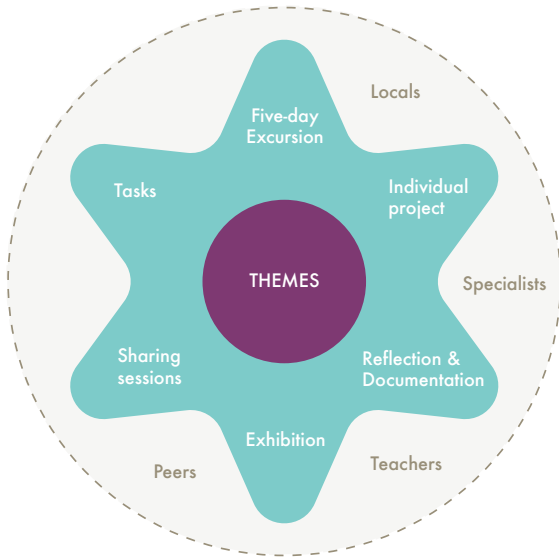
Figure 22. An illustration made of the Design Exploration and Experimentation course platform. The course is annually built around a theme that serves as a core inspiration in the course. The course activities (=components) are presented in the white ellipses and the network of collaborators (=reflection surfaces) in green text. The course activities direct the students towards the world outside the platform: 1. Present yourself and your view on the given theme, 2. Study the location and make a presentation of it, 3. Select an artist that you find relevant in relation to the work you are doing now in the course. The assignments begin with the person himself, proceed to the world outside and continue to a professional reference point, an interesting artist or designer. The weekly activities include both reflection on the past week and presenting the phase of the developing work. In this way, these repeating activities, such as weekly discussions, tutorials and presentations, facilitate the development of the processes, including the near past and near future in the discussions.

The DEE course (Figure 22) begins with a personal presentation and ends with the compilation of the final report, in which the student reflects on the creative process. In the personal presentations, many students spoke about studies, work and personal life, such as hobbies, family and childhood. Beginning the course with personal storytelling linked the approach to narrative identity from the very beginning. Thus, the course provoked identity reflection that could be seen in the weekly reports by students. Furthermore, some course themes, such as *Identity* and *Family* provoked more reflection on these areas. From the point of view of my study, the reports on the *Identity* theme were the richest, since they provided insights both into creative processes and identity.

The weekly reports formed the skeleton for the story, since they were written each week and shared with the teachers. Some students wrote all the reports, whereas others wrote only few during the course. This directed the focus of this study to those students who were more active in sharing their process, because the analysis was made based on the written documents and the more passive students were hard to interpret due to the lack of data. The reports were both visual and textual and varied between 1-2 A4 pages (see Figure 25-28). The reports included photos, drawings, sketches and text. The layout was free, but the DEE course advice was to write a short, approximately 1 page report. The ways in which the reports were made varied in consist-

Figure 23-24. Oliver's (on the left) and Emilio's working diaries.
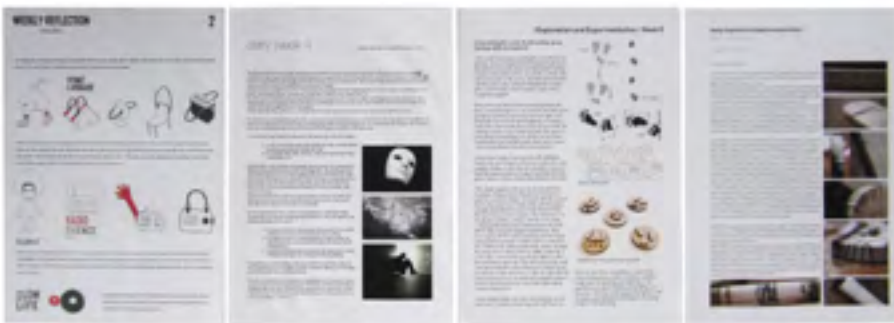
Figure 25-28. Weekly reflections from Blue (on the left), Emilio, Mary and Monika.
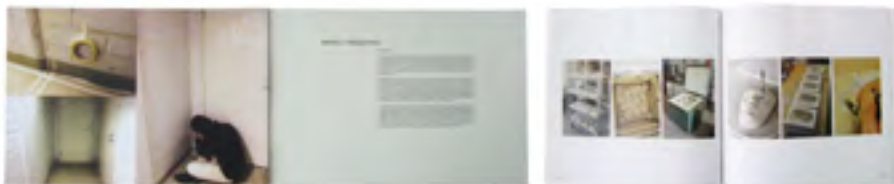
Figure 29-30. Spreads from Oliver's (on the left) and Emilio's final reflections.

ency and outlook. Some used the same layout for each report, whereas some changed the fonts and layouts over the weeks. All these means of expression, in addition to the actual content of the report, provided a view of students' individual ways of managing their processes.

The weekly reports served at least two main points: they encouraged the student to reflect on the past and upcoming week, and clarify what she had done and was about to do (Kosonen & Mäkelä 2012: 234). The reports kept the teachers updated about the processes that took place mostly outside the classroom, so that the teachers could provide the students with better support.

The weekly reports aimed at capturing thoughts close to the event in order to store these valuable moments in the process that we tend to forget after the work is over. The exact reflection-in-action that happens during the activity itself could be captured this way, since it happens during design activity. Schön (1983:54-55) describes this activity as a reflective conversation with the situation, in which tacit knowledge gained by previous experience is used to adjust to solving a new, unique problem. However, weekly reports illustrated the processes soon after the events and were in that sense different to the nature of the final reflections that were written after the work was done. Final reflections featured reflection-on-action, making visible some of the internal processes and learning that took place during the course. Since they were written after the course, some of them possessed insights that the students were not aware of during the course. (For more on reflection, see Schön 1983.)

> The 'weekly diary' method, which I have followed during the project, seemed to me as a good place for writing about these questions, even though they were not directly related to the project. Nevertheless, I consider them as a very crucial part of the process, since these reflections influence my ideas and choices, and therefore indirectly influence the direction into which I take my projects and the way in which I turn ideas into tangible matters. Besides, writing about them helps me in trying to find out how I should work and position myself in the field of design.
>
> Yvette, final reflection

To gain insights into how students reflect on identity and find their ways in creative processes, I have analysed the weekly and final reports of the 26 students that participated in the DEE courses in 2011 and 2012. In this study, I have concentrated on analysing and presenting more thoroughly 5 students' creative processes. 4 of these students – Emilio, Oliver, Yvette and Blue – participated in the course in 2011 when the theme of the course was Identity. The 5th student, Mikael, participated in the DEE course in 2012, when the course theme was Family. I have concentrated on these specific students since they represented different, contrasting ways and had provided rich reports in the course.

3.5 Design Stories as Data

The workshops and course presented have produced visual, narrative and documentary data from designers and design students. The previous sections

have shown examples of the visual data that will be presented in more detail in the empirical part along with their makers. Here, all the narratives are presented as miniature versions (Figure 31) to give an overview of the visual and textual data. The narratives are presented in larger size in Appendix E.

3.6 Other Activities that Have Informed the Research

In addition to the workshops and courses, my research process included other activities that have contributed to my research. In this section, I briefly describe three of these activities: the panel discussions, the *Envisioning Career Paths workshop*, and the *Significant Experiences III* workshop, since they have influenced my understanding of how designers and design students find their ways in design. They have illuminated the methods and approaches that can be valuable in design education to help students to find their ways, express their experiences and create their own professional identities. The data gathered during these events has not been analysed in depth, but are used as supportive data based on overall analysis. In addition, the *Stones as Experiences* experiment, which made me understand the power of installations in making experiences visible, is introduced and discussed in Appendix B and in the seminar paper, *Stones as experiences – Artistic experiments as part of an ethnographic research* (Kosonen 2011b).

3.6.1 Panel Discussions

In order to arouse discussion on the topics that emerged from the entrepreneurs' and students' narratives, a panel discussion was organized in 2010. The aim was to obtain up-to-date information on the condition and concerns of the Finnish design field today.

The panel discussion *Uudet toimintamallit muotoilun kentällä [New operation models in the design field]* was organized and facilitated by me in Design Forum Finland as a part of the Young Designer of the Year exhibition in Helsinki, August 2010. The four invited panellists – Timo Salli, the professor of Applied Art and Design at Aalto University School of Art, Design and Architecture; Anna Valtonen, the Rector of Umeå Design Institute (currently Dean at Aalto University); Viivi Lehto, Design Manager and CEO of Musta design; and Mikael Silvanto, co-founder of Aivan! (currently Industrial Designer at Apple) - covered both practice and academia. In addition to the facilitation of the panel discussion, I actively took part in the discussion and invited the audience to participate as well. The audience consisted of almost 100 people,
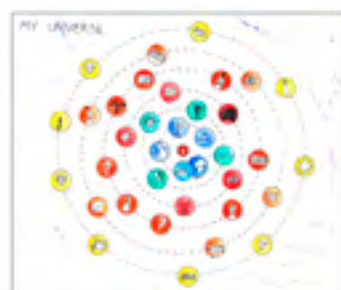
Figure 31. An overview of the data. The Visual Narratives are on the left page: design entrepreneurs' narratives on the brown paper and design students' narratives on the white paper. The original narratives are several meters wide (See Appendix E for the larger images of the narratives). The right page shows examples of final reflections (on the top), working diaries (the green ones), and weekly reports. The Visual Narratives and creative process reports have been edited so that all the elements that could reveal their maker's identity have been covered or removed.

who actively took part in the discussion. The panel discussion provided interesting viewpoints on the study, and made me realize better the complexity of finding one's own way in design from education to one's own practice and of guiding students to build their design identities.

In 2011, I organized and facilitated another panel discussion, *Individuality and Commonality* at Design Forum Finland. The panelists were Katriina Haikala, artist at Nutty Tarts[19] and Henna Tanskanen, a freelance artist and actress. The main aim of the panel discussion was to discuss how the panellists experienced individual and collaborative work. Since the participants were from the art and theatre fields, the discussion did not reflect that much on the problems and experiences of the designers studied. However, it provided an interesting cross-artistic view on the significance of collaboration, and made me pay greater attention to the role of social interaction as a part of identity formation.

The purpose of organizing and participating in the panel discussions was to evoke discussion around the main topics of the study. The participants were mainly practitioners, not researchers, and thus provided a valuable practitioners' perspective on the topic of the study – a broader view in comparison to the selected individuals. Since I had video recorded both events, I was able to revisit the discussions. I made a quick analysis of the first panel discussion, which functioned mostly as a guideline of how I should frame my research questions (see chapter 1.3) to respond to the problems the practitioners felt most important to solve. The other panel discussion provided additional information and functioned mostly as a mirroring surface to the developing research scope.

3.6.2 Envisioning Career Paths

The Visual Narrative method was expanded to include the future aspect in the *Envisioning Career Paths* workshop for MA design students in Aalto ARTS in October 2010. The workshop was a 5-day voluntary workshop, which aimed to discover which experiences students considered essential in their design paths, and what kind of dreams and fears they have for the future. In addition to the visualization exercise of the past, it included the making of three future scenarios: ideal, natural and worst case. This choice was inspired by Markus & Nurius' concept of *Possible selves* (Markus & Nurius 1986). The goal of the workshop was to provide an empathic platform for the students to share their experiences in an encouraging atmosphere. The cues, tools and instructions were similar to the *Significant Experiences* workshop, but the emphasis was placed on the creation of the Visual Narrative. The tasks were given in a class-

[19] www.shaken-not-blurred.com

room, but the assignments were completed independently in a chosen location. During this workshop, the Visual Narrative creation was freer and not so bound to the prepared cues.

In 2011, four of the participants were interviewed about the workshop experience. The main insight that came through the interviews was that the envisioning exercise had been very powerful for some of the students and had already influenced their thinking. The workshop showed the variety of future dreams. One student's ideal future was another's worst case scenario. Even though the data from this workshop has not been analysed for this study, the experience of running the workshop influenced the design of the *My Story* workshop, and during the later stages of my study made me realize the importance of envisioning as part of creating one's own way.

3.6.3 Significant Experiences III and Continuation of the Method

To experience the method and its restrictions, I organized the *Significant Experiences III* Visual Narrative workshop for me and my friend, who is also a designer, in January 2013. At that time, I had already organized the workshops I have described above, and I wanted to obtain insights into how the narrative making feels as an experience and find out what I could learn from it. I felt that the start of the assignment was frustrating, but when I began, I became very excited. While making the narrative, I realized patterns in my life that I had not realized before, even though I had devoted a lot of time to self-reflection both alone and in dialogue with others. The power of visualization still came as a surprise, even though I had seen its benefits for the research participants. The most striking things were that I ended up describing some of the most significant experiences as paradoxes in an emotional sense. To give an example, an inspiring experience caused also irritation and doubt. Another significant thing was that I found three main themes from my narrative that seemed to combine all my experiences together. This gave me insights that I believe I would not have been able to gain otherwise. The visualization made it possible to link the experiences together and see my story from a meta-level perspective.

The discussion with my colleague was open and touching. We revealed sensitive facts about our lives and described our emotions and experiences honestly. The confidentiality and trust between us enabled us to open up and gain insights from our revelations. Compared to the exercises presented in a group of peers, this exercise produced richer accounts in the sense that it also included weaknesses, hesitations, failures and doubts that were described in more detailed way. It was evident that we both utilized the opportunity for

our own benefit to understand more of ourselves, and had the courage to also share painful experiences due to the trust we shared. After presenting the narrative, I realized that if I were to do it again in two months or one year, some of the things might be left out and replaced by other things I consider relevant at that time. This made me concretely realize the constructionist nature of identity narratives and how the audience you tell your story to influences what you unfold. The presentations between me and my friend were sort of confessions. After my presentation, I felt I had no need to go back to those experiences, but rather build up my future based on my understanding of the main themes that had significantly influenced my life so far. Thus, I thought that my next narratives would probably look quite different – and so they did when I did the exercise again in 2015 and 2016.

These exercises made me realize concretely and personally that narration is shaped by fears, wishes and hopes at that specific time in life. Furthermore, I realized how much the audience influences both your way of presenting your story and the motive for telling it. It was obvious to me that I also used these opportunities to share very fragile parts of myself instead of creating a nice representation of the most successful moments in my life that I might have done for a different audience. My motivation was, however, to construct an honest, integrated story that does not leave the negative experiences aside. This act included the hope that by doing so the significance of the negative experiences would diminish and release energy for the current moment. This also happened to me through gaining a larger perspective on my story by visualization and sharing. In relation to McAdams' theory on narrative identity (McAdams 1993), I felt as if I was able make a coherent story of my life so far, one that I can accept and which does not hide any downsides, failures and mistakes. For me, this was a good starting point for starting to create my identity in a more conscious way, and I felt that this visualization gave me the necessary tools to direct my future towards my dreams. From the point of view of this study, this workshop enabled me to evaluate the method in a more profound way and also develop it further. In addition, it showed me how the theories I had read concerning identity and narrative functioned for me in practice.
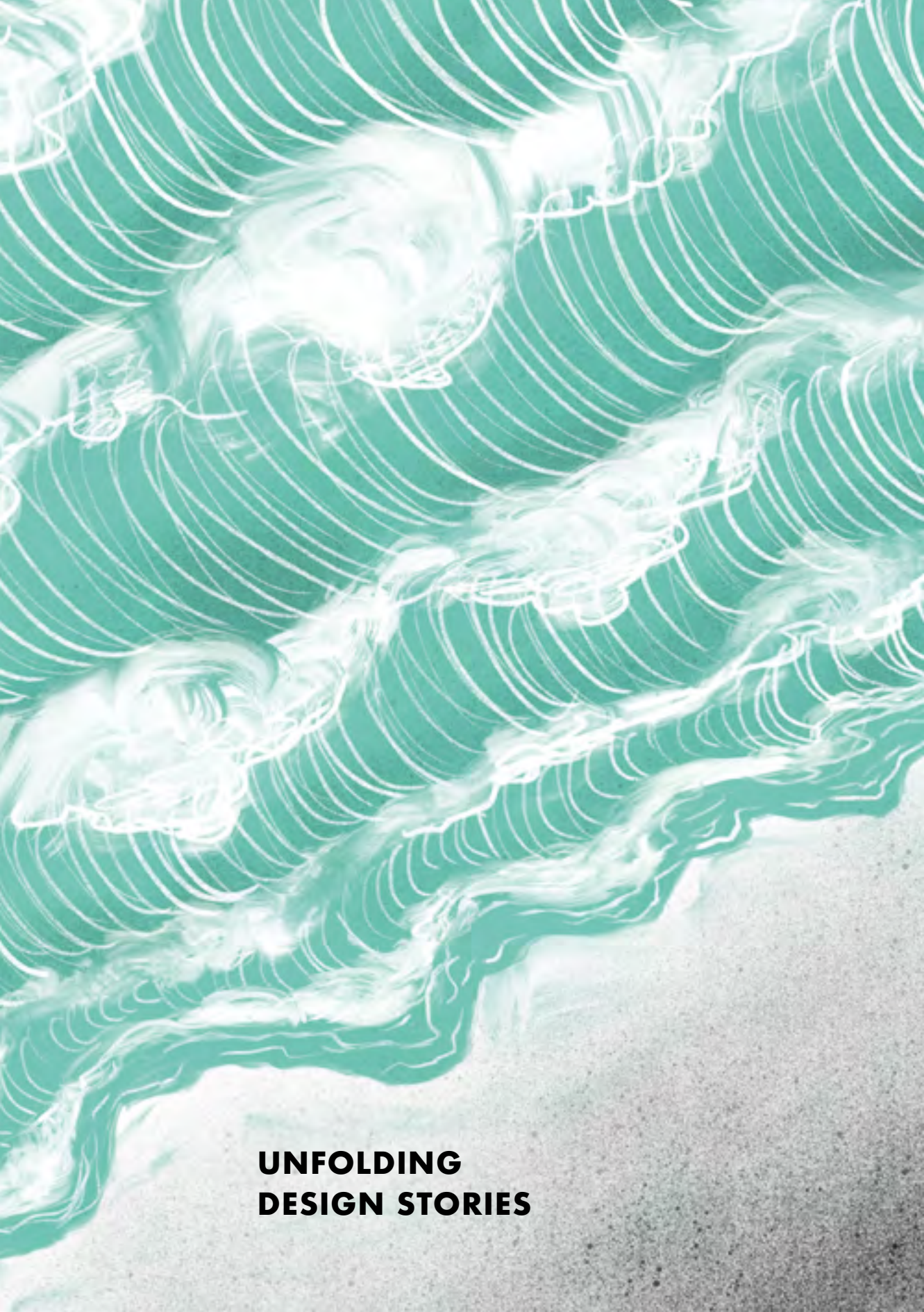
**UNFOLDING
DESIGN STORIES**

4 Unfolding Design Stories

The main purpose of this chapter is to present an analytic framework that I have named *Narrative Design Identity* and illuminate the way in which I have analysed the generated data. The framework has been constructed in parallel with the data analysis, and its main function has been facilitating the analysis of the collected stories after the first, data-driven phase of the analysis. The goal of the analysis has been to remain faithful to the themes that have emerged from the data prior to the construction of the framework. Consequently, the concepts from narrative identity discussions have been used creatively to support and give depth to the data-driven analysis.

At the base of this framework, there lies the generally agreed understanding of identity and narrative that has been thoroughly discussed in Chapter 2. This foundation builds on an understanding that identity is cultural, takes shape in social interaction (Eteläpelto 2009 :96-97) and is negotiated in this moment in relation to the past and future (Singer 2004:445; Markus & Wurf 1987) and takes the form of a narrative (Murray 2008; McAdams 1993).

Furthermore, in the analysis of the narratives I have acknowledged the co-constructed nature of the visual and spoken stories. The fact that the stories are told to a certain audience in a certain situation and environment with particular tools provided influences how the stories are constructed and told (Singer 2004). This understanding takes into consideration the role of the data-generating method, which both facilitated the production of data and influenced the kind of data that was produced. These key understandings of the social, dynamic and contextual nature of narrative identity laid the foundation for the study.

4.1 Analytic Framework: Narrative Design Identity

My analytical process led me to the development of a simple theoretical model of *Narrative Design Identity* (Figure 32) that I consider to be one of the contributions of this study. However, it is presented here before the empirical chapters, since I have used it in the later stages of the data analysis and revised the analysis with the help of this model.

This model presents how design identity is born in interaction with others and the field in addition to internal dialogue of the designer. This internal dialogue happens between what G.H. Mead (1964) called the 'ME' that is the 'social self' consisting of attitudes of others the person assumes, and the 'I', which is the response to the construction of ME. The data, narratives of sig-
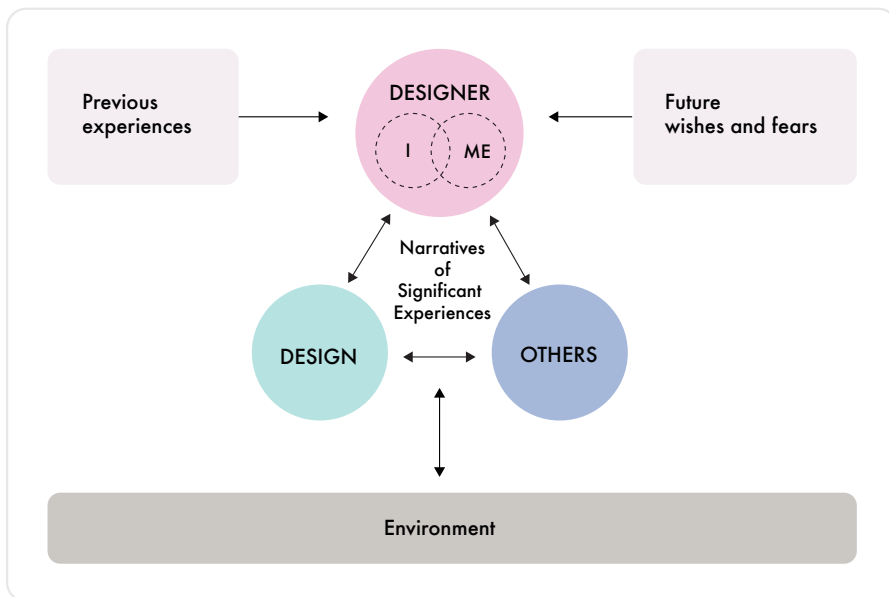
Figure 32. *Narrative Design Identity* is a model of design identity in which the different interactions are explored by examining narratives of significant experiences. The intrapersonal dialogue happens between I and ME, and interpersonal interaction between ME and OTHERS. The interaction, such as 'making' takes place between the DESIGNER (I and ME) and the developing artefact (DESIGN). These interactions are further influenced by how others relate to and function in design (DESIGN - OTHERS). Identity is formed in relation to past experiences and future wishes and influenced by the environment, context and culture in which the experiences have been born and are told.

nificant experiences, is placed in the centre of the model to emphasize the narrative approach. Both visualized and narrated stories and creative process reports are seen as narratives that consist of selected important experiences.

As indicated above, the interaction between I and ME stems from G.H. Mead's identity theory (Mead 1964). It illustrates the intrapersonal dialogue one has and through which identity is partly formed. This system of I and ME is influenced by interaction with others, as identity theories in general suggest. However, in design, not only others, but also the professional domain and the design work – be it an artefact or a service or anything in between – influence a designer's identity. Thus, the interaction between the designer and her work (DESIGNER–DESIGN) plays an important role and in some cases can be seen as dominating the other relationships. This can be seen, for instance, in the examples given in the 7th chapter, in which I present findings related to finding one's own way in a creative process.

This relationship is influenced by the other interactions, such as DESIGNER and OTHERS, which contains feedback, discussions and collaboration and may be dominant for a collaborative and socially active person. The interac-

tion between DESIGN and OTHERS informs the designer of the practices, tools and methods others use and how they carry out their work in design.

Interaction between DESIGNER, DESIGN and OTHERS happens all the time, and this interaction is shaped by and in our experiences, where we express ourselves and get responses from others about us and our work. These experiences influence our perception of ourselves and others and can thus be seen as key elements in the personal narrative. Figure 33 illustrates how each experience contains this interaction related to our identity formation, and how the presented Visual Narrative method aims to capture these experiences and their dynamics. The figure shows that the insights and findings this study has produced are tightly integrated and influenced by the method I have utilized to generate the data.
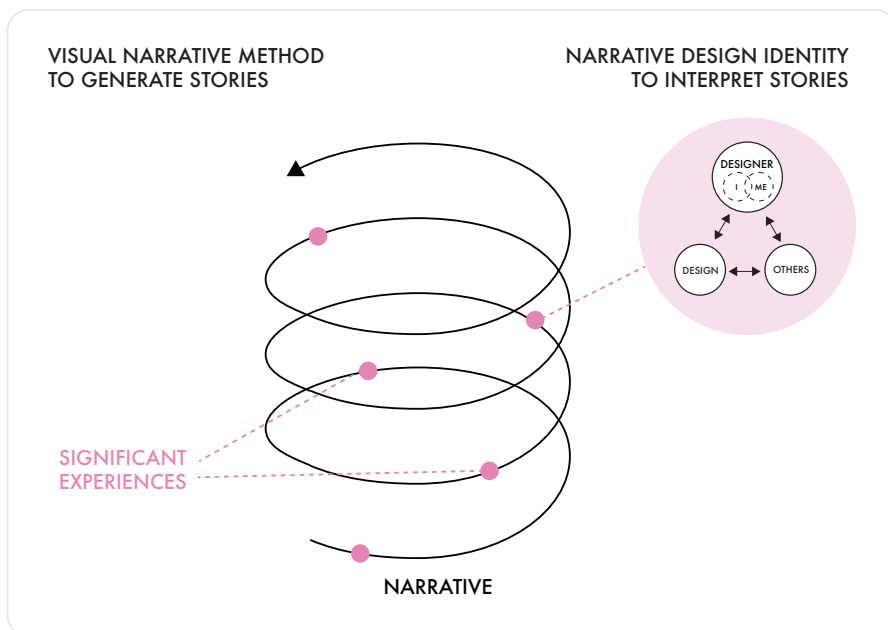
Figure 33. The spiral represents the personal narrative that consists of significant experiences. These narratives were generated with the help of the Visual Narrative method, and the experiences were interpreted with the help of the Narrative Design Identity framework.

4.2 Interpreting the Visual Narratives

The Visual Narratives were created with the help of the Visual Narrative method. The idea of the method was not to produce visually pleasing presentations – but to make the participants focus on reflection, not the visual outcome and its aesthetics (Kosonen 2011a). However, being design students,

the participants used their design skills in all the areas they needed to complete the task: planning, organizing and visualization. These skills were used in the illustration (drawing, creating icons, using colours), layout (organization of experiences, hierarchy), and concept creation (main idea of how to solve the design task of representing a flow of experiences, how to link them together and present them) to solve the problem of presenting both the overall story and the details. The visualizations were influenced by the pre-assignment and the guidelines given in the workshop situation, as well as the main task to visualize the design path. Together, these tasks started to create a structure for the representations and so influenced their making. Thus, the visualizations were not free drawings of design paths, but rather relatively free-formed answers to the assignment given.

The Visual Narratives are stories like the spoken ones, but their interpretation is very limited without the spoken explanation. To facilitate the analysis of the visualizations, I created an analytic tool for Visual Narratives (Figure 34). In addition to the *Narrative Design Identity* framework, this tool helped to focus attention on the presented elements that can be found in most of the Visual Narratives. The tool functions as an analytic framework, taking into consideration both the making of the narrative and the finalized version. Thus, attention is not focused solely on the completed outcome[20].
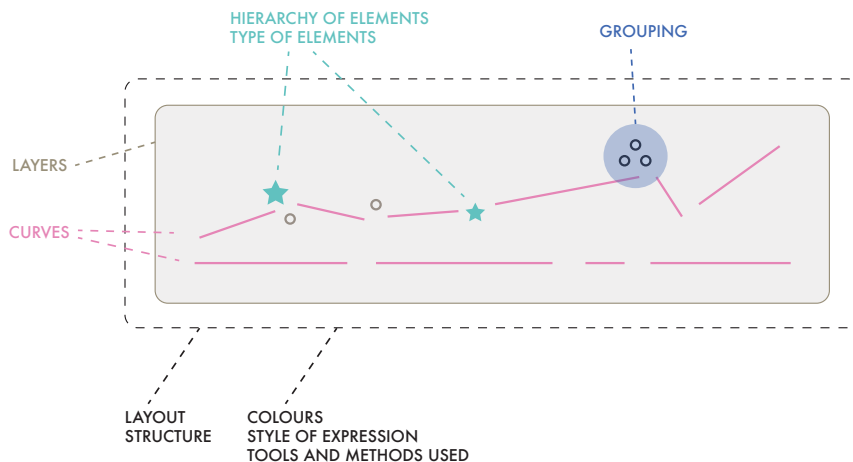
Figure 34. Analytic tool for interpreting Visual Narratives.

[20] The tool was built after several rounds of analysis of the transcribed stories. I concentrated on the visualizations only after I had internalized the concepts presented in narrative and identity studies; hence, my understanding of narrative identity influenced the way I looked at the visualizations.

The analytic tool created for the visualizations directs attention to different aspects that form the Visual Narrative. *Layout* and *structure* reveal how the experiences have been organized on the paper. The experiences are connected using various ways, such as *grouping* them or forming *curves* or lines of them that may be multiple, single or non-existent, depending on the presentation. The experiences differ in their *type* (cues, pictures, texts, symbols, icons and drawings) size, position and significance, forming a *hierarchy* between the elements. *The style of expression*, such as drawing, reveals the tools used, such as water colours, cues or sticky notes. In some cases, the way the visual presentation was made was highly influenced by the tools used to create it. Visual expression may also include the use of *colours*, which may have different meanings in the presentation. The role and meaning of colours may reveal something about the way the presenter has grouped and coded the experiences. [21]

The presented foci tap into the concepts presented by Marcus Banks (2007:52), who notes the distinction between form and content, which is apparent in both visual and spoken narratives. He also points out the dialogue between figure and ground (ibid.:13), which in the presented analytic framework would apply to the hierarchy of elements. Those in the front are the figures, whereas those in the background form the ground.

Even though Visual Narratives can be examined alone, without the spoken story they can be understood only to a certain extent. Next, we will take a look at how the visualization informs the spoken story, and then move on to discuss the analytic foci of the spoken stories.

4.3 Visualization Informing the Verbal Narrative

In the third chapter, I presented how the Visual Narrative method influenced the visualizations. In a similar way, the visualizations informed the verbal narrative and influenced its form and content (Figure 35). There is a natural correlation between the visual and the verbal, even though these different forms revealed information that was not presented in the other form. The

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[21] Tufte (2003) discusses several viewpoints for investigating rich visualizations. The following aspects fit well with the analytic framework for Visual Narratives presented here: 1) *Micro - macro readings* apply to both the 'big narrative', the life story and its major turns, and to the illustrated experiences and events and what is revealed of them; 2) *Layering and separation* is related to the structure of the narrative, how different paths, themes, periods or other entities are separated and / or layered in the composition; 3) *Colour and Information* focuses on the way and means of expression in the narratives – how information is separated or coded with colour and how it is expressed with symbols, icons, drawings, cues, photos and the like; and 4) *Time and Space* are factors that guide the inspection of how the sequence of events is organized on the paper, what role time plays in the presentation and how space and place can be seen in the visualizations.

Figure 35. The VN method influenced the Visual Narrative (product) that was used varying ways in the presentation of each designer's own story.

visualizations had pictures and texts that were not mentioned in the presentation and, vice versa, the spoken presentation added information and meaning making to the visualization. However, the visualizations served as the foundation for the spoken stories and were consulted and referred to during the presentation.

The stories were created and presented in a workshop setting that influenced their construction and presentation (Kosonen 2011a). When presenting, the designers gave meanings to their visualizations and experiences in different ways. They revealed insights and tied experiences together, drew conclusions and justified their activities. They also left things untold, selecting what they presented and elaborated on. All these choices affected the narratives and made them situational, contextual and crafted for the existing audience. The visual and spoken narratives varied in depth; some included more details and were more explanatory and descriptive than others. The spoken stories also varied in their tone and emotional expressions, and they had distinctive features, such as some repeated expressions or words that distinguished them from other accounts.

Both the visual and spoken narratives included turning points and gaps in their continuity. The stories did not reveal everything, but were built around the most significant experiences in relation to the designer's own design path. They revealed what their creators decided to reveal, hence they can be seen as filtered or curated representations of the participants' lives. The focus on significant experiences leans on the understanding that memories still 'live' in us, affecting our current behaviour and self-concept (Pillemer 2001: 126). This means that faced by a new situation we revisit these memories to cope with it (ibid.).

4.4 The Focus of the Analysis in Visual and Spoken Stories

The analysis focuses on the key aspects of *Narrative Design Identity* that are guided by the research questions (Chapter 1.3). Some of these aspects can be explored in both spoken and written stories and some only in spoken stories.

Furthermore, some of these stem from narrative research and some from theories on identity formation. Narrative and identity together take into consideration both the question of *what* can be said about significant experiences and professional identity and *how* this identity emerges through narrative and storytelling. Ergo, they consider the themes that have emerged from the data, the specific individual strong experiences, and the overall development of identity in the narrative form. Some of these aspects are helpful to examine through polarities, such as intrinsic–extrinsic motivation, to evaluate how these dimensions appear in the narratives.

4.4.1 Visual and Spoken Stories

Even though the Visual Narratives and spoken stories are quite different as data, they also have similarities, such as a structure that consisted of different *life phases*, a hierarchy of elements that emphasized some *significant events*, and a *means of expression* that also revealed the richness and depth of expression.

1. Life Phases

Life phases, such as childhood, school years and graduation give structure to life narratives and help in comparing stories.

2. The Most Significant Events

Each story includes some major events or happenings that influence the story in a powerful way. These significant events can be brief in time, such as getting an award, or long lasting, such as spending a year abroad. The most significant experiences can be categorized into different types of events, such as originating events, turning points and anchoring events (Pillemer 2001). Memories of originating events inspire and energize us long after their initial occurrence. Turning points are episodes that have suddenly changed one's life plan. Both of these mark the beginning of a new life path. In contrast to these, anchoring events provide an episodic foundation for a belief system. The memory of anchoring events reminds us how the world works. It warns, guides and shows what is valuable.

3. Means of Expression

The narratives consist of linguistic and visual means of expression. In spoken stories these are, for instance, the patterns of language, such as phrases and verbs that are used frequently. In the visualizations these consist of words, pictures, icons and other visual means that give further depth to the analysis of the stories. These means of expression give a distinctive handprint to each story.

4.4.2 Spoken Stories

Spoken stories reveal reasoning, justifications, meaning making and explanations for the presented experiences. Thus, there are several elements that can be examined when investigating how people find their ways and construct their identities by the way they speak about themselves and their experiences.

1. The Main Characters and Their Motivations in the Story

McAdams (1993:117-118) suggests that the different social selves we possess in our everyday lives – such as mother, friend and colleague – together form our identity. When identity takes the form of a story, these different selves can be seen as characters in this story. Some of the characters in our stories stand out more strongly[22]. I call these characters the main characters of the story. The concepts of agency and communion, as well as the concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation provide a way to define and compare these main characters. I will be referring to these concepts throughout my analysis.

a. Agency–Communion

McAdams (1993: 133-161) divides the main characters into two main categories: agentic and communal – essentially built around power and love. The agentic characters seek to conquer, master and control and they could be described, for example, as independent, ambitious and forceful. In contrast, communal characters seek to unite with others, cooperate, nurture and share with others. They could be described, for example, as altruistic, warm and sensitive.

In the design context, agency and communion also relate to different interests and practices in design. Design that has its roots in art, craft and engineering, has different orientations due to these roots. Social design, co-design, service design and other forms of design that build on collaboration, social interaction and sharing link more to communion as an orientation, since their focus is on people – or 'users' – and their practices. Furniture and ceramic design, and other forms that build on craftsmanship and value self-expression build more on art and can be considered to have an agentic orientation despite a possible communal goal.

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[22] McAdams (1993: 122-132) calls these more dominating characters 'imagoes'. Imagoes are carefully crafted aspects of the self and usually built around significant others. They personify our traits and recurrent behaviours and give voice to our values and the values of our culture. The imagoes can also conflict, and many stories are built around polarized characters. However, imagoes are not people, nor are they the whole story of us. Our stories are multidimensional and they contain many voices that want to be heard – however, some voices come through more strongly and dominate other voices. In this study, I call these imagoes 'main characters'.

b. Intrinsic–Extrinsic Motivations

Intrinsic motivation refers to the internal motivation to do something enjoyable or interesting. Since the activity itself is satisfying, the expectation is directed at the activity and not the outcome that is a result of the activity. In contrast, extrinsic motivation refers to a motivation to reach something, such as a reward, compliment or acceptance (Ryan & Deci 2000).

2. Concepts that Relate to Interactions with Self, Others and the Design Work

a. Self-expression and Collaboration

Self-expression is connected to handprint, artistry, style and other features that express something of the designer. In self-expression, the focus in design is typically on the making side (DESIGNER–DESIGN), not on the social interaction side (DESIGNER–OTHERS) of identity. However, design as a field consists of various areas and positions that build on social interaction and collaboration (Falin 2011: 160). Thus, self-expression can also happen via collaboration.

b. Emotion and Reason

The pair emotion and reason directs attention to the reasons behind choices – how emotional motives and rational motives behind decisions were expressed in the narratives. In this study, emotions and feelings[23] and reason are seen as intertwined bodily and mental processes, which are also social and cultural products.

c. Fixed–Exploratory

The pair fixed–exploratory refers to the movement and activity of the participants. 'Fixed' refers to a stable, committed position where movement and change is minimal, whereas 'exploratory' refers to a curious and exploring position that is dominated by change.

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[23] Damasio (2005: 143; 2001) has made a distinction between emotions and feelings. According to him, emotions (such as fear, anger, sadness and joy) are mostly responses to external stimuli, such as an approaching bear or encountering a loved one. Feelings instead are the consequences of emotions that happen on the mental level of the person. Whereas emotions are universal, feelings are subjective (Damasio 2001). Feelings can be described as one's mental experiences of her body states (Damasio & Carvalho 2013: 143). In other words, emotions happen on a physical level, and feelings happen on a mental level, and on this mental level one assigns meanings to one's emotions. In this data, however, this distinction does not come through from the participants' accounts. Instead, they refer to both emotions and feelings depending on how they perceive them.

d. Hands-on and Conceptual

The aspects of 'hands-on' and 'conceptual' are linked to the different, changing emphases in students' creative processes. These polarities speak about the ways in which the students started their creative processes and maintained their relationship with their work.

3. Concepts Related to the Way in Which the Story Is Told

The following concepts illustrate how the story is told: what kind of narrative tone it has, how profoundly and analytically it is presented, and how the participants define themselves.

a. Narrative Tone

Narrative tone refers to the way we speak about ourselves and our lives. According to McAdams (1993: 47-50), this tone is born in our childhood, based on our early interactions. Narrative tone reveals some of our assumptions about life and our beliefs – for example, whether things will work out or whether we tend to fear the worst.

b. Level of Reflection and Awareness

The narratives range from descriptive to analytical depending on the narrator. This allows the examination of meta-cognitive thinking within the story. Since the aim of the study is to unfold as much as possible from the narratives, this evaluation has influenced which storied experiences have been presented as examples in the analysis. (See also Wiggins & McTighe 2005: 76-77; Hargrove 2011)

c. Self-Definitions

When the participants spoke about themselves and their work, they defined who they were, what they did and what they did not identify with. These self-definitions were direct expressions of narrative identity.

4.4.3 Polarities in Narrative Design Identity

In addition to the aspects that focus on the structure of the narrative – *life phases, significant experiences* – and the way in which we tell our story and present ourselves – *the level of reflection, narrative tone, self-definitions* – the focus of the analysis was on the themes that I presented as polarities. The polarities *agency–communion, intrinsic–extrinsic motivation, self-expression–collaboration,*

Agency ⟷ Communion   Visual ⟷ Linguistic

Intrinsic motivation ⟷ Extrinsic motivation   Hands-on ⟷ Conceptual

Self-expression ⟷ Collaboration   Emotion ⟷ Reason

Descriptive ⟷ Analytical   Fixed ⟷ Exploratory
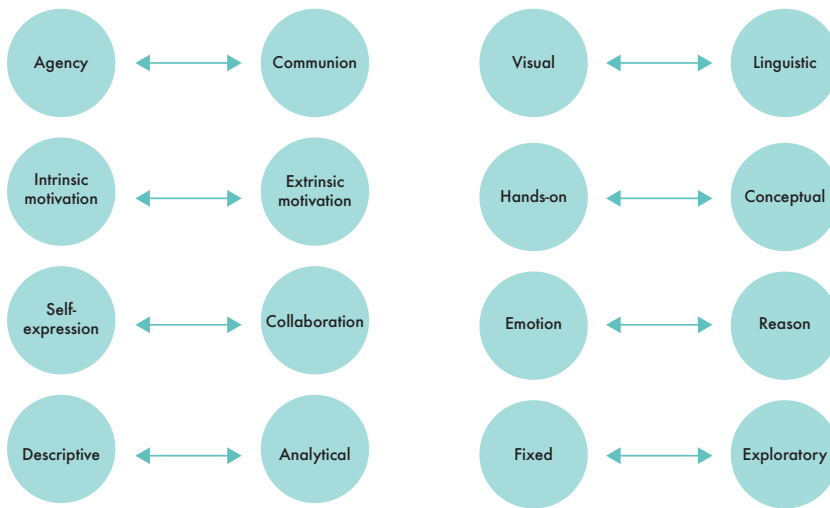
Figure 36. The polarities that helped in the interpretative phase of the analysis.

descriptive–analytical, visual–linguistic, hands-on–conceptual, emotional–rational, and fixed–exploratory have been discussed throughout the analysis of the stories.

I have chosen to present these also overlapping and co-existing analytical foci as polarities, since polarities provide a productive and appropriate way to study and understand identity development (Mishler 1999). The polarities illustrated in Figure 36 helped to interpret the narratives and their unique configurations – that is, how they appeared in each story.

The idea of polarities is to help to pay attention to both aspects that represent the different sides of a certain theme. In each story, both sides co-existed, but at a certain moment one aspect was stronger and it could be seen that this dominated the account of a certain experience. The idea of polarities is not to function as opposites from which to choose one, but vice versa, to notice both aspects and examine how they emerge intertwined in the narratives.

Furthermore, it is acknowledged that these polarities are social and cultural products and can be seen as contrasting areas that in another field or setting would not be seen as different. For instance, self-expression and collaboration can overlap completely, since a collaborative act can be also very self-expressive. In a similar way, hands-on work and conceptual thinking happen in parallel to one another and may overlap completely. Thus, the idea of presenting these concepts as polarities is not to make a statement that they are absolute opposites. Their main function in the analysis has been to help to frame the interpretive analysis with the aid of these aspects after the descrip-

tive analysis. Furthermore, many of the foci have been presented as contrasting aspects by the participants.

4.4.4 Correlation Between Visual and Spoken Narrative

The visualizations and the verbally narrated stories both speak about their presenter's identity. When the analyses of these two perspectives are brought together, they illuminate the main character described and its strategies and drivers in a holistic way.

4.4.5 About the Analysis of the Narratives

I began the research by gathering data from design practitioners to frame the research topic according to what the design practitioners and students, not only academia, consider to be valuable and relevant to investigate. This data-driven starting point also reflected onto my analytic process. From the very start of this study, I wanted to provide an interpretation that was based on the participants' unique perspectives and grounded in the actual data. My goal was to maintain 'an ethnographer's approach' throughout the analysis, meaning that I tried to understand the participants as they understand their lives, explain themselves and make sense of their experiences.

Before analysing the visual and verbal narratives, I had familiarized myself with the video recording of the *Uudet toimintamallit muotoilun kentällä [New operation models in the design field]* panel discussion, which I also transcribed. I made notes on the transcript and colour coded the text based on the topics I found in the data. The main purpose of this was to discover what the design field considered to be interesting. This partly framed my analytical lens.

When I began to analyse the visual narratives and their presentations, I had only a vague theoretical understanding of narrative identity. I had read a little about entrepreneurship, identity and narrative research, which provided me with a broad lens for looking at the data. However, my theoretical understanding started to develop only after several rounds of data analysis. The analysis began by watching the videos and making notes of key events and interesting features. After this, I transcribed the videos verbatim and made notes on the transcripts to track themes that repeatedly emerged.

I examined the visual narratives to spot their overall structure and key events. This coding and note-making was not systematic, but rather intuitive as I moved between the videos, visualizations and transcripts and compared the narratives to each other. I tried to create a holistic understanding of how

the participants expressed themselves and form a picture of this in my mind. By watching the videos and looking at my notes, I was able to recognize initial themes that emerged from the data. I recognized the themes by noticing that some issues were brought up repeatedly (see also Ryan and Bernard 2003: 89). I continued by concentrating on the most significant experiences, turning points and life phases and produced a descriptive account of each individual story. This descriptive phase is typically the first phase of a narrative analysis (Murray 2008: 120).

To connect the descriptive account to the theoretical literature, I made a sketch of a preliminary analytical framework based on literature on narrative, identity and symbolic interaction. This frame was an initial sketch of the *Narrative Design Identity* framework. It consisted of different polarities, such as "agency and communion", "intrinsic and extrinsic motivation" and "stable and explorative". This initiated the interpretative phase of the analysis (Murray 2008: 120). I decided on a colour for each analytical focus and went through the transcripts by highlighting the text that belonged to each focus. Since some texts referred to several foci, I highlighted those texts with all the corresponding colours.

This phase was similar to that of coding and theme identification, but in my analysis the process was not so systematic. My strategy was to immerse myself within the data so that I could "walk through" the main events of each story in my mind and start to see how the stories unfolded and could be compared to one another. This strategy served me to understand better how social interaction and interpersonal interaction had influenced identity development. By 'living' the stories of the participants, I was able to see the main characters of the stories (McAdams 1993:117-161) better. From individual stories, I moved to comparison to seek similarities and differences (see Ryan & Bernard 2003: 91) in the narratives.

I returned to watch the videos several times to identify issues that I had not previously noticed, and to familiarize myself with the participants' stories. This was easier through the videos than through the transcripts, since in this way I was able to 'live' the story with the participant better, hearing the laughter and seeing the hands moving when the participants explained their experiences. This also made it possible to follow when the presenters pointed to the visualizations and described something in them.

I used the initial analytical foci to develop the descriptive accounts into more an interpretative analysis. I kept moving between the literature, videos, transcripts and the written drafts of the analysis. At this stage, I was able to understand the deeper meaning of the analogies and metaphors, such as "My Universe" that the participants used (see also Ryan & Bernard 2003:90). This helped me in labelling the stories, and I started to pay more attention to how

the narratives were told: how the participants spoke about themselves, how they defined themselves, what kind of direct expressions they gave of their identities, beliefs, motives and dreams, and how the narrative tone came through.

In addition, I paid attention to words that were repeated often and attitudes that came through the expressions. During this phase, I started to notice what was missing (see Ryan & Bernard 2003: 92-93) from the data. I also began to see more connections between different concepts and how the narrative identities developed. The analysis proceeded mostly by writing, reading, rewriting, restructuring and revisiting the references. At the same time, I analysed the creative process reports and modified and also developed the Narrative Design Identity framework based on that analytical process.

Thus far, the analysis had concentrated on the presentation of the narratives. I had considered the visual data mostly as a facilitator for the storytelling. At this stage, I also started to analyse the visual narratives and created a frame for this analysis as presented. I selected parts from the Visual Narratives to represent the turning points, significant experiences and other key factors in the stories. In the analysis, I looked at both the issues that stood out in the visualizations and the issues that stood out in the spoken accounts. This facilitated the writing as well, since the narratives began to organize themselves around these key events and their sequences.

I tested several structures to best respond to the research questions. I tried to present all the stories separately as individual stories, I tried to organize them around key themes, and I finally ended up presenting the design entrepreneurs' stories with a structure that follows the order of life events in a more or less chronological way and which is formed around significant events. To give a view on the individual stories, I decided to present the students' stories individually, but also raise a few themes that were common in the stories and a few that illustrated how the stories differed.

4.5 Interpreting the Creative Process Reports

The analysis of the creative processes had already started during the DEE courses, when I read the reports and discussed the processes with the students and the other teachers. This analysis led to an article – Designing platform for exploration and experimentation (Kosonen & Mäkelä 2012) that I co-wrote with my supervisor. Before returning to these reports, I analysed the visual and verbal narratives as described in the previous section. After this phase, I continued the analysis of the documents by colour-coding the documents

with the help of the draft of the Narrative Design Identity framework I discussed in the previous section. In addition to the foci derived from narrative and identity research, I focused on the drivers, methods and strategies with which the students navigated their creative processes. These foci were selected since they helped to present the *way* in which the design task was executed.

Since I had already analysed the visual and verbal narratives, I had in mind an idea of how narrative identity is formed, and this conception guided my analysis. I began to see similarities in how life paths and creative processes unfold. Both the formation of a life path and the formation of a creative process happen in phases of commitment and exploration, and consist of critical moments that may also become identity or creative crises. Both processes can be examined by looking at intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, and how agentic and communal characters appear in the narrative data. In creative processes, the emphasis on agency or communion can be seen in the way the student takes ownership of her work, pursues her goal, seeks approval, and shares concerns.

In comparison to the analysis of the personal narratives, I paid more attention to the interactions that happened between the students, others in the course, their environment and their design work. This helped me in developing the analytical framework of Narrative Design Identity further. To make sense of the creative processes and interactions, I created charts and visualization that helped me to construct the structure concerning how to present the findings. As in the previous reconstructions, I wanted to illustrate both the common experiences and features in identity exploration and examples of individual "own ways".

Since the DEE course and its structure, assignments and teachers influenced the students' processes, I included some of my experiential understanding from the course in the analysis. This understanding relates to at-home ethnography, a study of one's own setting (Alvesson 2009). In at-home ethnography, the researcher is part of, or actively participates in the setting that she studies (see also Kosonen & Mäkelä 2012: 228). Her experiences and knowledge of the setting provide valuable information to enrich the study.

During the DEE courses, I participated in the 5-day excursion organized at the beginning of the course, mentored students and shared several discussions with the teachers concerning the students. Thus, I had knowledge of the course I could utilize when describing the course context and mirroring the individual processes in that context. This experience made me pay attention, for instance, to the way in which the creative process reports are interpreted. They are generated for a course to respond to a given task. Thus, they are influenced by this assignment and the audience they are written for, in this case

the teachers. Since the teachers also mentor, guide and grade the students, the process reports are not free expressions of their makers' creative processes, but influenced by these factors.

In reporting the findings based on this data, I present extracts from various students to illustrate the main themes that have emerged from the data. To illustrate how students have navigated their creative processes, I present cases by 5 students, of which 3 also attended the *My Story* workshop. These cases have been selected since they represent different approaches and thus illustrate different drivers, methods and ways that guide the navigation of a creative process. Selecting students that attended both the DEE course and the *My Story* workshop also allowed me to draw conclusions on how life paths and creative processes were linked.

4.6 Ethical Considerations on Reporting the Findings on Personal Narratives

Ethical aspects concern both the facilitation of the creation of the identity narratives as well as the interpretation and presentation of the findings drawn from this personal data. I have previously presented ethical issues related to the recruitment of participants, facilitation of the narrative making in the workshop, reflective work and sharing one's own story at the workshop and my own ethical attitude as a facilitator. Here in this section, I will discuss the ethical aspects of reporting the findings of the study, that is, my interpretation and representation of the narrative data.

One of the most challenging aspects of reporting a narrative study based on participants' personal reflection is to ensure that the participants' different voices are heard in the representation of the narratives (Josselson 2007: 548). As narrative researchers, we want to present our discoveries in a way that does not damage, or misrepresent the participants in any way (Bach 2007:298). However, we also need to stay truthful to the data and what it shows. This puts us in a dual role: we are responsible to both our participants and the research community for our interpretation (Josselson 2007: 538). It is important to maintain our respect and compassion for our participants, and consider the possible harm our insights and interpretation may bring to them, but it is also important to communicate what we have found – even if that might be upsetting for some of the participants (ibid. 539, 543-544).

Josselson (2007:549) notes that it is important to stress the fact that the report is based on the researcher's meaning making, not only on the participants' meaning making, even though the researcher aims to understand and capture their worldviews and meaning making processes as well as possible.

Like Josselson (2007:553), I also write from a post-modern position that recognizes that there are multiple 'truths' instead of one. What I can do as a researcher is to remain as humble as possible in front of my participants, learn from their stories and take responsibility for my own interpretation (ibid. 560). This includes the quality of sensitivity, and working towards truly understanding the participants (Bach 2007: 297). Further, this requires self-reflection and discussion of my own biases and conceptions in order to broaden my personal and social horizons of understanding (Josselson 2007:545). For me, this has also meant taking time off from the study to renew my understanding of what I have seen in the data. I have taken months off from the work before revisiting and re-examining the data with fresh eyes. To write ethically has also meant that I have tried to put myself in the participants' position and imagined how they would feel reading what I have written.

Since my study took several years, I contacted the participants again years after the workshops to reconfirm that they were still willing to let me use the data they had produced. I mentioned in my message that I will make sure that their identities were not revealed. All the participants agreed with this. They were more interested in reading the findings when the work is published. For those whose stories revealed more personal details, I also offered an opportunity to read the manuscript to check that they agree their identity is sufficiently hidden. One participant wanted to read the manuscript and replied, agreeing that her identity was hidden well enough. She also noted that her story is accurate and it still holds.

Even though there are some risks that the participants will be surprised or hurt by what we have written of them, our interpretation is also an opportunity for the participants to view their lives from another angle (Josselson 2007:553). In addition, there is a lot of evidence that most people experience the opportunity to share their story as integrative, useful and meaningful (Josselson 2007:559, McAdams 1993). Hence, also reading about the findings may also be a growth-promoting experience for the participants. When we as narrative researchers make sure that we hide information that would reveal our participants, treat our informants' stories with respect, and agree with the ethical aspects presented, we are at least more conscious of how we present our findings and that consciousness hopefully leads to a highly ethical result.

DESIGN ENTREPRENEURS' STORIES: FROM CHOCOLATE PORRIDGE TO RED DOT AWARD

Finding your own way (…), in what phase you
then realize that the question is about yourself,
and accept that nothing else matters.

Jiro

5 Design Entrepreneurs' Stories: From Chocolate Porridge to Red Dot Award

This chapter presents the main elements of finding one's own way over time by concentrating on design entrepreneurs' significant experiences. These experiences come from different participants and have been selected carefully by considering how influential they have been in the formation of professional identity[24]. Thus, the chapter discusses different paths in parallel to one another by highlighting the key factors in each story. The chapter starts from childhood, proceeds to the choice of school, continues to discuss the higher education and then the challenges of entrepreneurs.

Each personal experience is unique but can be linked to other experiences that have had a similar influence on others' design paths. The selected experiences have emerged from the stories as turning points or influential periods that have had a strong impact on the overall development of the person's professional identity. These influential elements could be also called phases that the designers went through; however, not in the sense of phases that happened one after another, but phases that overlapped or happened repeatedly. These phases – or key factors – link the protagonists' lives to the world and how the world is organized, the world in which they have to navigate their ways and create their paths.

5.1 Stories by Six Design Entrepreneurs

The visual and spoken narratives that have been examined in the analysis come from six Finnish design entrepreneurs – Annika, Erika, Inka, Jiro, Veera and Sofia[25] – who participated in the *Significant Experiences I* and *II* workshops in Helsinki in 2010. In this workshop, they created Visual Narratives with the help of cues and tools and presented those narratives in front of the group (Kosonen 2011a). The workshop is presented in detail in Chapter 3.

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[24] This way has been selected instead of case study approach or story typification, since case studies would limit the chapter to only a few stories and typification would require the creation of 'ideal stories' that do not represent the multidimensionality of an individual story.

[25] The real names have been changed to pseudonyms.

All the participants have studied Applied Art and Design[26] at Aalto ARTS, and five of them had graduated as Master of Arts at the time of the workshop. Their ages varied between 31 and 37, and they all lived in Helsinki and received their main income from design work. All the participants knew one another, and some of them had worked together or were still working together. Some of them were closer friends, and some of them more distant colleagues. They were not in the exact same point in their careers in terms of how long they had been working as entrepreneurs, but they had all been awarded or received grants and could be considered as more or less equal in their position in the field.

From the point of view of analysis, it is essential to remark that most of the Visual Narratives (5/6) were created with the help of provided cues. These cues were made by me – the facilitator and organizer of the workshop – based on my knowledge and understanding of design practice. Consequently, the cues had an influence on how the Visual Narratives were built and came to look like, and also partly directed the attention of the participants towards the themes or ideas presented in them. However, the role of cues was small in the spoken narrations that were built around key events in each participant's story.

The words and phrases that are direct expressions of the participants are written in *italics* with single quotes, such as '*chocolate porridge*', in the main text. Longer extracts are presented as indented italicised text. The stories in the 5th chapter have been translated from Finnish to English by the present author.

5.2 Design as Calling

5.2.1 Childhood Influences

Childhood was reflected on in most of the narratives, although briefly. Childhood decisions, emotions and environment were mostly presented in two stories – the stories of Erika and Veera. These designers situated the starting point of their interest in design in their childhood. In comparison to these two stories, Annika noted only one thing about her childhood: that she did not have an artistic or cultural background. She located the beginning of her design path in the moment that she was accepted to TaiK[27]. She mentioned

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[26] The term Applied Art and Design (Taideteollisuus) refers to designers who plan and make handmade or industrial, functional and aesthetic products to home and public space. These designers typically make prototypes of their works that aim to meet a certain need in the living environment. The term Applied Art and Design is typically replaced by 'muotoilu' in Finnish and 'design' in international publications, but to avoid potential confusion with industrial design or engineering design, I use the term Applied Art and Design to refer to all the material-based fields, such as furniture, spatial, graphic, ceramic and textile design.

[27] TaiK is currently Aalto ARTS.

that she started to study design '*by coin-cidence*' and that if she had not been ac-cepted at the first trial, she would not have applied again. In a similar way, Sofia applied to TaiK in 'secrecy' when she was studying at the University of Helsinki. By chance, she was accept-ed, and this changed her route from a student of philosophy to a student of design.

Figure 37. Chocolate porridge as Erika's first significant experience.

To gain an understanding of how Erika and Veera spoke about their childhood influences, we will briefly explore some of their experiences. For Erika, the atmosphere at her nanny's place was very inspirational. Her first experience is described with a symbol that presents '*chocolate porridge*' (Figure 37). This symbol refers to her time in a small day care place run by an artist. The artist made the best chocolate porridge in the world. She also held mod-elling clay sessions every week and provided the children with '*better modelling clays that you could get from the store*'. Erika enjoyed these moments and the '*at-mosphere of making*'. As a child, she was also inspired by her father, who was an electrician and made electric circuit plans on a wide drawing board in the car garage. With these notions, Erika tied her professional identity to her child-hood.

Veera, whose narrative identity was strongly built around making, had drawn a picture of a sunshade at the beginning of her Visual Narrative to illustrate one of the things she had made as a child (Figure 38). When de-scribing her early years, she defined herself as '*a little maker*'. This self-defi-nition lays the ground for the rest of her story, which was wrapped around the theme of making.

The influence of the childhood en-vironment may be examined not only by looking at experiences, but also lis-tening to the *narrative tone* of the story. According to Dan P. McAdams (1993: 47-50), the first two years of our lives strongly influence our narrative tones.

Figure 38. The beginning of Veera's Visual Narrative.

Even though we have not yet become storytellers at the age of two, we have experienced the world either as safe and secure or as an uncertain and even dangerous place. This worldview of ours has developed through the nature of the attachment to our caregivers. The narrative tone reveals the author's underlying faith in life, in a simplified manner whether the world is trustworthy, predictable and good, or whether it is capricious and unpredictable, where stories have unhappy endings.

The narrative tone in the stories varied from hesitating and searching to assuring and stating. Hesitation could be seen in the way the designer expressed their lack of knowing what her 'thing' or 'way' is. Instead, she kept exploring and searching for her thing. An assuring tone, which will be shown through the notions expressed by Veera explored in the next section, expressed commitment, passion and dedication towards design and one's own activities. However, since the stories do not reveal early childhood dynamics or relationships with caregivers, it is impossible to know from where these different tones originate. From the perspective of narrative identity and the creation of one's own way, it is more essential to see how the tone serves the protagonist and influences the way she presents herself and is perceived by others.

The workshop setting and task did not allow the participants to go very deeply into self-reflection about their own professional identity and its roots. The workshop was only a one day workshop with one pre-assignment, so to obtain more reflective stories and experiences related to childhood, family and relatives and their possible influences more specific questions and maybe even more time should have been provided. Since the visualization task was quite free for interpretation, and the workshop was arranged before the specific research questions or goals had even been set, these questions were not posed.

5.2.2 Intuition Guiding the Career Choice

To illustrate how professional identity was constructed and explained via stories of experiences, we will explore some of Veera's notions that reveal her beliefs. Taylor (1989, in Bruner 1991a:76) has suggested that self has some concepts and beliefs that a person is not willing to let go easily. These concepts form the most enduring concept of the self, the part that stays the same. In Veera's story, this part was built around her 'knowing' she wanted to become designer, her intuition that guided her choices and her enjoyment of becoming and being a designer. The role of faith and trust – as well as the lack of them – are present in other stories, too, but more implicitly. This intuition and

Figure 39. Veera's Visual Narrative. See Appendix E1 for a larger image.

reference to *making* started from the very beginning of her story and remained central until the end.

Veera started her story by referring to her '*roots*' situated in a certain area in Finland. The narrative proceeded chronologically, beginning from her childhood. The visualization consists of two streams, which she described as a '*timeline*' (lower) and '*feeling*' (upper) (Figure 39). The lower line starts with an icon of a little girl with a flame on top of her head and a sunshade (Figure 38). The line proceeds straight, ending up with an aeroplane that seems to fly out from the paper, towards the future. The upper stream forms an ascending curve that reaches the top of the paper at its end. The stream consists of a line and words that have been placed one after another to form a continuum. In addition, the line has two flame icons on it. The flame, starting from the beginning of the narrative, grows bigger as we move along showing that the 'flame' - the passion to do design – increases on the way. In between the two curves, there is a 'cloud' of words and pictures, visually referring to an intense and active time in her life.

Veera's story shows a strong commitment to design, which she chose as her field already in high school. Her design education is multifaceted, consisting of several studies in schools before her time in Aalto ARTS. Her commitment is also very apparent in the way she spoke. She mentioned that she had already *decided* to become a furniture designer in high school.

> *I don't know what I invented it from. It was just an unexplained pulse in the back of one's head. I was just drawing all kinds of chairs...*

For her, the choice was '*knowing*' that this is what she will become. She refers to intuition through the phrase '*unexplained pulse in the back of one's head*'. It seems that Veera finds design to be her 'fate'. This belief provides a stable setting for Veera's identity, which supports McAdams' (1993: 179-186) notion of the significance of faith in our identity formation. When our faith in something is strong, this belief is so rooted in our identity that it guides our actions and stays as part of our identity even when we revise our identity.

Even though it took some time for her to get into the school she dreamed of, she was committed to the field and expressed gratitude about the experiences she gained from the two other design schools she attended before Lahti Institute of Design. After graduation as Bachelor of Arts from Lahti, she showed great enthusiasm towards the opportunity to start to practise what she had learned. Referring to this time, she stated with a laugh:

> And then I graduated and I thought that great, now I'm a Scandinavian furniture designer, yes, yes, now we start to work!

Veera referred to her intuition and subconscious as driving forces that guide her in her path. She seemed to be well connected with intuition, the delicate power that reveals its force when it is trusted and applied, not over-rationalized (Raami 2015: 257-261). Intuition is understood to be the most significant method guiding creative processes among experienced designers and artists (ibid.: 258). Veera's notion of her intuition shows an example of the internal discussion each entrepreneur has in their endeavours to follow their own path among the other paths in the field. Veera's internal dialogue is rooted to a stronger power she locates in her subconscious. Being able to locate it, she is aware of its existence, even though she did not define it more clearly. However, it has a strong driving force in Veera's story and obviously also gives Veera a lot of confidence.

5.2.3 Rhetoric and Expressions

Veera used verbs such as to '*know*' and to '*decide*' that both express her commitment to design. Her expression was persuasive and energetic. She used words such as '*grateful*' and '*joy*' several times and spoke respectfully and warmly about her experiences. The tone in her narrative was warm, strong and excited. From a narrative point of view, her story had a lot of credibility and includes the element of 'calling', a choice of the heart, true desire – or fate, as Veera defined it. The growing symbol of a flame expressed this same growing commitment and passion that Veera gets from her work. Veera's narrative did not express strong tensions within her professional identity, which

can be seen in some of the students' narratives later in this study. Neither did it show signs of a strong identity crisis, only pondering and clarifying what she likes to do and what not.

It could be argued that the constructive and inspired presentation 'technique' can be understood as her rhetoric[28] that she uses to convince the audience and herself. However, her narrative tone remains consistent all the way and reflects a strong, voluntary commitment to the field and honest enjoyment of her activities. It seems unlikely that she would have left most of the challenges or negative experiences out since she does not want to reveal them. Rather, she has decided to focus on the experiences that form her development as a designer. Undoubtedly, she has faced challenges, and she also refers to some, but only very briefly. Her motivation and passion for design keeps her going and is stronger than the power of obstacles and misfortunes. Even if Veera's narrative were positively distorted and hid negative experiences, it serves its purpose well. It presented her as a dedicated and committed designer and through this 'presentation of self' she also wanted to be seen this way (Goffman 1956:17).

All the stories have a different rhetoric and motives that guide them, which make the participants emphasize some things and leave others untold. These motives are essential part of the stories, since we create ourselves through stories we tell ourselves and others (Singer 2004, McAdams 1993, McAdams 2008, Bauer & al 2008). Veera tied her career choice to her childhood, which gave her strong roots that had started to grow a long time before she needed to face challenges in schools or in practice. Her narrative gained power from these experiences in the past. Her passion for design was also emphasized in her comments about the future.

Veera's spoken narrative correlates well with her Visual Narrative. The ascending curve, activity cloud and positive words in the narrative support her storytelling. Showing gratitude and commitment, she expressed professional maturity and reliability. For the listener, her story opened up as a personal success story, and it was hard to find any point where she contradicted herself. However, an elaboration on some of the negative experiences would have clarified the role of challenges in her identity development. The story did not reveal identity crises or other strong revisions of identity, and for this reason it raises the question of whether these are hidden or yet to come across her path.

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[28] Rhetoric can be defined as speech or writing that is intended to influence people, but that is not completely honest or sincere and as the skill of using language in speech or writing in a special way that influences or entertains people (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary)

5.3 The Search for Rewarding Feedback

5.3.1 The Lack of Constructive Feedback at the University

After some key events in childhood, the next turning point in the entrepreneurs' stories was either feedback from a respected designer or acceptance to a specific school[29] as a proof of their own potential. In both cases, their own attempt to proceed in design was supported by others. However, while some of the participants, such as Veera, worked hard to get into a one specific school, two of the participants started studying design *by coincidence*. This coincidence – or serendipity (Taylor & Littleton 2012: 51) – became a turning point in these participants' lives, even though design was not a calling for them before their studies, as it was for Veera.

All the stories showed the huge impact of feedback in the formation of design identity and the search for their own way. Encouraging and constructive feedback was highly valued. However, the participants did not speak much about getting support or feedback at the university. Instead, most of the participants spoke openly about their experience of the lack of teaching.

> *I chose the MA program in Spatial Design only since they had teaching. In Furniture they didn't really [have any], so that it was just like hanging around. I did not feel that I would be ready for my studies [if] I'm just there and do things by myself, but I wanted more input for studying.*

The need for feedback and a professional reflection surface cannot be underestimated. Hägg (2008: 145) notes that in the creative fields, professional identity, formed through education, is a deeply rooted conception of self as a person and a member of a professional community. In artistic fields, the personal and professional identities are inseparably intertwined both at the personal and collective levels. The identity of a young student is constructed in dialogue with others, which in the professional domain means interaction with people with influence in the chosen field, such as teachers, more experienced colleagues and peers. The new members of the design domain enter the field with various backgrounds and skills. For some, encouraging feedback is

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[29] One reason behind this is the fact that it is difficult to get into the University of Art and Design Helsinki (current Aalto ARTS). Less than 8% of the applicants got into BA programmes, and less than 25% into MA programmes (2016), thus merely the acceptance to university signifies an acknowledgement of certain skills. (See *www.aalto.fi/fi/studies/statistics* for statistics). Despite this fact, two of the participants, Annika and Sofia, who were accepted at their first attempt, considered their choice to start to study design to be a coincidence.

crucial, and destructive feedback may be hard to overcome, as we can see later in the next chapter that discusses students' stories.

Kenneth Gergen has noted that people's self-esteem and self-concept changed in reaction to different people and even more in response to the feedback, positive and negative, that they received from these people (Bruner 1990: 109). At the beginning of one's studies, this feedback is essential, since it helps the student to see her talents and challenges. Crushing criticism or lack of critique does not provide the professional mirroring surface needed to grow as a designer. As Tracey & Hutchinson (2013: 29) note, the development of professional identity requires guidance, support and feedback to build the preliminary foundation of professional identity – the preliminary store of design precedents.[30]

From the point of view of narrative identity development, significant others play an important role. When a significant other agrees with the narrator's interpretation of her personal story, the narrator is more likely to hold on to that story and incorporate it into her understanding of herself (McAdams & McLean 2013: 236). In design, these narratives begin to build up at the latest in design schools; thus, the role of teachers and their support is essential. Teachers' suggestions, prejudices and comments stay persistent in narratives in the creative field: these comments are cited and used to validate a creative career (Taylor & Littleton 2012: 54-55).

All the entrepreneurs had studied at the same university and most of them in the Furniture Design programme. Most felt that this programme was non-supportive. One participant expressed this by saying that she felt like '*being on top of nothing*' in the programme. She also felt a bit stuck in her thoughts, and mentioned that she took courses from another department since it was more inspiring.

> *We took courses by Salli[31] [Applied Arts and Design], since it was so inspiring and fun. Furniture Design had sort of only one policy.*

Even though some participants expressed strong criticism of the programme and its respective teachers, most of the stories only discussed the general lack of feedback and absence of teaching. Next, we will explore a situation in which a critique session turned into a personal insight.

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[30] According to Tracey & Hutchinson (2013) design precedents form designer's personal reference bank that consists of stored successes and failures in design processes. These experiences influence designer's decision-making.

[31] Timo Salli was the professor in the Applied Art and Design programme.
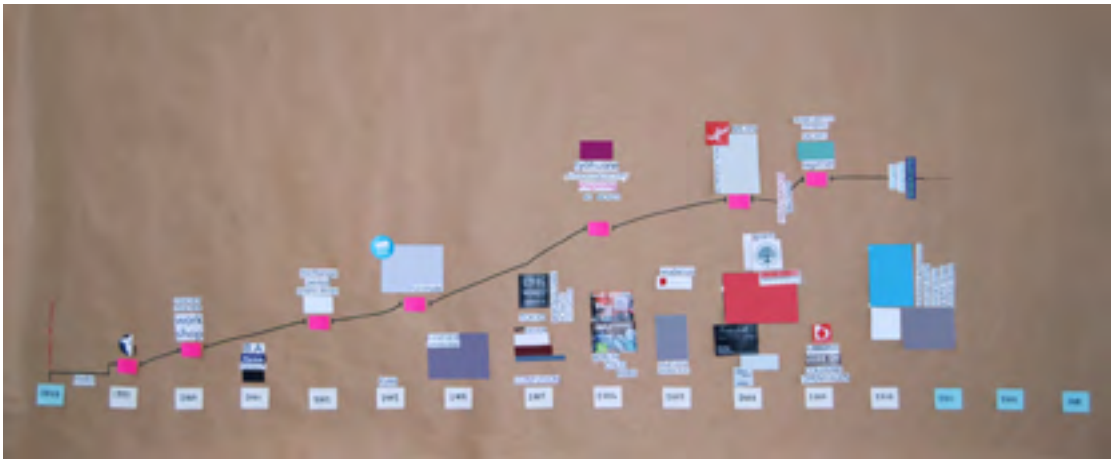
Figure 40. Sofia's Visual Narrative. See Appendix E2 for a larger image.

5.3.2 A Sudden Insight

Sofia, who had started studying design '*by coincidence*', told of a ground-breaking experience from the beginning of her studies when she realized that she can do design 'her way' (See Figure 40 for Sofia's Visual Narrative). She had already gained this insight in her first year at Aalto ARTS. Facing contradictory opinions by her teachers, she realized that she can do what she wants. Figure 41 shows how Sofia illustrated this experience, which she described in the following way:

Figure 41. Acceptance to study at TaiK and teachers' conflict in Sofia's Visual Narrative.

> *Then the school started and we had the first course which was run by Sami and Juhani.[32] For me, that was such an absurd experience as a matter of fact, since I didn't know anything of this [field] and I just tried so much to do good things and so on and then these two teachers argued all the time; exactly, they disagreed about everything. I mean really, one was like 'Great, yes do it like this' and the other one was like 'No you should definitely not do it like that, do it like this'. And then somehow I realised that I just need to do what feels good to me. Everyone will think differently about this and that is just the point, and*

[32] The names have been changed.

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that was for me such a big lesson to learn and realize just for starters. Ever since, I have been mainly doing things I have wanted to.

Sofia discovered that to do what feels good is at least as good a solution as following someone else – in this case an authority. This realization is extraordinary and not typical for a young student. In addition to this insight, attention should be paid to the verb Sofia used. Sofia started to do what feels good to her. She could have said, what I think / know is right / good or what I want / decide / wish to do, but instead she chose a verb that expresses bodily experience, a holistic experience of feeling good, not a rationalization or justification in her mind. She acted based on her emotions.

In design education, generally, as in this specific programme, feedback is mostly given in critique sessions, where students present their designs. Critique is mostly directed at the design process, outcome, presentation and communication of the design (Dannels & al. 2008). This excludes attention to the overall development of the student and the 'design profile' or 'own way' of the designer, as was seen in Sofia's example of the disagreeing teachers. Sofia's description reveals that the teachers focused on justifying their own views against one another instead of focusing on seeing the situation from the point of view of the student. Having just started studying, she was looking for constructive, justified feedback, and experimenting with different ways to do design.

5.3.3 Important Encouraging Words

To give another example of the power of feedback, in this case encouragement at a special moment, we will explore Inka's experiences. These experiences are situated at the beginning of her story, but they are not visible from her visualization (Figure 42). The visualization shows only some of the main turning points from this time, such as her acceptance by TaiK, but it does not give any hints to the insights that Inka shared in her story.

At the beginning of her story, Inka talked about a project that she did in a vocational school. She made designs for a company and at the end of the project met a design practitioner to present her ideas. This meeting became important for her.

> *I showed my work to him and he said to me that these are good works. He looked at me again and said that these really are good works. (…) I was both shocked and happy. I was so insecure that I could not believe that someone would say anything like that about my work.*

Figure 42. Inka's Visual Narrative. See Appendix E3 for a larger image.

She described this experience as a '*significant moment*', since she got sincere positive feedback. Being shocked referred to her own surprise at her skills that she had not realized before. When her work was acknowledged by a skilful practitioner, whose feedback she could trust, she started to become aware of her talents. Positive feedback was a surprise to her.

Inka used words such as '*uncertainty*' and '*timidity*' to describe the period at the vocational school before TaiK, which also explains the significance of encouraging feedback for her. She also mentioned her low self-esteem as the reason for working hard at the university.

> *I have been so insecure and timid.... and then you need to think everything through and [wonder] is this good enough? (...) Maybe it is due to this low self-esteem [I have had] such an insane pressure to work a lot. So you have this fear of failing [and that is why] you [need to] learn and work so much.*

This requirement for hard work, which Jiro also talked about, can also be seen as a construct of expectations about the conditions and requirements for creative work. Novice creatives typically connect creative work with intensive, lengthy, individual work (Taylor & Littleton 2012: 56). Art students have reported that if a work is done without engaging in experimentation and uncertainty with the intent to just complete the work, the tutors' critique of it will be negative (ibid.).

Inka noted, however, that despite the pressure, her final work for the vocational school went well. She was encouraged by the rector of TaiK, who came to the final work exhibition and after seeing Inka's work, suggested her to apply to TaiK. Following this advice, Inka applied and got in.

These experiences in Inka's story show the power of authorities in the formation of one's own path. Whether Inka would have applied to TaiK without these encouraging words, we will never know. However, being encouraging, they turned into significant moments in her design path, since through this recognition she became aware of her skills. Naturally, these comments were justified, evaluating her talent and competence and given due to seeing her potential. However, giving positive, encouraging feedback was not common for the participants; thus, these occasions stood out as special.

Describing her studies at TaiK, Inka mentioned the words '*own voice*' for the first time in her story. She had been asked to design an artefact by a respected professor. She had the belief that this item should be done in a certain way, but she decided to do it in a totally different way.

> *I had been thinking of all crazy things, but I thought that one cannot do something like that. It sort of has to be just the thing and then the item is there inside the thing and that is what was ordered from me. But then I did completely something different. It was a moment in Kipsari [a student café at the school], where there was also one guy from the scenography department. (...) I had thought a lot but I was totally like, no, one cannot do anything like this, and then the guy said something really encouraging at that moment so that I got the courage to, so that I will do it just like I think, and then I don't know at all whether somebody's going to yell at me or whether this will go well; I had no idea. Then it turned out to be really good. (....) That gave me a kind of little encouragement that one can do like this; one can do exactly as one wishes, which is not a traditional way to do things – and that can be a good thing (...) an encouragement to listen to own voice.*

Inka didn't describe what was '*ordered*' from her, but she felt that she was breaking some rules with her suggestion, which was '*completely something different*'. The experience seemed new to Inka, and she was uncertain about the feedback, and even afraid of a strong reaction, to the point of fearing '*yelling*'.

Her courage to '*do it just like I think*' is a good example of her capability to overcome her own critical, internal dialogue. We can notice parts of that dialogue when she expressed how she compared the 'crazy things' with 'something you have to do'. The things she cannot do are spoken of with a conventional, learned voice – the other party in the dialogue –, whereas the crazy things are spoken of with a more revolutionary and creative voice – the opposing party in the dialogue – that threatens and questions the conventional view. According to Mead (1964: 288), these voices are part of our thinking, our inner conversation. The voices are within our 'inner forum' that we call thought.

They are brought there by us, when we have internalized the perceived views of others. More typically these voices are voices of a generalized other, that is, an attitude of a certain group that we converse with (see Strauss 1956: 262 on Mead). In other words, these voices were Inka's perception of what someone else or a certain group would say or think about what she is about to do. Trying out what she wanted to do, she was able to broaden her perception of what is acceptable and build trust in her own view and understanding in design.

The encouraging comment from a random fellow student was enough for her to try out something '*crazy*' she had been thinking instead of rationalizing it down to what she perceived to be acceptable. This fellow student supported the 'revolutionary and creative' voice and encouraged Inka to follow that thought. She took a risk and entered into uncertainty, giving her creative, exploratory side a try with '*no idea*' of what kind of response she would get. Since her unconventional idea was approved by an authority, she gained experience of succeeding when relying on her '*own*' thinking, that is, outside-the-box, free from conventions and creative (About creativity, see: Sawyer 2017; Bohm 2004; Simonton 2000; Csikszentmihalyi 1997; Koestler 1975).

Inka's experiences show the significance of encouragement and recognition, and how through recognition one starts to become part of the professional community. The feedback from a more experienced member of the community strengthened Inka's self-confidence and 'validated' her work in the field. However, even though Inka could rely on herself and 'doing what she wanted in her way' at that moment, this did not, however, mean that her own way would not be questioned several times afterwards. Doing things in one's 'own way' takes place in constant negotiation with the surroundings and, as we gain more experience, we face things we have not understood nor processed yet.

5.3.4 People Have Always Been Significant for Me

As shown, one's own way is found though different interactions with people. From the point of view of the formation of professional identity, these people and their opinions, advice, ideas and judgements served as mirroring surfaces to the designers' own development as design students. The significance of other people was present in all the stories but was particularly visible in Erika's story, whose story touched upon this topic frequently (see Figure 43 for Erika's visualization).

Throughout her story, Erika emphasized the role of the people she had met, how they guided, inspired, supported and gave joy to her in her way from young student to design entrepreneur. Erika's choices and decisions seemed

Figure 43. Erika's visual narrative. See Appendix E4 for a larger image.

often to link with these different significant others that somehow had an outstanding appearance and attitude. She spoke of them in an excited and admiring manner.

During the making of the Visual Narrative, Erika realized that she has been influenced by several men with long hair (Figure 44). The first of these encounters was a school counsellor at elementary school from whom Erika learned that there is a profession called 'furniture designer' and decided

Figure 44. Three (the second, fourth and eighth drawing from the left) long-haired men in Erika's visualization.

immediately that this will be her future profession. In vocational school, Erika met an interesting teacher, who had a '*cool attitude*', which Erika linked with a certain appearance and lifestyle, a sort of a rebel and rock style. This teacher, too, was one of the long-haired men that Erika considered influential for her. Erika had interesting conversations with this teacher, for instance about the art versus commercialism dilemma.[33] The teacher encouraged Erika to focus on '*who she is*' and on her '*artistic side*', assuring her that the commercial side

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[33] The relationship between art and commerce has been a topic for discussion for a long time. Artists typically work for the satisfaction of the work itself (Caves 2003: 75). Some see that making art for money is sacrificing the quality of art. An artist who would do what her dealer, e.g. gallery owner, thinks could sell, would lose her creative autonomy (Caves 2003:76).

will come automatically from this starting point. Hence, this teacher encouraged Erika to nourish her own expression in design.

For Erika, the role of significant others was a key factor in her whole story. Significant others influence the development of the story, since through their advice, rejections, doubts and other comments they influence the protagonists and their decisions.

> *I've also realized that many things are linked to people. [...] People have always been very significant for me.*
>
> *As a designer you work quite a lot alone, but, however, there are always those people who eventually are important, so that even if you make furniture or spatial projects, the fact that you meet people is, that is, a sort of 'air hole' for me as well.*

As Mead has suggested, the internal dialogues we have of different topics, include our perception of the thoughts of our significant others – and through this dialogue between ourselves and the internalized others we make sense of ourselves and of the world, (Strauss 1956: 212-260) and create our own ways. Erika had been able to internalize the positive and encouraging words of others and – based on her story – leave more critical and destructive comments outside her 'arena of thought' (Mead 1964: 288). Her story shows how some people can just quickly visit our lives and leave a remarkable influence. This calls for responsibility regarding what we as professionals say to those who are still seeking their paths. It shows the power of authority and position that we can use to nourish and also to defeat.

The capability to take in constructive feedback and leave out destructive feedback is related to self-awareness, self-esteem and self-trust. It calls for a broad understanding of the motives of others: why does this person encourage me, is his feedback genuine or does he do it to please or to use me for his own ends? Also, to be able to build one's own way in dialogue with others needs a constant evaluation of what to listen to and what to leave out. This decision cannot be made by anyone else, and in many cases this decision is not based on facts, but on emotions or intuition. Industrial designer Mikael Silvanto referred to this in the panel discussion (see 3.6.1) by noting that when he listens to his intuition, it doesn't always give an easy solution; the road may be painful too. This arises a question of how do you choose which road to take? How do you separate mean, envious words from honest constructive – but critical – feedback? Trusting one's own vision when faced with a situation where everyone suggests you do things in a different way is hard, but sometimes it is the only way to go, and in the end you'll see that this was exactly what you needed to do. And sometimes it fails, which also teaches you new things. In

either case, if the experience is taken from the point of view of learning, not succeeding or failing, it serves the development of one's own way.

In addition to feedback from peers, the designers received feedback from their partners. Work and personal close relationships were somehow mixed in three of the six cases, since two of the designers worked with their partner occasionally, and one consulted her partner regularly. Even though these relationships were not elaborated upon in the stories, their significance may have been remarkable, maybe even taken for granted due to its every day presence.

5.4 Escaping the Familiar

5.4.1 Exploring the World

When the entrepreneurs spoke about their time studying, they raised experiences that gave them new perspectives on what they had learned so far. These significant experiences included escapes from the familiar environment to a new country in the form of travelling, exchange studies and trade shows. They illustrated the curious, explorative attitude that is embedded in design and has an exploratory nature (Cross 2011: 8). Later in the stories, these experiences also included their own exhibitions, artist residences and company collaborations in foreign countries. This section shows how important it was for the entrepreneurs to see other ways of doing, presenting and thinking of design.

All the participants had travelled widely, and many of them had spent an exchange study period abroad. The perspective gained, whether it originated from exhibitions, travelling or exchange studies, seemed to be one of the most influential factors contributing to the discovery of their own voice. An example of this is how Tokyo as an environment and experience influenced Jiro's design approach (Figure 45).

Figure 45. One cluster of cues in Jiro's narrative.

> *Tokyo opened new scenery, so that it doesn't have to be so – that you can do something else too, based on emotions.*

Annika and Sofia noted how exchange studies abroad taught them another way to teach and learn and provided new skills:

> *The time in London was good, because it showed kind of another type of doing; it was sort of process-oriented the way they studied. Instead, here it is like you look at the ready work. There, they specifically didn't even want to see the ready work.*

> *Really many left to study abroad and several had a year off. I then went to Madrid. I have read Spanish in the past, so I then went to study there, and then when I was there I found out that they don't even teach furniture design at that school, and also that in spatial design that school did not have a very good reputation – so I'll be here like one year and what do I do here? I cannot study what I'm thinking of. So then I started to study graphic design in Spanish, and then I did it there for a year and photography and got to know people and it was just great. As a consequence of this, when I came to Finland, I had to establish [my own] trade name, since I suddenly had a lot of work in graphic design that I had not thought of at all. This is how it went.*

The education at Aalto ARTS was not elaborated upon in detail. Jiro mentioned that he found the workshops run by visiting lecturers to be interesting and beneficial, and many of the participants highlighted how inspiring it was to study in the Applied Art and Design programme. However, it seems that after entering the university, the education became so obvious for the students that only a few participants used any time in talking about the courses in Aalto ARTS. Veera's case in this sense was exceptional, since she expressed strong gratitude for the education she received. This, however, does not imply that the participants did not appreciate the education they got. Rather, it reveals something about the ways in which we perceive our past. The long lasting and consistent things do not necessarily appear significant, whereas the more exciting and exceptional gain our attention when we reflect back in time.

When Erika talked about an exhibition challenge abroad, she referred to Finland as a bird's nest which you come back to before you head abroad again to try out your wings. The same theme was brought up in the *Uudet toimintamallit muotoilun kentällä [New operation models in the design field]* panel discussion.

> *Finland is like a little bird's nest, and problems swell here, since everything is so good. It is interesting how things go. It is typical for humans to see a problem somewhere, and not to look at it from another perspective. So that others have even worse problems.*

Maybe it was precisely this safe environment that allowed and encouraged these designers to gain new experiences, and without the experiences in this safe and familiar, yet sometimes also boring or unresponsive, environment

their attention would have been directed differently. If, for instance, the school environment had been strongly competitive and dynamic and the students had been suffering from information overload, maybe the significance and experience gained from their exchange studies might have been different.

Next, we'll take a look at two experiences that serve as examples of escaping the familiar: the first in relation to place and culture, the second in relation to one's own habits and approaches.

5.4.2 Away from Cows to a Metropolitan City

Erika was studying crafts in a little town in the countryside, which started to feel small to her after a while. A vacation abroad made Erika realize that she wanted '*more action*'. She ran into an old friend, who had ordered application guides to apply for studying abroad, and this encouraged Erika to browse through the guides. This led Erika to apply for a university in London, and she was accepted.

Even though Erika's family was not thrilled about her going abroad, Erika felt empowered about this new experience (Figure 46). She described her feelings on the aeroplane in the following way:

I remember that moment, for me it was like a big… I had never been to England and I had like forty kilos luggage and I sat in the plane and I thought that now I'm going to take a drink. Now I'm going towards something like I don't know what, but that sort of crazy feeling that I'm not afraid of anything. And I didn't have a flat, I didn't have anything to where to go, I had just one address that ok I can be one week there and so on.

The possibility of experiencing a new culture inspired Erika a lot, even though she also felt a bit uncomfortable, referring to her background, '*girl from the countryside*', and lack of awareness of, for instance, a different cuisine
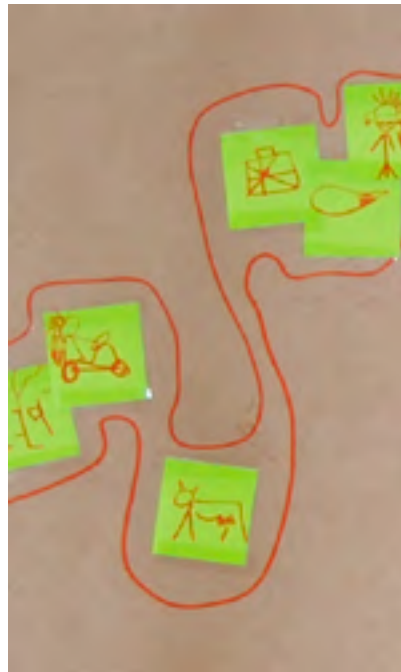
Figure 46. Erika illustrated the change from countryside (cow) to London (suitcase and eggplant) as a positive experience using an escalating curve.

to what she was used to. With this step, Erika stepped away from her comfort zone,[34] which caused her both excitement and uncertainty. Travelling and international collaboration has been a part of Erika's way of life ever since, both in her professional and personal life.

5.4.3 Something Crazy

I presented previously how Sofia experienced the argument between her teachers, and how this led to her insight of having the freedom to do things in her own way (see 5.3.2). Another experience that further encouraged Sofia to follow her own way in design was a project she did with her colleague for an exhibition (Figure 47):

> *This design was really important to me (…) I hadn't done anything like that before, and then I did something I think was like totally crazy and amazing, and then suddenly it raised interest and it became something, and since there was this exhibition I really had to make a prototype as otherwise it would probably never become anything.*

Also in this description by Sofia there is a feeling of unexpectedness and surprise that related both to her skills and the experience of breaking (perceived) conventions. She used the word '*crazy*' to illustrate this activity of making something new. Furthermore, she validated this activity by explaining that people were interested in this new design.

    She continued her story by evaluating that at this stage she found her '*own style of expression*'. This one exhibition had given way to new opportunities and she felt overwhelmed with exhibitions and competitions and other events that took place simultaneously at that time.

> *Somehow in that phase I started to find that sort of, like, my own style of expression and maybe also as a designer the thing you really want to do and where to head, and realized also that it is necessary to go abroad. That in Finland there is no chance with this sort of thing, so that one needs to be internationally involved.*

Finding one's own way by doing 'something crazy' emerged in Erika's, Sofia's and Inka's narratives. Conceptually, this 'crazy' seems to be outside the ex-

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[34] According to Mälkki (2011:30), 'comfort zone' refers to the pleasant experience of being able to make meaning unproblematically within the meaning perspective and maintain the intactness of it. In this study, 'comfort zone' is used to illustrate this area in which we act and think relatively easily without hard effort. We move out from our comfort zones when we start to question our actions or beliefs and learn new approaches or widen our perspective.

pected, required and known way of doing design from the perspective of these designers. As part of an internal dialogue, this 'crazy' is something new and not typical for the person's internal discussion. It brings excitement, since it is a new player in the arena of thought (see also Mead 1964: 288). The decision to go for this crazy thing was a courageous act that at the time felt exciting and stimulating. This act had elements of wonder and astonishment that Buchanan (2007:44) suggests to be both the "sign and the source of

Figure 47. The visualization of the significant work consisted of a photo of the design and the logo of the organization that exhibited the work. The word 'handmade' was glued on top of the photo.

creativity and originality". For the students, it was an exploratory experience, where they followed an uncertain route without knowing the outcome.

Later, this crazy thing became incorporated into their stories, but left a remarkable footprint that served as a design precedent for future endeavours (Tracey & Hutchinson 2013, Lawson 2004:96) and a reminder of a bold act. An essential issue here is that both the '*crazy and amazing*' as well as the '*unconventional*' were finally approved and accepted by an authority or the media and the public. Due to this acceptance, the experience could then be memorized as a positive turn and used later as a strengthening memory. It can become an analogous event that we revisit later when faced with a similar situation (Pillemer 2001: 128).

In addition to the fact that these events have strengthened these participants' self-esteem, they have also shown the possibility of another way of doing things – a way to break some rules or conventions in a manner that is considered interesting in the field. Thus, they have shown how one's own way can be created using one's own voice and expression – when this expression is acknowledged in the field.

5.5 All the Roads Lead to Exhibitions

5.5.1 A Platform to Share Your Work

All participants spoke about the significance of international activities, specifically exhibitions. For Sofia, a successful exhibition experience laid the ground for future exhibitions, which eventually became the most significant, structuring events in her design work:

I think that in my career the main things are those exhibitions and residences and that kind of thing. And specifically the fact that when you have those exhibitions, you also have deadlines that push you to make prototypes and because of those prototypes things start to happen.

Exhibiting has been a very typical and successful, essential activity in the field of Applied Art and Design ever since the successful Finnish exhibitions that took place in international fairs in the 1950's (Korvenmaa 2009:175-209, Oksanen-Särelä 2012: 23-29). International exhibitions have brought positive publicity to Finnish design and encouraged domestic companies to hire designers, which has further lifted the quality of the field (Oksanen-Särelä 2012: 23).

Exhibitions serve as important events for designers, since they combine several aspects that designers mentioned as significant in their work paths. Exhibitions provide a platform to meet new people, be it a colleague, potential manufacturer or customer. In exhibitions, designers can receive feedback on their designs from the public, which has its own view and may not correlate with the feedback designers get from their peers or the institution that they are involved with. Trade shows allow designers to broaden their perspective and see what people have done in other countries.

Exhibiting is a financial investment and the whole event – a trade show – is not an everyday routine for a designer. It needs a lot of preparation and it involves risks. In exhibitions or trade shows abroad, designers tend to spend time with people all night. Exhibiting is party time, a celebration of the completed work and a networking event to push your career further. If exhibiting does not lead to collaboration with any manufacturer, it still provides a possibility to attract the media and gain publicity for the designer and the work. Also, it is an act that shows colleagues that you are serious and willing to invest time and money to develop and contribute to the field. Exhibitions can be equated to festivals or performances, since they have very special features that do not happen every day. The participants regarded the attention gained in exhibitions as inspirational. It reassured you that your own way was not ignored; on the contrary, some people showed interest and reacted to your work.

When the exhibitions occurred at the beginning of their studies, the students considered them overwhelming. The spirit and atmosphere when travelling to another country to exhibit your work in a group may at its best bring up a positive, encouraging atmosphere and provide a feeling of success and strengthen your self-esteem. This can be seen particularly well in the story of Veera, who spoke about her studying time at Aalto university as a very excit-

ing and motivating, even crucial, period in her life. We will explore her experiences next.

5.5.2 Becoming Fearless

In Veera's Visual Narrative, all the exhibitions were gathered together to form a cluster, a cloud-like collage, which was surrounded with the names of different cities in Europe (Figure 48). In her verbal account, she referred to this 'exhibition cloud' as a time period during which she really enjoyed designing and travelling, and which prepared her to start her own business. She enjoyed her time at Aalto ARTS to a great extent:

> And that was fruitful time for me. (…) I was so excited. I came to just the right place at the right time. (…) We just travelled. (…) The MA should have lasted two years. I was there for four years and I worked so hard that, you know, just like out of the joy of it. I thought it was so great. (….) Without that, I wouldn't really be here. All that hype and acknowledgement, to the place and to the people there were. A little girl like me who goes there everywhere in Europe and can do whatever stuff – bliss! – it opened my eyes completely. You can really do it like this as well! This is the way you can get ahead, you know.

The programme Veera attended was at that time possibly the most outgoing and internationally active design programme in TaiK. And for Veera, specifically the international exhibitions were the events that opened her eyes and gave her the courage and open mind to explore and experiment in design. She became confident in exploration.

> We made some things and then we went abroad and things happened there. I have become sort of fearless. I just go. Then we'll see.

During her MA studies, Veera also joined several design collectives and took part in the projects that these collectives enabled. She spent some time abroad as an exchange student, and mentioned that this time opened up many things for her – some of those she still carries with her.

Figure 48. Exhibition cloud in Veera's visualization.

Exhibiting does not necessarily have to happen in an international forum to be influential, but among these collected stories internationality was prominent as an important factor. This seems quite obvious, since the opportunities in Finland are limited. Sofia elaborated on this fact in her story, referring to the necessity of 'going abroad', since Finland alone does not provide enough opportunities for the things she does.

It can be concluded that exhibitions served as a '*counterweight*', as two participants expressed, to the everyday routines. Exhibitions were the professional annual festivities that are needed to structure the year. They also served as deadlines to get things done. The downside was that they also caused pressure and hesitation, since they are events at which you are being examined and measured and compared to others. However, being outside of that competition restricts one's ability to make connections and become acknowledged. Whether success as a design entrepreneur would be possible without networking is an interesting question, but one that is impossible to answer with the limits of the data available here, since all the stories referred to the significance of social interaction as one of the key factors in entrepreneurship.

5.6 Becoming a Design Practitioner

5.6.1 Graduation

The step from full-time student to design practitioner did not happen quickly at the moment of graduation. These two roles coexisted and the preparation work for one's own practice was already initiated when a student. Graduation was felt to be a relieving and completing experience:

> *The time of graduation was in that way a significant moment in that the load from my school life was wiped away, so that it was anyway really quite a burden, a spiritual burden, so to speak, to be somewhere. Or at least I have a habit that if I don't complete a task, it kind of stresses me all the time. So it was sort of a spiritual relief, so that after that you were free to do whatever.*

However, ultimately it was not found to be that significant, as Inka noted in line with Annika, after Annika's presentation:

> *I have put a small knot (to the pre-assignment thread) for the final work. But not really the graduation itself, rather how significant the (final) work was.*

Even though graduation was not considered to be significant, it meant a big change for the designers, since they had to leave the support network and workshops that were available at the university. The graduates were no longer eligible for an allowance for their studies anymore, and they needed to find work or financial support to continue in design.

For Annika and Inka, the university provided work after their graduation, keeping the freshly graduated designers inside the design community (Figure 49). This work also brought some financial security and broad-

Figure 49. The black drawn frame illustrated the time when Annika worked at the university after her graduation.

ened their personal network in the design field. The other participants used another strategy. They had already established or joined a design collective during their studies. All the participants in this study belonged to at least one design collective, most to several collectives. Collaboration in the collectives opened doors and brought credibility to the participants (see also Taylor & Littleton 2012:61).

5.6.2 Recognition and Sense of Belonging

Exhibitions provided an opportunity to fulfil some of the basic needs in the journey towards a more mature professional identity. One of the reasons for this was that exhibitions gathered together people with similar interests and strengthened the feeling of belonging to a professional community. This sense of belonging[35] was specifically important for Jiro, whose story is wrapped around the themes of recognition and belongingness (Figure 50-51).

Jiro did not consider himself as '*gifted*', so at one stage in school he worked almost around the clock to reach the level of others he considered more skilful. Jiro's self-esteem got better through hard work and acknowledgement at exhibitions.

> *It [the exhibition] was anyway a ranked thing. In the school, you could do anything and you got no feedback. (…) I was lucky to get in [to the exhibition]. In some ways it strengthened my belief in my own perception and how I*

[35] Ferrucci (2006: 52) notes that a sense of belonging is a basic need, like food or water, since without a reference to others, it's hard, or even impossible, to know who one is.

Figure 50. Jiro's Visual Narrative. See Appendix E5 for a larger image.

present it. It brought some visibility, at least for me, so that at least some people were interested in seeing [my design work]. It was positive to notice about myself or I mean my work. (...) This was the first thing happening abroad and it raised some attention. [It was] inspiring in that sense for my own making.
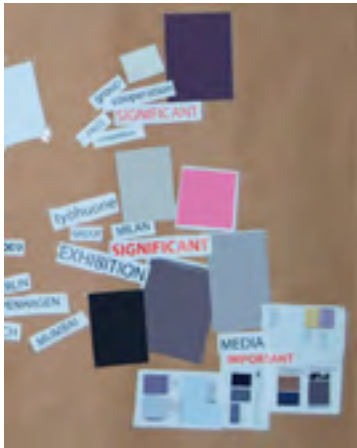
Figure 51. Jiro had chosen many cues that reflected the value he gave to recognition.

Jiro's story shows the significance of winning a competition, being selected for an exhibition and being acknowledged as a professional within the community (see also Nasir & Cooks 2009). He also notes this himself after his presentation:

Yes [I consider that] in my own (...) development [it is important] that you're somehow approved of or that the design is sort of approved.

Jiro's notion is in line with previous research about how artists become accepted: it is easier when you are like the others (Taylor & Littleton 2012: 26). As a potential member of a design community, one is situated in a network where field-specific practices and traditions exist and are negotiated by the practitioners and educators that maintain the domain and agree upon the conditions for being accepted into the domain (see also Taylor & Littleton 2012: 17).

After graduation, Jiro established a design collective together with his colleagues, with whom he felt he was on '*a similar wavelength*' and shared similar humour. The collective attended design exhibitions and gained attention both from public and from the media. Jiro evaluated the time as significant for his professional credibility.

> *I presume that this time, I think, I mean in a professional sense, has had quite a bit of significance, specifically in relation to what others see in making or what I do or we do. I think it has sort of opened quite a number of doors (...) and kind of brought credibility, professional credibility. (...) You have had the chance to show your work, gained attention, and in a way that has given one trust in it, so that maybe you're not totally wrong after all.*

For Jiro, professional credibility – being accepted as a member of the community – has been one goal that has driven his activities. This same goal was subtly present in all the narratives, but here it is easier to isolate. In addition to professional credibility, previous research shows that students in creative fields find being surrounded by like-minded people and working with talented peers a general advantage (Taylor & Littleton 2012: 61).

The need for recognition and a sense of belonging can be linked to the previously discussed need for feedback (see Chapter 5.3). As the narratives – and professional identities – developed, the need for feedback from significant others broadened to the need for acknowledgement from the wider design community. Exhibitions, awards, collectives, media attention and other social recognition functioned as key events in providing an opportunity to become recognized and gain a sense of belonging within the design field. Furthermore, these experiences prepared the ground for the creation of their own position in society and as a part of design culture.

5.6.3 Balancing Between Art and Everyday Design

Most of the participants tackled the theme of artistic expression versus commercial work in some way. One of the earliest experiences in relation to the theme was related by Erika, who had been encouraged by a teacher to focus on '*who she is*' and her artistic side, assuring her that the commercial side will follow automatically from this starting point. This teacher encouraged Erika to nourish her own expression in design.

Jiro considered the more artistic and free work to be a significant counterweight to everyday work. However, in Jiro's story, the artistry and commercial work seemed to intertwine without any conflict. Jiro also mentioned that he

felt that design was a kind of a lifestyle, which is common among designers (Taito 2011: 16).

Of all the participants, the separation into artistic and 'bread and butter' work was mostly visible in Annika's Visual Narrative. She created her narrative in the way that the more free and artistic projects were situated at the top of the paper, and the 'bread and butter' work at the bottom. For her, projects that allowed an artistic approach, experimentation, and freedom, were rewarding. However, when asked about the significance of these events, she emphasized the balance between the 'bread and butter' work and these special events. She wanted to make it clear that she also values the everyday basic work.

What is most distinctive in Annika's story is how she described her own practice developing between the two main lines that are under the individual artistic projects in her Visual Narrative. The lower of the lines is the 'bread and butter' working and the upper one consists of exhibitions within the exhibition organization (Figure 52). She speaks about the development of her own design practice in the following way, demonstrating with her hands how the lines separate and what gets born in between:

> 'Then there [is] 'my very first solo project', so here it sort of comes in a bit, little by little.... here are the main lines and from here [in between the main lines] starts to come these own... which sort of broaden into that 'bread and butter' work, which is now the profession. [They] start from here, in between.''

Annika pointed out a rewarding project (placed on the top stream) that she instantly linked with another rewarding project abroad. She considered this project an ideal project, one you would normally do for free, since it is so interesting. This project also provided her with an adequate salary and the freedom to experiment and make her design and artwork in a free way. The design was also awarded. Annika refers to this acknowledged project in her Visual Narrative with the cues '*rewarding*' and '*award*', and in her spoken story with words '*successful*' and '*nice workmates*'. From her latest design work, Annika brought up one of her designs that had received a lot of publicity in blogs, which only started to be common in 2010, when these narratives were told. This project was also placed on the top stream of the narrative.

After her presentation, when Annika was summing up, she said that the works brought her more self-confidence, but the main point was to be able to live by doing design.

> That sort of 'bread and butter' line, I consider it to be valuable. It does not bring up any particular individual thing, but as an entity it is valuable. The thing is that it's independent and that you do the work and that sort of every

Figure 52. Annika's Visual Narrative divides into two main streams that Annika pointed to when she presented her story. See Appendix E6 for a larger image.

day, every day doing, which does not include the star moments, but enough that you just do your work, enjoy it and live and get a salary from what you do.

The things that are up there (...) they in a way bring that self-confidence and excitement, and maybe you find some, like, new ideas, so that they feed that basic [work] – that's why they are there. But I would not really want to say that I'd like to quit other things so that I could do only those. I think they work well in parallel to one another and feed each other well.

5.6.4 Money and Competition

Taylor and Littleton (2008) have noticed conflicts around money and creative work in their study about the identity projects of novice practitioners. They have found two conflicting patterns among their research participants in relation to the economy of art work. The first was that art and money-making were discussed as incompatible and directly opposed. The second was the direct opposite of that, presenting earning as evidence of success, implying that the money validated the art work. A number of students that accepted the incompatibility of art and money according to the first pattern also talked about getting a job that would allow them to do their creative work alongside that, that is, to live a 'double life' where money-making is done in another job and creative work occurs separately from that. (See also Taylor & Littleton 2012: 65, 69).

The participants of the present study did not emphasize the role of money in their narratives. Money was mentioned as a necessary resource, but none of the participants referred to it in a non-instrumental way, a goal *per se*. The designers did not discuss money-making as being in conflict their design work, but neither did they imply that money would be needed to validate their designs.

Annika referred to money as a necessity to be able to live, not as a validation for her designs. Instead, the acknowledgement from the design organizations in the form of awards and similar recognition – as well as that from the public – was considered a stronger influencer on their feeling of success. Even though Inka presented the work that she could make money with as her 'break-through work', the emphasis of her account was on finding her own voice and way of doing design, not seeking validation for her work by making money. Sofia pointed out that the collective she was a part of was fun but could not succeed for long as such. The collective provided experience and peer support, but did not bring in money.

It is commonly known that even globally working and acknowledged Finnish designers do not have a high income. Designers' financial situation is more often a struggle than a pleasure and the design field is very competitive, both domestically and globally. Knowing this, the lack of discussion about money and competition is striking in the narratives. One reason for this could be the fact that the audience for the narratives consisted of entrepreneurs that were in a similar situation than the presenter. It is typical to not to discuss issues that are commonly known in the group. Another possible reason for not emphasizing money-related issues can be related to the fact that the participants were also competing for the same grants, awards and work. This made the topic a delicate one. In addition, collaboration was seen as crucial, which directed the focus away from competition.

However, the conflicts Taylor and Littleton present for the art world also prevail in design domain, specifically in the artistic side of the broad field of design such as Applied Art and Design. Even though economic success is valued and not considered to downplay the design work, it is not emphasized as a goal or validator of good design. A stronger conflict of creative work versus money can be seen in Chapter 6, which presents Lauretta's account. Lauretta's story shows how she struggles with her wish to make art and settles for design due to her belief that she would not be able to earn enough money as an artist, among other reasons.

5.7 Uncertainty and Identity

5.7.1 Identity Doubts and Insights

Uncertainty as a theme came through in all the narratives, but in a different manner. In Erika's story, this uncertainty emerged mostly as being intriguing. Annika instead referred to uncertainty only when she spoke about her maternity leave, since she was afraid that during this time off from working in the design scene she would be forgotten. In Inka's story, uncertainty appeared in relation to self-esteem, whether she could trust that she can manage through all the obstacles. Since Inka's story revealed the most identity doubts, we will explore it next.

Previously, I showed how Inka gained self-confidence by going against her perceived expectations and carried out a task *her way*. Through that experience, Inka's own way gained a boost and further flourished in her MA thesis work, which she considered one of the most rewarding works. Pointing to her visualization, she showed how the three following years after her graduation created an upswing in her story, and then the curve began to go down (Figure 53). The rising curve has its peak point in an artist residence period Inka spent abroad. During this upswing period, Inka created and started to manufacture one of her own designs. She considered this design significant since it has provided her money and the ability to decline the sort of jobs or tasks that she would not enjoy so much.

Figure 53. The time when Inka was 'fed up' with design and then got her inspiration back.

What made the curve turn down at this phase of her life? The declining curve starts with two simultaneous projects for two different companies. Even though these experiences were inspiring and great learning experiences for Inka, she also felt that she was in a hurry, had a lot of pressure to achieve the goals, and did not have as much time as she would have wanted to have to complete the designs. She mentioned that one of the reasons why she enjoyed her MA thesis work was that she had time to fully concentrate on it.

The declining curve continued with the mark of a grant, a one-year scholarship, which Inka considered to be a significant recognition. However, at that time she was not able to utilize the grant in a useful way. Instead, she felt that the grant contributed to the declining curve, making her more passive and uninterested in design. Consequently, the next mark on the Visual Narrative reads: '*This time I was fed up with design*'. Inka said that it during this period that she pondered whether she wants to do design at all, and if so, what was the way that she would like to do it. This situation can be defined as an identity crisis that caused self-reflection and pushed her to break old perceptions of her own identity and create a new identity definition (Hall 1999: 19-21).

Inka did not explain the period in any greater detail in the workshop. However, outside the workshop she mentioned that she works better when there are limited resources. Then she needs to be creative. Maybe the grant allowed her too much freedom, and she experienced too much pressure to achieve something good, since the design community had rewarded her? Or maybe she felt guilty for getting 'free' money? She had always been the one who makes, works, does – and a lot, and also values concrete work with concrete results. I remember her words from our private discussion: "Things don't come easily. You have to work hard to get results."

When Inka proceeded in her narrative to describe the time when the curve started to ascend again, she talked about a positive realization in a trade show that she visited abroad. She was inspired by what she saw at the show, which made her feel more at ease with design.

> *The design profession is actually quite nice. It is just how you define it.*

This phrase holds a lot of power. It implies that one can define design oneself and that the definition can guide the way one experiences design – and finds or creates one's own position in design. Even though Inka did not speak a lot about the time she was fed up with design, this phrase shows that she was not content with her own internalized perception of what design is. When she broke free of her idea, she felt more free and regained her agency[36] in design.

> *Education is what it is; it is not, as everyone knows, the best thing in the*
> *world. It gives you some skills, but then you study more all the time, learn*

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[36] In addition to McAdam's (1993: 282-287) definition of agency, in this study agency is seen as a concept that refers to the individual's capability to make independent decisions. Agency is affected by the individual's belief system, which has been formed based on her experiences and interaction with others and her environment. McAdams & McLean (2013:234) define agency in the following way: "The degree to which protagonists are able to affect change in their own lives or influence others in their environment, often through demonstrations of self-mastery, empowerment, achievement, or status. Highly agentic stories privilege accomplishment and the ability to control one's fate."

from yourself what is good in it, and what does not feel like you. Personally, I hope that it crystallizes through success and failure. That this is my thing that I like to do this sort of thing, I'm good at this. That is the sort of thing I think that, hopefully, is starting from now on.

At the end of her story, she said that her thing was not crystal clear yet, but that she now knew the direction and was working towards finding out the things she really wants to do, *her things*, which she likes to do among other *makers*.

5.7.2 Trust and Uncertainty

Trust as a theme came through the stories implicitly. It was not directly referred to, but it existed there, at the core of the stories, giving a tone to the storytelling. All the designers worked hard to gain experience and gain trust in their abilities, but their expression of these experiences in the stories differed. Some stories featured a more critical and worried approach, whereas others reflected adjustment and a taking-it-easy attitude. This taking-it-easy attitude did not appear as carelessness, but rather as doing good work but not stressing too much about it. Hard work and self-doubt seemed to result in a stronger identity crisis, whereas a more easy-going attitude kept the focus on the present and the work at hand, not on worrying about the future.

Bayles & Orland (2001: 2) state that "Making art now means working in the face of uncertainty; it means living with doubt and contradiction, doing something no one much cares whether you do, and for which there may be neither audience nor reward." This rather demanding challenge seems to ask for intrinsically driven motivation and a commitment to work for the work itself (ibid.; Sennett 2008: 20, 27). In relation to the formation of professional identity, it seeks internal commitment, a drive that guides a person from within and brings commitment and self-trust to the situations of interaction.

Even though Bayles & Orland are artists and the quote refers to art, design as a domain has similar challenges: the need to do new things, invent and create. All the design entrepreneurs studied come from fields where artistic, personal expression has traditionally been valued greatly. At the artistic end of the design axis, where one's own vision and creativity plays a strong role, the creative process may be lonely and require a strong commitment to overcome internal and external doubts and criticism. This calls for internal trust, self-trust that is independent of others, even though others are needed to mirror ideas, learn from and lean on every now and then.

Bayles & Orland (2001: 3) continue by suggesting that "Becoming an artist consists of learning to accept yourself, which makes your work personal, and

in following your own voice, which makes your work distinctive." This suggestion of self-acceptance is in line with McAdams' (1993: 37, 195-221) idea of mature identity. When we can look at our stories with acceptance and cherish all that has happened and also accept conflicts as part of our story, our identity becomes more integrated. This task is not easy, since we all have parts that are harder for us to accept and cherish. The task calls both for self-reflection skills, the courage to face our past selves, personal fears and doubts and then to embrace them – and continue working despite our fears. Self-reflection alone is difficult and painful. Facing oneself requires courage and the capability to process the variety of emotions that may arise when we see ourselves doing things that we are not proud of. Fear, at its worst, can prevent us from pursuing our dreams, and even stop dreaming altogether. From the point of view of creating one's own way, this would leave most or all of our potential unused.

Bayles & Orland (2001) note that what prevents artists from working on their art is either their fear about themselves or their fears about others – or both.

> *Fears about yourself prevent you from doing your best work, while fears about your reception by others prevent you from doing your own work (ibid.: 23)*

This implies that we should embrace our fears and weaknesses and turn them into sources of strength (see also Bayles & Orland 2001: 4) – and occasionally stop thinking about what others think about what we do. To follow this approach in design would require high agency, strong trust and high self-awareness and self-confidence – which according to Mead (Strauss 1956: 79) is the awareness of the dynamics between I and ME as part of self. It would call for trust both in oneself and trust in others no matter how they receive and respond the work. Ultimately, this trust would signify trust in life in general: that everything will turn out fine, and I have the freedom to be who I am, unique and personal. This type of trust in the data was seen in relation to one's own intuition – or self – as in Veera's case, or trust in life in general – meaning the belief that things turn out fine – as the tone of most of the stories implied. If this trust is missing, repairing it might be a longer process and require support in the form of therapy or counselling – or lead the person to continually give up or underachieve.

Trust in one's own professional abilities and competence, on the other hand, is something that can be supported in design education. The student can be supported to find her way and strengthen her agency by accepting and valuing the student (Smith 2002: 221), and providing support and freedom

in a respectful and constructive dialogical interaction (Vehviläinen 2014). However, in design, unlike in, for example, mathematics, there are no absolute right or wrong answers (Cross 2011; Lawson 2005, 2004). This ambiguous nature of design makes holistic supervising and teaching difficult from the point of view of the student's personal identity development. Even though design can be taught, design students and designers have to find their own ways within design – and most of this work is dependent on the designer herself. This combination of freedom and responsibility causes both excitement and doubt and asks for a high tolerance of uncertainty.

5.7.3 Managing Uncertainty

The creative domain is anything but easy and certain. Referring to several studies, Rosalind Gill and Andy Pratt have described creative work in the following way: "a preponderance of temporary, intermittent and precarious jobs; long hours and bulimic patterns of working; the collapse or erasure of the boundaries between work and play; poor pay; high levels of mobility; passionate attachment to the work and to the identity of creative labourer (e.g. web designer, artist, fashion designer); an attitudinal mindset that is a blend of bohemianism and entrepreneurialism; informal work environments and distinctive forms of sociality; and profound experiences of insecurity and anxiety about finding work, earning enough money and 'keeping up' in rapidly changing fields" (Gill & Pratt 2008: 14). This implies that creative work calls for strong, consistent motivation and, as noted above, a high tolerance for uncertainty.

From the point of view of finding one's own way there is no other person than the person herself that can ever know exactly what is – or feels like – her way. Others may make insightful notions regarding her skills, competence, tendencies, or person, but no-one else can create the way she has to make for her. This responsibility and relative freedom to create one's own way is uncertain by nature. In hindsight, anything and everything has been an act in own way, since that way was taken and no other way was chosen. However, the choices made might not have been in line with one's own wishes and goals, or not even conscious or independent choices. They might have been reactions or responses to expectations in the lack of or wish for the rise of personal vision.

The design entrepreneurs studied experienced uncertainty in a conflicting manner. It was felt to be frightening, since the future could not be foreseen, but also inspiring, since it provided freedom and excitement. This excitement was clearly expressed by Veera after she was once again faced by the unknown.

> *Then it happened again, that 'What will I do next year?' And then the grant came! Wow, I can continue! And I don't really know much forward from this point [laughs]*

Even though a tolerance for uncertainty is regarded as a positive capability in design, it can also be seen as reluctance to set definite plans or goals, since that sort of planning would be considered non-creative (Taylor & Littleton 2012: 62). This resonates well with the idea of how to overcome a critical point in the creative process: to continue working despite the uncertain situation without committing to any specific result (see Chapter 7.5). Even though this uncertain phase is acknowledged as part of the creative process, uncertainty in general is more often felt to be negative than positive. Uncertainty may cause anxiety, confusion and lack of confidence (Anderson 2006). However, tolerance of uncertainty and the ability to bear the emotions that it gives rise to is one key to learning and tying in the new information with pre-existing knowledge (Anderson 2006).

Long-lasting uncertainty may lead to an identity crisis. Jiro's and Inka's stories revealed a type of period of identity negotiations that were described as 'negative'. However, these periods have been significant and caused deep reflection on the designer's own way. As an outcome of these reflective epochs, both designers reflected on their own ways in a similar manner, emphasizing the power that everyone has in defining design and doing design.

> *Finding your own way (…), in what phase you then realize that the question is about yourself, and accept that nothing else matters.*

Jiro's and Inka's stories tackled the power that one has over one's thinking and approach, thus both referred to agency. However, in practice, having strong agency when faced by all the internal and external pressure is not that easy. We need support to hold on to what we think is our way. It is rarely crystal clear for us, and we need other people to say what is specific in us, how they see us. This came through in each story.

Uncertainty in design can be truly painful, even devastating. When you try to bring a new thing into the world, and your thing is so raw that it is hard to explain, it is also hard to find support for it. The only thing that can be supported then is you as a person – without any proof of what you are planning to do. This describes the challenges for design educators, who try to find ways to support different students in finding their own voice and way without any proof of the future. At the same time, this challenge is an honourable task. We can also learn to see the beauty of uncertainty, as the things unfold in their own way. This approach that values presence in this exact moment may bring

some magic to our everyday searches and discoveries in this world, where each of us seeks her own way and place.

5.8 Significant Experiences in Design Paths

The design entrepreneurs' stories revealed some experiences that most of the participants considered significant in the formation of their design paths, such as acceptance to design school, feedback from peers and design educators, exhibiting and belonging to the design community. The role of belonging to a community and having a good relationship with teachers have been regarded as significant factors in learning and creating a professional identity in previous research, too (Nasir & Cooks 2009). Positive relationships with other community members increase connection to the practice (ibid: 47). These aspects highlight the role of social interaction in identity formation.

The stories also revealed unique experiences that helped the designers in finding own voices and their own way in design. These experiences, such as the feedback Inka received in the student café from her peer or Sofia's insight in the situation where her teachers shared opposite opinions, became meaningful moments that the participants returned to in their narrations after many years. These moments can be considered turning points in the sense that they influenced the participants' self-esteem and courage to do things in their 'own way'.

Even though the main idea of the *Significant Experiences* workshop was to identify which experiences the participants considered most significant, it became clear that these experiences and their interpretation is intertwined with the created narrative and the way it is structured and presented. This insight directed the attention of the study towards the form and expression of the narratives and what they revealed about their authors independent of the content of the experiences they had chosen for their narratives. These factors, such as agency and communion, intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, and narrative tone were interpreted by looking at both the content of the experience and the way the experience was presented as well as its link to the whole story of the person. To give an example, Veera, who tied the motivation to become a designer to her childhood, appeared highly motivated throughout her story and spoke with an assuring narrative tone. All these features, in addition to the words she repeated in her story and how she defined herself directly, influenced the interpretation of her story as agentic and intrinsically motivated.

The narrative tones can be linked to the level of reflection in the narratives. Inka's confessional tone revealed negative phases and some reflection

on how these phases had affected her, whereas Annika's mostly descriptive story correlated with her stating narrative tone. Annika's visualization did not have negative words, whereas Inka's narrative included both challenges and successes in both the visual and spoken stories.

The narratives presented were created with the help of cues that helped the narrative making but also directed their making (Kosonen 2011a). Since Erika did not use cues in her narrative and her story did not bring out fields or areas that the other narratives did not touch upon, it can be concluded that the cues did not distort the narratives remarkably. However, Erika's narrative was the most reflective; thus, I decided to omit the cues from the *My Story* workshop, which is discussed in the next chapter. The narratives formed around significant experiences with the help of the few given guidelines (see Chapter 3.2.2) seemed to function well in framing the narrative; hence, I held onto those guidelines as part of the Visual Narrative method.

DESIGN
STUDENTS'
STORIES:
MY UNIVERSE,
MY OWN THING

I noticed that in the end the most important thing is that you enjoy what you are doing. And then, like, the rest comes itself, sort of naturally.

Oliver

6 Design Students' Stories: My Universe, My Own Thing

This chapter continues the study of narratives and identity in design via the stories of design students. The main aim of this chapter is to show how the design students studied have started to create and negotiate their developing professional identities. In line with the previous chapter, this chapter, too, concentrates on the most significant experiences and proceeds chronologically from childhood to the moment of the presentations. However, this chapter focuses on individual stories instead of similar experiences across participants. The students' stories are presented individually, since as individual stories they allow the examination of the development of each story separately. To show the strategies and approaches each student has, the stories have been compared to one another. Comparison helps in showing the differences and commonalities in each story.

6.1 Stories by Five Design Students

The analysed visual and spoken narratives come from five international design students – Emilio, Monika, Yvette, Oliver and Lauretta [37] – who participated in the *My Story* workshop in Italy in 2011. In this workshop, they created and presented Visual Narratives and Installations about their significant experiences. The workshop and the creation of the narratives are presented in detail in Chapter 3.

The participants had their previous education in different design fields, such as Industrial Design and Applied Art and Design. Their ages varied between 21 and 27. They had participated in the DEE course at Aalto University earlier during the same year and thus knew one another. Some of them had also studied in the same school before coming to Aalto, or lived together during their studies. Due to these close relationships, the stories were also more personal and revealing than those of the design entrepreneurs.

In comparison to the previous chapter, the analysis has stronger dialogue between the visual elements and the spoken stories. This has been possible due to the rich visualizations and longer and richer storytelling that the *My Story* workshop allowed. The workshop lasted three days, and encouraged the participants to tackle identity questions through various exercises and discussions. The Visual Narratives were made without cues, thus the results were more diverse than in the *Significant Experiences* workshop (see also Kosonen

[37] The real names have been changed to pseudonyms.

2011a). *My story* narratives better reflected the way their makers thought, constructed, and presented complex entities. Due to the intensive and longer workshop and freedom in constructing the visualizations, the narratives were more detailed and carefully crafted than the visualizations made by the design entrepreneurs presented in the previous chapter.

The narratives have been titled according to the main characters, such as "Dynamic Agent" and "Sensitive, Analytical Traveller" that have emerged from the stories. The analysis contains a reconstruction of the stories, in which the emphasis of each story has been carefully selected by analysing the stories individually before comparing them to one another. Each individual narrative begins by first presenting the Visual Narrative and continues by elaborating on narrative identity through both the constructed visual and spoken narratives. Four of the narratives are introduced and discussed as pairs before and after their individual presentation to illustrate similar and contrasting factors that became visible when the stories were compared to one another.

The emphasis of visuals in the following reconstructions depends on how informative the visuals are in comparison to the spoken account. The first story, Emilio's narrative, relies mostly on the spoken account, whereas the third story by Yvette builds strongly on the Visual Narrative. From the point of view of the insights each story gives regarding the developing design identity, both data – visual and spoken – are examined as equally important sources.

As in the previous chapter, the words and phrases that are direct expressions of the participants are written in *italics* with single quotes, such as '*a really nice person*', in the main text. Longer extracts are presented as indented italicised text. The stories were originally spoken or written in English and the extracts have been only slightly modified for clarity of language.

6.2 Seeds for Creative Identity

In comparison to the entrepreneurs' stories, the students' stories revealed more childhood experiences. Some childhood experiences had influenced the participants strongly. The influence of these experiences could be seen later in the story as if some of these experiences had formed a supporting structure of how to face the world or its challenges. The support received as a child could be seen as self-support as an adult. Also, the environment in which the participant had lived was transferred to adulthood in the form of what way of living felt familiar. One thing that stood out clearly is that those who had been supported by their parents allowed more room for exploration and creativity

in their lives. This *creative early environment* (Taylor & Littleton 2012:48[38]) was significant, as can be seen in most of the stories.

Each narrative had its starting point in the protagonist's childhood that provided a setting for the birth of the story. Childhood is also the time when the narrative tone is born (McAdams 1993: 47-53). Our sense of stories and storytelling and our identity and identification starts in our childhood, when we interact with our caregivers (McAdams 1993). We are exposed to several stimuli and experiences, of which we remember and pick up some to the stories we create of ourselves. McAdams (1993:227) notes that

> *We recast and revise our own life stories so that the past is seen as giving birth to the present and the future, and so that beginning, middle, and end make sense in terms of each other.*

The past gives meaning to the present and the present is explained in the light of the past (Bruner 2004). In a similar way, the students selected some events and experiences from their childhood that they considered meaningful for their design-oriented stories. They located the starting points of their design paths in these events.

All the students referred to hands-on activities as positive, joyful experiences in their childhood. Furthermore, everyone spoke about their relatives, whose influence could also be seen later in the stories. To give an example, Emilio explained how he liked acting and playing with modelling clay as a child. He spoke about his grandmother's influence, since he spent a lot of time with his granny, who used to draw a lot. He also mentioned how his parents supported him, for instance, when he wanted to go abroad or needed to make a difficult decision.

Oliver and Lauretta, who expressed a strong passion for artistic activities throughout their stories, said that their childhood had included emotionally strong experiences. These experiences pushed Oliver to create his own world by drawing and Lauretta to crave for hands-on work with ceramics. These passions and experiences will be explored later in this chapter. However, first we start with Emilio's and Monika's stories, which I have named 'Dynamic Agent' and 'Collaborative Maker'.

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[38] Taylor & Littleton (2012: 48) have found three key repertoires in their study about art college students' early influences. These key repertoires are 'prodigiousness', 'creative early environment' and 'creative inheritance'. Prodigiousness refers to 'always' doing enjoyable creative things as children. Creative early environment refers to childhood, where family members were encouraging of creative activity, either directly or indirectly (via their own creative activity). Creative inheritance refers to the talent of one's own parents or family members that is passed down to the child.

6.3 Dynamic Agent and Collaborative Maker

Emilio's and Monika's paths crossed in Aalto ARTS, where they were both exchange students as part of the MEDes (Master of European Design) programme. I have chosen to present these stories together, since their orientation is different in the axis of agency and communion (McAdams 1993: 133-161). Both students are agentic in the sense that they have high self-esteem and are proactive; however, the way they speak about themselves differs in the way that they position themselves in relation to others. Emilio's story features strong, uncompromising agency, whereas Monika emphasizes the role of collaboration and social interaction. These orientations between agency and communion will be discussed further after the discussion on the stories (see 6.4).

6.3.1 Dynamic Agent in the Search for Unconventional Design

Emilio named his narrative '*My Universe*' (Figure 54). His story proceeded from the biggest and most external yellow circle, which represents his childhood and youth, to the smallest blue circle that represents the moment he told the story. He placed himself in the middle at the red spot. When I asked how the visualization would look like in 3D format, he explained that the construction would be a pyramid, and those events that took place in his early years would form the basis for the construction. However, at the moment that he told the story, the most important things for him were the events closest to him in the smallest circle.

6.3.1.1 Intriguing Unconventionality

Emilio did not consider the pre-assignment important, and he had not used it much before the workshop. He started his story by speaking of his interests as a child, such as playing with Lego™, creating things with modelling clay, cooking, acting and creating stories. He emphasized the role of acting and storytelling, and how this interest still prevailed, for instance, in making presentations later as an adult.

Emilio's granny was the only artistic person in the family, and staying close to her had influenced him. One of the yellow circles symbolizes his grandmother:

> *She was drawing all the time so I was watching her drawing and she had like something special that she was drawing so well and when she died and she had*

Figure 54. Emilio's Visual Narrative. See Appendix E7 for a larger image.

> *a bad disease and she could not do anything but the only thing she could do*
> *was drawing*

The second, orange circle of symbols starts with a picture that resembles the decision about which school to go to. Emilio elaborated on his decision in the following way:

> *So the reasons why maybe I chose design [was] I was good in drawings,*
> *technical drawings at school and everyone was saying that I could be an*
> *architect. So when you're... too many people are telling you would be an*
> *architect you would be an architect you start to think that that's the way and*
> *your direction.*

Emilio's quote is a good example of how identity is formed in interaction with others (Eteläpelto 2009: 97). Others' views effect how we see ourselves. Emilio's story showed that he had later become aware of the significance of

others' opinions in life transitions, even if at that time he was not aware of this impact.

One important person for Emilio was his high school professor. Emilio described this person as '*a really nice person*' who had had a strong influence on him both as a person and due to his approach in design.

> *I really loved how he was so I think [he] influenced me... the way of thinking influenced me somehow I think cannot explain how but he was somehow unconventional and I like the unconventional things.*

The design exhibitions in Milan had made a similar type of impact on Emilio, who got inspired by unconventional things that were *something new*.

> *Wow! I would like the same, to create something strange and different*

Design as a field seemed to match with Emilio's wishes. His choice to study design came closer when at the orientation in school he saw a presentation about design. The presentation showed how within design one could design anything and everything from a USB stick to a car.

> *...so you can design the world... you can do whatever you want. So I like this kind of flexibility... so it's not well defined but... can go [in] any direction*

Here, we start to notice that from the beginning of Emilio's study path he has been fascinated by unconventionality, flexibility and a wide range of possibilities. The variety of options, which could bewilder someone else, motivates and inspires him.

At the very same time that Emilio made the decision to apply to study design he, however, considered another very different option:

> *I had just [a] completely crazy idea to leave everything, and I was thinking to start to study to become a priest. So it was something completely far away from then with what I wanted to do, because then after some weeks everything passed from my mind (...) In that moment I was being so unsure about everything that I was considering every possibility. I was feeling so insecure about the decision.*

This served for Emilio also as a backup plan, in case he did not pass the test. He considered theology, since one of his friends had started to study this field and explained how that fulfilled him. However, he got in to the design school and the idea of going for theology never came up again in his story.

6.3.1.2 Harsh Critique and Big Decisions

Emilio was accepted by a scientific-technological university to study design. However, his studies did not begin in an encouraging way. Emilio had visualized this experience by writing '*SHIIIT!*' on top of a drawn paper note (Figure 55). He described how he experienced the mentality at his university in the following way:

> Many times they were telling you that what you were doing is just shit. And it's not so nice that if you just start the university and you already feel insecure, and the people that are judging you in a such a strong way, and you are wondering if this is my direction or not, if everyone is so aggressive with me

Hard, and even hurtful criticism is common and assumed to be beneficial in creative fields (Taylor & Littleton 2012: 61). Critique itself broadens one's view of one's work to include other perspectives, but the brutality of the critique makes wonder whether it truly works as well as constructive feedback. After her story, Erika, one of the design entrepreneurs discussed in Chapter 5, gave an example of brutal

Figure 55. The experience of being judged unconstructively

critique that in her opinion was given to test the person and his strength to bear it. This seems like a valid idea but nonetheless questionable, knowing how many students quit or stop working in a creative career because they have been put down and discouraged.

Emilio was about to quit the university after the first year. However, two people made him change his mind. One of these significant people was his father, who had always supported Emilio, and the other one, his friend. Here we can see how critical feedback affected a new student, but the opinions of significant others' had still more power in his decision-making.

Emilio continued his studies, but his perception of design was in flux and he explained how he returned to the question 'What is design? ' over and over again (see also Figure 61), since his university was a '*technical school*' but there were '*artistic people*'. The direction of the faculty was unclear for him, as well as his own perception of art in his identity.

I think I am artistic in the mind but not maybe in the way I am, really, I'm not an artist.

The data does not reveal what kind of person Emilio thinks an artist is, but he distinguishes between *being an artist* with *having an artistic mind*. He can identify with the latter, but not with the former. This self-defining act is essential in a creative field. A self-definition as an artist, craftsman or designer instantly gives different assumptions on what is expected from you.

As Emilio's studies continued, he started to find courses he liked, such as anthropology, which is not a design

Figure 56. A fragment of Emilio's Visual Narrative. On the left, the arrow symbol refers to the situation when Emilio was considering choices on what to study. The two other symbols illustrate significant people for him.

field as such. He mentioned thinking back to the course and his insights on that many times afterwards, since he found the ideas in the course very useful and gained *a new way of thinking.*

> *I like to imagine design like a diamond with many faces, and the more faces there are in the diamond, like, it's a good design.*

Emilio's presentation proceeded by describing the visualized circles until he came to a significant turning point in his life. This insight made him '*change his universe perspective*'. He had his '*coming out*' with his first boyfriend, which he considers to be the most significant moment in his life so far (see Figure 56).

> *I realized that if you are not sure about yourself, about your personality, then you cannot be sure about anything. (...) That was good for me to understand that for myself so what I wanted, and it was crazy how that was like a big bang moment where everything became clear.*

For Emilio, revealing his sexual identity helped him to become more confident in himself also in other fields in life. He was able to put himself in the middle of his life story, without hiding in the shadows. This choice required courage, but was rewarded with higher self-esteem.

6.3.1.3 Self-Esteem Rising

Emilio travelled abroad for two months in between the second and third year at the university. The trip gave him '*a new way of seeing*', and he also decided to broaden his experiences in design and apply for a MEDes programme. The green circles (see Figure 54) illustrate what Emilio gained during his MEDes experience. First, he started a new significant relationship; second, he became more sure about himself.

> *I did not care about what the professors or the other people were thinking, so if there are ten people thinking in one way and I think in other way, I just think that way and I don't try to be influenced like I was until that point, so I just wanted to go to my direction.*

This comment shows how Emilio's agency had become much stronger. He started to make his own way in design, trusting in his thoughts and ideas instead of being directed in the way others suggested. His experiences abroad also made him reflect on his home country, and the significance for him of his nationality and home country, which he had not considered meaningful before, but rather just as a '*geographical division*'.

The last, smallest blue-coloured circle (see Figure 54) started with a description of *an area of design* or a *way of teaching* that *gave him nothing* in the following way.

> *It's just words, words or fried air like we say (...) let's say that MEDes made me more critical, so I know what I want to listen and what I don't want to listen (...) and now coming back to my home university we were listening to some professors that they are speaking and making research and things that doesn't give anything, so I think if you are a professor or if you are a researcher and you research for ten years and then you are not able in one hour to give at least anything interesting what you have done in ten years, I think there is nothing. So it's like, I don't want to listen to that, I just want to go to another direction and not things that are not interesting for me.*

Emilio continued by contrasting this new approach with the one he had had during his first study year when he was taking notes of things he didn't find interesting:

> *At that time I couldn't understand which were the differences. Now I know more what I want and what I don't want.*

When criticising teaching, Emilio spoke more with an astonished and objective than judging voice. He noted that now he can choose what he wants to listen to, but realized also that now he might have taken his attitude a bit too far towards the other end, previously being at the other extreme where he let others influence him a lot. Now, he was also more aware of his own genuine interests, which led him to quicker decision making. So he was sort of acting as a critical gatekeeper for the influences the world provides him with. He also showed strong willpower and the capacity to direct his psychic energy where he wanted. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1993/2006: 114), this will make him a powerful guide in finding his own path. Csikszentmihalyi proposes that that the central image of one's self is formed by those things on which we focus most of our psychic energy (ibid.).

6.3.1.4 Focus at This Moment and His Own Capacity

The blue symbols in the closest circle are topics that Emilio was interested in at the time of his presentation. Emilio spoke relatively long about the topic he was interested in having for his MA thesis at the end of his story. His installation task was also related to his current interest, instead of a past experience that the others used according to the suggestion I had made. This focus on the current moment seems to be very typical for him. He did not seem to use too much energy in reflecting on the past, even though his way of speaking reflects his capability to integrate many events together as a whole story where the pieces of the puzzle fit together and give meaning to his actions now.

In comparison to the other participants, Emilio had a distinctive approach and rhetoric. He emphasized very strongly the significance of new, undiscovered viewpoints. Emilio used the verb '*create*' very frequently and the adjective '*unconventional*' repeatedly. Emilio's story continually tackled the question of finding one's own way. He also seemed to take risks and repeatedly seek his way out of his comfort zone. This attitude is also recognizable in the way he responded to the given visualization assignment. Instead of making a timeline, which three of the five students did, he wanted to present his experiences in a visualisation that he called his universe. When he explained the structure of the visualization, he referred to the time when people discovered that it is not the sun that circulates around the world but vice versa. He linked the idea of our solar system with the sun in the middle to his experience of putting himself in the centre of his life after years of not having done so.

> *...now because I feel in the middle, I just decided to use this kind of way to present.*

During his study time, Emilio had become a very agentic and intrinsically motivated person. The development from a passive and receptive first year student into a self-motivated, self-managing final year student can be seen very clearly in his narrative. His story illustrated a true desire for exploration and self-expression, and he seems to have already taken a position against conventional and obvious thinking. He seems to be sort of fearless and even confrontational if that makes him understand more and develop his professional competence.

Emilio's story includes elements of good self-awareness and self-reliance, which are important for design students that aim to develop a design practice around their own interests and unique vision (Winters 2011: 90-91). These skills contribute to the self-management that is required to create and sustain a creative practice (ibid.)

6.3.2 Collaborative Maker

Next, we will explore Monika's story to give another example of a student that also expressed strong self-esteem and a passion for design. However, in her story collaboration and communal aspects received more emphasis than in Emilio's story. In addition, Monika referred to hands-on work frequently. Because of these aspects, I have named her story the story of a Collaborative Maker.

6.3.2.1 Organized but Open to Changes

Monika named her visualization a '*timeline*' (Figure 57). She started by explaining how she has structured her presentation and how she utilized the pre-assignment as a guiding tool to make the visualization, basing it on the reflective work she did during the pre-assignment. The pre-assignment thread was drawn horizontally in the middle of the paper to show the knots she had tied in the thread. The drawn knots were different and became stronger at the end of the visualization, since she remembered the events in the near past more clearly.

Monika's Visual Narrative is organized chronologically, starting from childhood on the left. On the bottom of the paper, there are the names for the different periods in her life, such as '*childhood*' and '*Paris*'. In the middle, she has drawn small drawings of memories and events. The drawings become richer in detail the further up they are. The top of the paper consists of coloured notes that relate to her emotions and feelings and are also less time-framed than the lower visualizations.

The Visual Narrative is two pieces of paper taped together, since the first paper ran out. Despite the unintended break in the paper, Monika found this

Figure 57. Monika's Visual Narrative. The sticky notes she used have directly influenced her visualization technique. See Appendix E8 for a larger image.

coincidence logical for the story, since the first part of the paper happened to end with an experience that was one turning point in her life. Hence, the break came to represent this turning point in her story.

6.3.2.2 The Enjoyment of Making Crafts

Monika's first memory was related to hands-on work. She explained that her parents had a metal processing company where they worked a lot with their hands. Her father liked making things by hand and included his children in his making activities in an engaging way. She received a knife from her parents at an early age, which encouraged her to start to work with wood. Monika described how she was '*interested and excited*' as a child, '*active*' and '*creative*'.

> *My dad was like really into do-it-yourself as well, doing things at home, so we would always, like, do everything together. (...) He was just showing us everything, like, literally everything that he's doing (...) We made this little dog hut, and that was something really satisfying to me, because we designed it in a way that we thought how it would look like and does it work (...) I was really fascinated about the thing that you can make something by hand.*

> *I liked to sit in the garden just carving wood. (...) What came out in the end was totally crap, like, it did not look like anything at all, but I had this one piece of wood that I found and it just looked like a whale to me, so I said this is a whale, so then I just carved a bit more and I said, 'Look it's alive'. I like this idea of using imagination, which every child does obviously, but using hands to make it work.*

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When Monika was in high school, she was interested in the afternoon courses, at which she would learn new craft skills, such as how to do silk paintings and wood weaving. She described how she enjoyed the making activity, not particularly developing the skill itself.

> *I enjoyed them but not because I wanted to become perfect in them; like, I did not want to get perfection in a craft, I just like the way of exploring new fields.*

This enjoyment of experimentation and exploration can be seen throughout Monika's story. The experiences in Monika's childhood formed the basis for her enjoyment in making. We can see that Monika's narrative tone is positive, and she ties making activity to positive memories from her childhood. Her orientation towards experimentation and exploration could be also seen during the DEE course when she manipulated wood with different techniques.

6.3.2.3 Business or Design?

Another significant experience in Monika's childhood relates to creativity and business. She was 10-12 years old when she was selling paintings to her family on a birthday party.

> *I had a deal with my cousin and I was sitting in the backroom drawing new paintings and he would go out and sell them. I'm not joking, I mean I studied design and he studies business now. And he was like my best friend, and I don't know it was like you would go out like selling them for me like cheap price and I would like really cheap. Then he'd come back and we'd share the money (…) But we were young so it was, like, super exciting.*

This experience relates to the first major turning point in Monika's story, when she needed to decide between design and business. She mirrored her thoughts on her older sisters' decisions, of which the oldest had chosen a creative field and the middle one the path of business engineering.

> *I was kind of this, like, the young girl, like, the youngest of three and I kind of had to decide where I want to go, and I was really, like, I could feel at this moment that I was stuck in between in a situation that shall I go more to this direction or should I go to more on this, because if I go creative I obviously I have to find something by myself, if I go to business I can maybe take care of my parents' company, which they always like asked me, I mean they never forced me it was, like, you know, this is an alternative for you, I mean I'm still creative and you're like… good at what you're doing if you want to study engineering or something or business or it would be a possibility.*

Monika saw the options that her sisters and parents had chosen as possible 'walked paths' from which she could choose (Figure 58). She had also an option to continue her parents' work. These options provided 'safe' possibilities, since she would have role models and support in each path.

Monika decided to give business school a try, but after just one year realized that it was not the right way for her:

Figure 58. Extract from Monika's Visual Narrative. The red arrows and text illustrate her choice between business and design.

> *I was quite good in the school,*
> *like, in a way of grades, but I*
> *realized instantly like after one year, like ok this is good but this is not what I*
> *want to do. So I mean I had to decide which way to go, but actually going to*
> *make the decision to change to a business school was exactly the right thing at*
> *the moment, because it made me realize like this is not what I want to do.*

Studies at the business school helped her realize relatively soon that this direction did not suit her. The way she spoke about this past experience gave the impression that she could easily justify her choice afterwards, and take it as a revealing exploration that made her realize what she did not want to do. In other words, she was able to integrate the experience at the business school as a constructive part of her story. This example was one of many that showed how Monika allowed herself explorations to find her way. One possible opposite reaction could have been to feel sorry for the 'lost year' or view it as a 'mistake' if she were not able to look at her past in a constructive way.

After Monika had realized that business school was not for her, but she could not yet apply for another school, she became involved with a magazine the school produced once in year. With enthusiasm, she described how they were able to make *a 'really amazing magazine'* and how she enjoyed research and making articles for the publication. This shows Monika's capacity to look for opportunities within an environment in which she did not want to continue her path.

However, she also mentioned feeling confused and hesitant on which way to go. To embrace this uncertainty, Monika went abroad and travelled for a year.

It was bit like Emilio said, just to get your head free (…) I wanted to just like to explore and then find out what I wanted to do (…) (I had) a camera and I just snapshotted everything I could find in my way, and I had so much fun. I really liked this way of seeing the world, and seeing materials and people.

After the year abroad, Monika had still doubts on what to do next. To become aware of what she wanted to do, Monika '*talked to a lot of people*' and went to an art school that offered courses in drawing and sculpting. However, the courses were not what influenced Monika most; instead, it was the dialogue with people she encountered.

There were young people that tried to make their portfolios for the universities and I talked to a lot of people and that was actually the point

She realized that she was very interested in materials and structures and considered product design to be an educational choice for her. She continued working as a carpenter for half a year and greatly enjoyed this experience, concentrating on the *materiality of things*:

It gave me enjoyment and really, like, I was happy there and I could see, like, doing something with my hands again

Here, we can see Monika's passion for making again, the same thing that pushed her away from business school. In addition, we start to see Monika's main strategy at moments of decisions-making: talking to people.

6.3.2.4 Design! But Not Only in One University.

After becoming even more aware of the enjoyment of hands-on work, Monika applied and got in into Stuttgart Academy of Fine Arts. She listed three reasons for this choice. The first was the realization that she likes the materiality of things, and the second was that it has a close connection to architecture, which she is interested in. The third reason was related to the fact that those five years that she would spend at the university would allow her to travel and see many perspectives.

So after all this finding a new inspiration and different hunches I realized that this is exactly what I need, like, something not being stuck in one university for five years, but having a possibility to go and see different ways of working

…loads of professors are really like narrow minded in a way, but I knew from the beginning that I would be abroad for quite a long time, so this was like

the, I tried to get the best out of it, so in a way by doing all this different… model workshops and everything it was kind of like something, so loads of possibilities to explore different fields of working.

Here, Monika pointed out the significance of exploration and different inputs for her. She continued by explaining that the reason she applied to Paris to one of the MEDes schools was that they had such good workshops, and the people in the school help you to learn to understand different materials.

However, she continued to work in Paris the same way she had worked in Stuttgart until she and her colleagues took part in a competition for Milan and received positive feedback on their designs.

It was the first time I actually had really, we had success; like, people liked our work, which gave me kind of strength to think about, okay, maybe what I'm doing, this is something that other people might really like.

So before I was not just sure, because I had always this kind of like (…) suddenly people really liked it and it was official and it was like, an idea that just came out it was maybe not the best idea ever, but you got feedback, and that was the first time I really got like big feedback from blogs, from magazines (…)

Monika's thoughts link well with the comment Jiro made after participating in an exhibition (see 5.6.2). The fact that the work was *official*, that is, was presented in a Salone Satellite exhibition in Milan where professionals go, had significance in itself. It also made possible the amount of feedback Monika described. Public acknowledgement for a student is a step into the real world, where practitioners test their designs in a similar way.

After one year, Monika returned to her home university and did an experimental bachelor work.

I was like totally experimenting, totally analyzing different movements and different feel, different sequences and everything, so it was very, very free, but I was really confident in a way that I want to do something very experimental.

By now it has become very evident that making, materiality and experimentation are very important to Monika, starting from her early childhood. With the help of this experimentation, Monika expanded her experiences and explored new possible routes. However, explorations also brought challenges along with them, which test the protagonist's strength and skills. Some of these challenges we will explore next.

6.3.2.5 Exploring and Questioning Design

Monika's MEDes studies took her next to Helsinki, Aalto ARTS, where she started to reflect more on design and her approach to it.

> *It was very challenging for myself, because it was the first time when I was really questioning what I was doing and I was having loads of discussions with people, especially with Yvette, since we were living together and we were kind of having like the same background more or less.*

Monika went on, explaining that the experience in Aalto was very different from previous ones, and that now when speaking about the period she realized that it changed how she was thinking considerably (Figure 59).

> *In Taik[39] they're offering you this kind of very, I would really say extreme point of views, like I wrote it here like industrial and strategic design versus fine arts and design, because that's how I felt there, I felt like this is colorization of two directions going on that really are, like I don't want to say fighting, but it felt a bit like it.*

Figure 59. Monika's illustration about the polarities she experienced in Aalto ARTS

Monika referred to one professor whom she felt had a very narrow perspective in design. Monika felt that the professor tried to '*get us all and get us in one direction, get us into, like, his world and his type of seeing things*'. According to Monika, this professor was also making fun of product designers and stressing his own point of view.

> *Ok I understand it's a different point of view, but product designers aren't useless, it's not like, I mean, I kind of had this feeling like I was wrong in these classes, but I learned a lot from it.*
>
> *And then I went to a load of people in Applied Arts and Design and I talked to them and those people were like living in this very funny world having no ground, like nothing, they were like these really funny things, and I asked them*

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[39] Many older Aalto students still refer to Aalto ARTS as TaiK (Taideteollinen korkeakoulu) or UiAH (University of Art and Design Helsinki), even though at the time Monika studied in Helsinki, Aalto University had already been founded. Aalto was founded in 2010.

why are you doing this they were like oh because I like it. I don't know what the use of it is, what is like, where it's going to go in the end, is it going to be sold or is it like an art piece. I talked to a lot of them, not all of them obviously, I am just like going over the top now, but I had this kind of a feeling that I was in between those fronts, but it was super, super interesting to be there, it was super interesting to see those different points of views that I didn't experience before
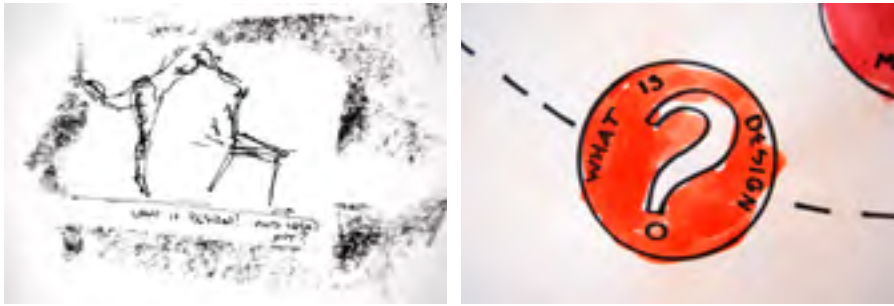
Figure 60-61. Monika (on the left) and Emilio (on the right) questioning design.

In the above, Monika described her experience of the extreme points of views that started to grow in these different faculties within Aalto. She continued to describe the different courses she attended, including theoretical studies and design history, but in the end, however, expressed same confusion (Figure 60) that was visible in Emilio's visualization (Figure 61). Monika had not yet found her thing:

> *But I was still like unsure of where to go and what to do, because I could not place myself in this field.*

The division between the romantic image of a free artist working in her studio that the ceramic design students expressed, and the designer at the service of society that the professor represented, also exists outside universities. Taylor and Littleton (2012: 28-29) discuss studies about creative workers in relation to capitalism. Referring to Adorno's theory of the Culture Industry (ibid. 21, O'Connor 2007) and Mark Banks' study (2007), they point out the same dilemma between the 'slave for industry' and the 'free artist working in her studio'. Furthermore, these conceptions of the artist or creative worker also live in the everyday discussions of our family members that further influence how we position and see creative work and its value as a part of society.

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Towards the end of Monika's studies in Aalto, she attended the Design Exploration and Experimentation course. This experience strengthened her background, product design, once again and her enjoyment of the *physical action of creating things*. Due to this 'realization' she had, she decided to apply for an internship in a furniture design office, which turned out to be a big turning point in Monika's path.

6.3.2.6 Becoming Mistreated as an Intern

So far Monika's story had had a positive, constructive, upbeat tone, but faced with an experience that she did not yet really understand nor had dealt with before, her narrative tone changed. Monika pointed to the seam in her narrative, where she had combined two separate papers. The experience is positioned along the seam of these two papers, which emphasizes its significance in her visual story.

> *And I had a really, really bad time there for four months. I mean, I had a really bad time there because of personal reasons of how I was treated there and how the people there see interns and how they use them, but I learned something out of it.*

Monika's story continued with a detailed description of the challenging and destructive internship experience (Figure 62). She also pointed out good parts of the experience, such as learning to use 3D programs, but even these positive issues had their downside, since the reason she became good at those was that she needed to use them even though no one helped her to learn them.

Figure 62. A detail from Monika's Visual Narrative.

Now I can reflect on this... and afterwards I was talking to so many people... trying to explain them, and while I explained it like [a] hundred times, like, two hundred times, I kind of like could realize what kind of feelings I had and how this infected me, like how this was kind of putting me in this situation that I didn't realize [at] that moment. And I think like that's why this is really packed with emotions as well and there's like... this is like a crash more or less... like an explosion, which really hit me like personally I, because I felt weak, weakness.

I felt lost after a while. I felt the need for trust, because my bosses weren't trusting anyone, and I felt desperate, because I didn't know how to justify or explain myself; they would just not allow any other reasons than theirs. And I felt very abused, because in a way I had to do everything and be there and I would work my head off and they would still complain about something you do, and looking back at it now it's really like frustrating to see and really.... weird as well to see myself in this situation, because I thought always, until this time, I thought I was a strong personality, and [at] this moment I realized I was so weak, and I couldn't do anything against it.

Monika's reflection on the experience was multidimensional and profound, but she still felt confused. In the installation exercise, Monika chose this experience to be visualized, which further emphasized her need to deal with the experience (see Appendix C for the installation).

The depth of her description shows that she has been analysing, discussing and examining her experience from various perspectives. Her vocabulary is rich, her description detailed and her phrases well-formed and deep in the sense that they combine her emotions and position; they situate her in the situation, which she has explored from her side and also tried to see from her employers' side. After trying to solve the situation for four months, she applied to another studio.

6.3.2.7 Continuing on

This new office, where she worked at the time she told the story, had a very different atmosphere. She felt appreciated and she could communicate with people productively. However, Monika could not leave the negative experience aside, since she wanted to *understand* what it was all about. The experience has questioned her perception of people, since she has been mainly surrounded by people who care for her and are a positive influence. After all, talking to people had always been one of her main strategies in decision-making.

But anyway like this line, this is still here and I drew a line over this, because this, because this was a big break for me. And I could actually draw another line here, I hope [Monika draws a horizontal line on the narrative after the internship experience with her finger]

Yeah, I was being naive in a way when I went in there in the office, and then I realized ok, the work is not everywhere like roses. I quit my first job! [people clapping their hands]. Welcome to life!

Monika was asked how she would like to continue from here, and she replied by using the pre-assignment as a metaphoric tool.

I would like to continue, like, having more knots on top of each other (...) So especially instead of those [points at the paper] dead end things like hanging, like those ones, because that is always like a dead end and going back or like a direction change. So instead of this, I would like to have more knots on top of each other.

Monika's story revolved around collaboration and the enjoyment of 'making'. Making with hands and human-material relationship came up repeatedly as a significant factor in her choices. Monika seems to be more intrinsically than extrinsically motivated, since her decision-making in big transitions is based on her own experience of enjoying what she does. Even though the story shows a need for contact with others, it doesn't reveal a strong need for recognition and acknowledgement from outside. Instead, the feeling of connection with other people plays a stronger role. Monika appears as an empathic, constructive collaborator. Her approach is conscientious, and her story features good self-esteem and a steady, secure base that has apparently been formed in her good childhood. Her expression is clear and her story organized, even though it also includes a challenging experience that Monika still has not got over or understood. Due to the negative experience, Monika's narrative tone changes to one a bit more doubtful and hesitant, but her overall approach stays constructive, which she notes herself in her willingness to build a knot on top of a knot.

6.4 Agentic and Communal Characters

McAdams (1993: 133-161) has presented different agentic and communal characters that dominate our life narratives[40]. Agentic characters can be described as ambitious, adventurous and daring, who seek to master, explore and understand. Communal characters in turn are affectionate, warm and kind, and oriented to unite with others in gratifying ways.

When we compare both the presented stories, we can see how Emilio's story features agency, whereas Monika puts great emphasis on activities that feature communion[41] (McAdams 1993: 148-161, 287-291). Emilio has placed himself in the middle, and he enjoys being challenged. Monika enjoys collaboration and tries to negotiate and use diplomacy even when faced by inappropriate behaviour. However, Monika's story also features an agentic character, 'The Maker' (ibid., 144-148).

The Maker is one of McAdam's agentic characters that fits into the context of design in a particular way due to the traditional materiality of design. In the Maker's story, the maker – creator, producer, inventor, entrepreneur, artist or designer – is the key character around which the identity is created (McAdams 1993: 144-148). The character is built around making tangible products, so it is tightly related to the material world and human-material interaction. However, McAdams' Maker character also includes a strong interest in the business world and making profitable work, which is not that apparent in the stories studied (ibid.). What is more visible is the connection to a craftsman who gets his enjoyment of the activity of making something concrete with his hands (Sennett 2008). This emphasis can be seen specifically in Monika's story.

Even though Emilio's story features strong agency, Emilio has not always been strong in agency. During the first years at university, Emilio faced a lot of tough critique, and he explained that he and his schoolmates cried many times in the feedback situations. He, however, managed to survive the criticism and become stronger. Placing himself in the middle and being selective of what he listens to, follows or does, may also be '*in the other extreme*' as he himself recognized. Despite this notion, he seemed to enjoy this agentic po-

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[40] The main characters (that McAdams calls imagoes) in our stories are born when we reconstruct our past and create our narrative. McAdams listed four types of main character: 1) agentic: the warrior, the traveller, the sage, the maker, 2) communal: the lover, the caregiver, the friend, the ritualist, 3) agentic and communal: the healer, the teacher, the counsellor, the humanist, the arbiter and 4) imagoes that are low in agency and communion: the escapist and the survivor. (McAdams 1993: 117-161).

[41] McAdams & McLean (2013:234) define communion as "The degree to which protagonists demonstrate or experience interpersonal connection through love, friendship, dialogue, or connection to a broad collective. The story emphasizes intimacy, caring and belongingness."

sition at the moment. His story expresses a lot mastering and controlling his own way in a quite independent manner.

Monika's story in turn, expresses a great deal of communal motivation. She talks a lot with others, values collaboration, and even her major turning point, a critical experience in the design studio, is built around the theme of sharing and collaboration – in this case, the lack of it. However, despite her ability and joy of working in groups, Monika does not select her way by pleasing others. She seems to be open to different opportunities and new directions, but very quickly recognizes what she likes, and pursues those kinds of activities, which can be seen, for example, in the way she realized that business school was not for her. The main character in Monika's story is communal, but her story also features agency. Her way resembles the way Taylor & Littleton (2012:66) describe creative workers: "whilst doing your own creative work remains an ideal, it is one that is recognized to depend on others".

Let us now return to the design entrepreneurs' stories to reflect on these polarities. We notice differences in agency and communion in those stories, too, even all of them are agentic. For Veera, her own thing was in the centre of her narrative, and it was obvious that in her case this 'own thing' is related to her own (artistic) expression in design. Thus, we can consider the main character in her story to be agentic. Erika, who emphasized the role of other people in her story, could be seen as more communal. However, her decisions seemed to serve her artistic expression and career and personal achievements. Hence, her story is also dominated by agency. Annika spoke more about other people and the significance of collaboration and getting to know people, which together indicate her desire for sharing and involvement instead of concentrating on developing strong artistic self-expression. However, her story did not reveal communal motivations more than the other stories. These findings point to a link between agency and entrepreneurship.

The investigation into narratives continues with Yvette's story, which follows the same agentic main character but with a sensitive, analytical and even poetic twist. Whereas Emilio is strong and direct in his expression, Yvette speaks with a softer voice and with a hint of shyness. These differences in expression also derive naturally from cultural backgrounds.

6.5 Sensitive, Analytical Traveller

Yvette spoke about her Visual Narrative both as a lifeline and timeline. Her Visual Narrative is a network that shows how different experiences are interrelated (Figure 63). Yvette had made a rough timeline at the bottom of the paper that contains different periods in her life from age 0-4 to age 24. However, the

Figure 63. Yvette's Visual Narrative. See Appendix E9 for a larger image.

narrative does not proceed in a strict chronological order. Instead, it proceeds from experience to experience and from place to place. She has divided the experiences so that the more positive experiences are on the top part of the paper and the more negative on the bottom. The most significant experiences are circled.

Yvette has named the experiences from her pre-assignment 'knots' (such as 8th knot: Taking the train to Paris) in the same order they were in the pre-assignment thread (Figure 64). Then she has connected these and other related

Figure 64. Yvette has transferred the significant experiences from the pre-assignment thread as 'knots' to her Visual Narrative.

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Figure 65. Lines of experiences from Yvette's visualization. I created the illustration afterwards as a part of the data analysis.

experiences with different coloured dotted lines. The dotted lines go through the visualization and vary in length and colour. The lines have all different headlines (or meanings) that combine the experiences under the same theme or label. Yvette has defined her 12 lines as: *Making things, Travelling, Confidence, Learning design & my position in design, Around me, Independence, Identity as a designer, Friends, Discovering design, Tools, Going deeper in design, International* (Figure 65). Most of the significant experiences named as knots belong to the following six categories: *Independence, Identity as a designer, Learning design & my position in design, Discovering design, Tools, and Going deeper in design.* All these categories relate to design, independence and identity, all of which connect to the core problem of this study: how to find one's own way in design.

Yvette's categorization implies that she has already analysed things that influence her identity as a designer. This can be also seen in the data from the DEE course that Yvette attended. Her reflection was profound and philosophical (see 7.3.3). Her Visual Narrative shows that she has become aware of how the things and people around her (the categories *Friends* and *Around me*) and the places she lives in or visits (*Travelling* and *International*) influence her identity. Within *Discovering design*, she has pinpointed the first touchpoint as design (2nd knot – a book about design). This category has yellow colour, as do the categories *Tools, Going deeper in design,* and *Learning design & my position as a designer*. These four categories together form a theme with experiences in her visualization that refer to the tools, materials, practices, learning and development in design. Her visualization is well aligned with her story and the experiences she emphasized in her story. Her analytical and observing side is well present in her visualization and gives a special starting point for the analysis of her spoken story in comparison to the other visualizations that did not present a thematic analysis as part of the visualization.

6.5.1 Travelling Already in Mom's Belly

The starting point for Yvette's identity development comes from her childhood setting during which she got considerable exposure to different cultures and atmospheres. Yvette's parents have different nationalities, which gave Yvette dual nationality. This duality could be seen in her story in a way she referred to home and the way her focus changed in different places: in Rotterdam she was socially more active and met friends, and in Paris she concentrated more on doing her own things. However, she couldn't name a place or country where she would feel more *her*.

> *I don't know. I'm always French in Holland and Dutch in France.*

Yvette's parents were travelling when her mom was pregnant with Yvette, so Yvette got used to travelling already as a small child. Her family moved from Europe to Taiwan when she was 4 years old, to North America when she was 7, and back to France when she was 8 years old. From this period, Yvette recalled her first sensory memories as important. She also realized how the environment had impacted on her, and remembered drawing with bright colours in Taiwan.

> *And the smells of the... especially the smells sometimes... also the colours ... I can always remember them. And I see them or if I walk somewhere I can smell something, especially in the Chinese neighbourhood in another city, I can recognize it, it's kind of important to me.*

Yvette was supported in her creative activities, which provided an excellent starting point for finding her own expression by trying out different things.

> *My mom was always encouraging us to create things. Like to draw things, just play and have paper and cardboard; whatever, just do our own thing.*

This childhood setting that supported creativity and contained a lot of travelling and exposure to different cultures created some of the most durable concepts in her identity. This can be seen in Yvette's Visual Narrative that reminds one of a metro map of a metropolitan city.

> *... there's one line, which is actually going all the way and is maybe one of the things which are important in my life. And [it] is actually travelling or living in different places. So I think it's also part of my identity, because I have a French mother and a Dutch father, so I have a double nationality.*

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Even though travelling or double identity do not yet refer to design, Yvette dealt with this dual nationality with a creative act, by making her own clothes and '*trying to find her identity from that'*. It was something that no one else around her did that time, so it gave Yvette a distinct feature that differentiated her from others.

6.5.2 I Just Left Them and I Went to Do My Own Thing

Yvette's first touchpoint with design was a book that she got from her mother. She decided to use the book for a presentation task she needed to make at school. Even though Yvette did not exactly know what design was, she felt drawn to it. Later, when she needed to select which school to go to, she was already oriented towards design, but did not know the route to take to become a designer.

> *I still remember that actually something I was always thinking like I want to do something where I don't feel bored, like I don't have to do the same every day, so not working in an office every day you have the computer. (…) So I… I want to do design, because that's what I always… yeah… have been doing, or something a bit similar. Yeah, I knew I wanted to do design, but I didn't really know where to go for that.*

> *So I already had to choose which direction to go at school, but then I was really good also in maths and physics and everything, so I just decided to do that. So then I would keep like all the opportunities and yeah, so that was yeah I could do it, but I didn't really like it.*

Even though Yvette seemed to be certain of wanting to study design, she continued studying those subjects she was good at in order to maintain the possibility of studying or working in various fields. Furthermore, art provided too narrow and definite a world for her.

> *I thought that maybe if I go to university, I have more chances to study what I want, because it's always possible to study everything with this more technical thing, which is not the case if you take more art there.*

Yvette's strategy at that point was very similar to Oliver's strategy, whose story we will explore in the next section. However, Yvette did not express such a frustration and conflict in her choice than Oliver did. The way Yvette spoke about this choice was a neutral and 'emotion-free' description of a past choice

that is there but never really bothered her, since eventually she chose design and was satisfied with her choice.

In France, Yvette met a friend, who studied design at a university in Paris. This affected Yvette so that when later she applied to study design, she applied to the same place that this person studied at. Yvette badly wanted to get into the university and the admission day has remained blurry in her memory because she had been so nervous. The only thing she could remember was how hard she wanted to go in and that she told the jury she really wants to study at exactly that university.

Strong passion combined with the fear of not being accepted shone through her narrative in a few places. It was present also in the presentation situation at the workshop, where Yvette needed to have a break to calm herself down, since she was speaking so fast. Yvette was nervous because her presentation touched upon personal issues.

Yvette's fears were not realised. She was accepted by the university, and left for France to live alone. This change became one of the most significant experiences in her life.

> *I was already travelling a lot but always with them [her parents], but in that day it was bit like a significant moment, because I took the train alone and I just left them and then I went to do my own thing. And I come from a family where everybody studied law, so they don't really know, like, what I do, they don't really understand it and… I'm just doing my own thing.*

Yvette compared this 'own thing' with what her family members did. Within this family context, 'her thing' differed from the 'others' things', since all the others had studied law. Throughout the narrative, there is a slight flavour of pride in Yvette's choice. She had been able to build a thing outside the main focus of professional interest in the family. She could create a sense of ownership of this field more easily, since she did not have to compete with her family members about her views on art or design. Instead, she had these discussions with others that shared her professional interests.

'Taking the train to do my own thing' became a symbol for this independent act, which makes sense when we look at Yvette's visualization. This experience combines three of the important themes Yvette has pointed out in her visualization. Firstly, she *travelled*, but this time alone (*independence*) towards her dream profession (*design*) that was her intuitive, own choice (*independence*). Each theme points to strong agency (McAdams 1993:133-161) and the desire for ownership of design.

6.5.3 How Do I Differ from These Other Talented Creative Students?

Yvette's narrative shows that she has become aware of how surroundings and things around her influence her. She has become used to changes of environment and people, which has probably also influenced her strong ownership of what she makes and does, to have something solid and stable. This 'own thing' started from creative explorations and inspired her to start to study design.

Before art school, Yvette was perceived as the creative one among her friends. The start of her studies made her feel less confident since, surrounded by other creatives, she was not special in the same sense anymore. This made her feel more insecure and required her to start working harder. At this stage, Yvette's own thing gained a new context in which others had 'own things' that were similar, or even 'better'. She had found her field, within which she needed to start to redefine her own thing to see how it related to others' own things and differentiate it from those in order to maintain the 'own-ness' of it, or *originality, personality, and style*.

Yvette's self-esteem became better after she visited her friends in Edinburgh. The trip made her realize that she missed the 'student life' that she did not really get in Paris. Due to this, she decided to apply for the MEDes programme. However, before she left for Stuttgart, she needed to make a presentation at her home university. Hesitating over her competences, she feared the worst – once again unnecessarily.

> *And I think it was important, because I was very unconfident in Paris, and I was working a lot and not really feeling very good about what I was doing. So I prepared, like, really well for this presentation, and I was like really expecting to get like terrible critiques, because I already had before. (…) And in the end it was really positive so I was not expecting [it] at all so but the teachers told me that, yeah, it's really good the only thing you have to work on is like stop stressing.*

Yvette was interested in hands-on work and experimentation, and she had already become familiar with different materials and techniques in Paris. However, pure experimentation or visual and tangible expression was not enough for her. After leaving for Germany, she wanted to have justifications for her doings.

> *So in Germany I could concentrate more on really experimenting and kind of exploring my own … who I am and what I want to do, because I already got a*

lot of tools in Paris, so it took me a lot of time to learn those tools in Paris. And in Germany I could use them more, like go a bit deeper.

She felt it was important to '*discover herself*' and '*develop her own language*' in design. She, like Emilio, mentioned that she found the Milan fair inspirational, but it also made her question what her input could be, since *there is already so much.*

> *So this was a question which was really important to me, like why am I doing things if there are already so many things around me. So here I was maybe reflecting a little bit about it before, but then I wanted to think more about it. And that's why I actually decided to go to Helsinki. Because they were doing service design and other kinds of design, which don't have so many things like very tangible. So I thought that maybe I want to see why they are doing that and how it works.*

In Helsinki, Yvette did a lot of self-reflection that can be seen in her DEE course work. Journal writing became one of those tools that helped her to reflect on her work and identity.

> *(…) through the journals you have to reflect on what you're doing and writing it down is different than talking about it. Because if you write it down, you have to organize your thoughts or see how unorganized they are. You can reflect on that. So I think that was very important.*

Yvette felt that in her work design needs to be tangible, since tangible things communicate and make the environment that influences us. In a similar way to how Monika spoke about the importance and enjoyment of hands-on work, Yvette considered tangibility and concreteness in design as significant. She likes objects and they are meaningful for her.

6.5.4 My Identity as a Designer

Yvette referred to intuition as the force that made her choose design in the first place (see Figure 66).

> *I wanted to do design even if I didn't know what it was. (…) I mean except [for] this little book here. (…) I … that's why I put intuition here, because it feels good, feels right, so I don't know why but then I just go straight and there is always a moment between like why am I doing this, but in the end there are several ways of doing it, somehow I just have to find the right way.*

Figure 66. Yvette connected her notions related to '*Discovering design*' with a yellow dotted line. Her first experience with design was the book her mum gave her. From there on, she continued to follow design, since she liked it and it felt intuitively right for her.

Yvette found the 'right way' with the help of other people. This comes through from her visualization, in which many of the knot-marked significant experiences contain social interaction. In addition, one of Yvette's lines of experiences is labelled *Friends*. The following examples show how encouragement and cross-disciplinary discussions have helped her to develop her designer identity.

One experience in Yvette's visualization stands out due to the distinct blue figures around it (see Figure 64). The experience is about Yvette's trip to Istanbul where she concentrated on drawing. She showed her drawings to a friend, who was encouraging her to continue:

> *He really liked them and he said that, "Yeah you should continue," and that's when I realized that actually it was important; if he had told me they were really ugly, I would have probably have just never drawn anymore, but then he said, "Yeah, it's nice and you should continue, you should try more," and everything.*

Yvette noted that negative feedback would have made her quit drawing, but this encouragement made her continue, which makes the experience crucial from the point of view of free creative expression. An artist friend in Germany also influenced Yvette in a constructive way. This experience is one of the most positive ones in her visualization according to Yvette's vertical axis categorization: negative experiences at the bottom and positive at the top.

I think what was also important in the atelier of this friend who was an artist was that he does not really know a lot about design. (...) so it was really nice to talk about what I thought about art and what he thought about design. And in this way I was trying to discover for myself what I thought was important about design. (...) So I think in a way these discussions were kind of forcing me to reflect about myself and my identity as a designer. And why it was not art and it was not something else. And why I thought it was relevant to do design.

Both these experiences point to the significance of peer-mentors that Taylor & Littleton (2012:78-82) have found to be significant factors in creative careers. More official experiences have been significant identity shapers too. Yvette's presentations for the university staff have both frightened her and strengthened her design identity. This authoritarian, professional feedback that was found to be crucial in the previous chapter also provided a reflecting mirror for Yvette's professional identity.

After her studies in Aalto ARTS, when Yvette was back at her home university in Paris, she had to present what she had done in Helsinki. She showed material from the UID course[42] that focuses on user-inspired design. The team of teachers responded to her work, questioning why she had done such different things. To respond in turn, Yvette decided to present her drawings, too, and instantly received a more positive response: '*That's more like you.*' Her teachers, who had followed Yvette from the start of her studies, emphasized those sides in Yvette that they considered as 'Yvette'. In their comment, they did not only refer to Yvette's work, but to Yvette as a person.

The last line Yvette drew on her visualization was *Identity as a designer* (Figure 67). The line divides into two lines, of which the upper one ends with the question '*As a designer, who am I?*' She partly answers this question by defining what she liked in her internship experience in the Netherlands:

What I liked about the projects is that they try to tell something more than just something to sit on or to have lights, and they are very critical, I would say. And they are especially trying to see, like, very common things from a different perspective. (...) I think the projects are really about trying to reflect how things of everyday life don't necessarily have to be what you think they should be.

Her description combines tangible design, critical reflection and questioning that are all Yvette's skills and interests.

[42] User Inspired Design (UID) is an MA-level course in Collaborative and Industrial Design in Aalto ARTS that focuses on understanding and illustrating user and use.

Figure 67. The line '*Identity as a designer*' continues with notes and further on to dots that reach for the future.

Yvette's story is built around traveling and a passion for design. For Yvette, design has been an intuitive career choice from early on. Yvette enjoys design and art, and she expressed no hesitation in her choice. Due to her dual nationality and extensive travelling, she adjusts easily and keeps on moving from one place to another. She seems intrinsically motivated and committed to the field, constantly seeking and refining her own way. She enjoys making and hands-on work, the materiality of objects, but she also reflects and ponders on design in a philosophical way. She seems more agentic than communal (McAdams 1993:133-161), aiming for enjoyable self-expression. She notes how significantly others and the environment influence on her, and is inspired by friends and new viewpoints on everyday objects. Yvette seems to be intuitive and trust her emotions in making decisions. In comparison to the others, she appears the most shy and sensitive.

6.6 Ambitious Crafter and Sceptical Artist

The last two stories of this chapter are crafted from the experiences of Oliver and Lauretta. Both students are reflective and ambitious, and manage well with their endeavours. However, their stories include tensions between their dreams and their choices, which suggests a conflicted agency. These tensions are formed of parallel 'currents' (Mishler 1999) that co-live in the narrative. These currents may be multiple and include different motivations that conflict with one another or support one another. This shows how narrative identity is not just one coherent narrative, but several intertwining and conflicting stories that bundle up to form the 'own way' of the protagonist. To maintain these different currents requires energy, hence the more they cause anxiety or frustration, the more they require negotiation to be fitted into one story.

6.6.1 The Hard Choice of School

Most of the design students' stories repeat a choice between art and science when it comes to choosing the school. Previously, we explored how Monika, Emilio and Yvette experienced the moment of choosing their school. For each, the choice was rather clear after a couple of years, even though Emilio experienced strong criticism and Monika needed to explore a business school first. Oliver and Lauretta had more difficulties in choosing 'the right' school. In their stories, their decision to not choose an artistic school disturbed them for a long time despite their success in the path they had chosen.

In Lauretta's and Oliver's home countries, education had been structured in a way that the students needed to select either a technical (or scientific) or an artistic school. The tension between these two polarities, and the difficulty in choosing one over another, are discussed with a conflicted voice. Oliver and Lauretta have selected their schools with a specific strategy, by assessing, for example, the kind of education that will help them most in getting a job and earning their living. The stories show, however, that these choices have caused anxiety and fought against their passion: making art, and hands-on work. The other three stories also discuss this polarity between artistic fields and technical fields, but in a softer way, and those other three students have made these big decisions based on their emotions and desires: what they enjoy and what they want to do. Consequently, they seemed to be more confident with their choices than Lauretta and Oliver.

For Monika, one year in business school was a rather short side-track in her design narrative in comparison to Oliver's long-lasting double life (Taylor & Littleton 2011, 2012: 67-78) that we will soon explore below. Yvette mentioned choosing technical school, since she was good in physics and maths. However, her desire for design was strong and she followed her passion without questioning her choice in the same way as Lauretta, who loved ceramics, but did not allow herself to dive into it.

The main reasons for these rational-strategic choices were related to financial stability, safety, recognition, or respect. They reflected the participants' views of what is realistic and possible for them. Lauretta and Oliver did not believe that a purely artistic education would satisfy their needs, even though they recognized how much enjoyment and satisfaction it would have provided to them. However, as a 'real profession' they seemed not to value it, or consider themselves talented enough to the extent that they could have made the choice, or taken the risk, to fully immerse themselves in artistic activities.

This educational system that requires the students to choose between an artistic or technical direction at an early age leaves a little time for exploration

of these two domains before committing to one of them. The Finnish entrepreneurs studied did not express such a strong dilemma between an artistic or 'other' choice, even though one of the participants studied philosophy before design and another considered theology as an option instead of design. Due to the Finnish educational system, the entrepreneurs did not need to choose between artistic or technical high school, since even though there are different high schools with a specific focus, such as visual arts or physical education, they do not influence further studies in any university as strongly.

6.6.2 Ambitious Crafter

I have named Oliver's story the story of an ambitious crafter, since he expressed a great passion to become a good designer and worked hard to the extent that it can be called his lifestyle. The word 'crafter' illustrates how he enjoyed drawing and hands-on work the most, despite having explored different fields within and outside design.

Oliver called his Visual Narrative a lifeline (Figure 68). He reflected on his past experiences during the pre-assignment and made knots accordingly. Then he transformed these knots to sticky notes, and continued by moving the notes around and putting them on different levels. Since he had started to describe the chosen experiences mostly by facts, he decided to add to the visualization a layer of emotions, thoughts and ambitions related to the experiences (blue texts in Figure 68). Neither the making process nor the tools can be seen in his visualization as they can in Monika's narrative. Oliver wanted to take the visualization to the next level from a pure sketch, even though this was not the purpose of the task. This choice reflects his ambition.

Oliver's Visual Narrative is a combination of illustrations and words. The drawings do not contain emotional expressions in a similar way to Monika's visualization. Instead, the textual expressions draw more attention. For instance, Oliver's way of expressing his wishes, such as '*I want...*', '*I will become...*' stand out clearly. His determination to follow his desires comes through

Figure 68. Oliver's Visual Narrative. See Appendix E10 for a larger image.

strongly, both in the Visual Narrative and his spoken story. The illustration and handwriting looks controlled, which is also in line with his story, in which consistent hard work and full commitment towards his goals is the dominant thread in the story.

6.6.2.1 Drawing and Competitions

Oliver's narrative began from his childhood when he was 4 years old. His father was seriously ill and he needed to spend time in the hospital when his father was treated.

> *I had to wait a lot of time in hospitals and to use that I did something I liked and that was drawing. So instead of like playing outside and doing sports, I was like developing this drawing and then also in my spare time at home I went on doing that. It was for me a way of finding a sort of relaxing and finding my own way to express myself and calm down, have my own little world. So that I would not really become part of those difficult issues.*

Drawing, as Oliver noted, became a tool for him to escape the painful reality and uncertainty of his father's condition. It also served as a starting point for other creative activities he took part in as a child. He enjoyed creating different things, such as huts or stone constructions. At the age of 5, Oliver started to attend after school classes, '*simple handicraft things*', and continued these classes for 13 years.

> *So from 5 to 18 I did like all kind of things to develop and work with my hands and explore new fields of creativity.*

Like Yvette, Oliver already used the words '*own way*' at the very beginning of his story. His 'own way' in this context is related to his emotional well-being, staying calm despite the difficult situation he had to live in due to his father's illness and dependence on hospital visits and treatments. He built his own little world, where he could escape and used drawing as means to focus his attention on something creative instead of painful thoughts about life's temporality and uncertainty.

During his childhood, Oliver started to participate in competitions in creative fields. Due to his success in the competitions, this became sort of a *creative sport* for him.

> *I was lucky to win a few, and it became (…) sort of addicting in a way, so I really enjoyed the winning. (…) At the age of 15 I won one poster competition and that was for me at that moment quite a big thing, because it was for a*

company that helped children with problems. (…) for me that was like [the] first really big thing like after doing all my own small projects, something where I got publicity and that could be seen, like, that my work could be seen in more places in a country and that was, like, wow this is great. And I want more of that.

Oliver enjoyed this sort of success, which made him want more of that, and very soon he won another larger-scale competition.

I won a competition in which also professionals were taking part, so it was really, really like another success and a sort of a way to, like, prove that I was (…) for me it gave satisfaction and a feeling that I was doing the right thing when they appreciated the way I worked.

6.6.2.2 Technical School Was the Choice, but It Didn't Provide Satisfaction

Oliver was drawn to art already as a child.

I wanted to become an artist. I was really interested in what they [artists] were doing and I liked what I was doing, so it was dreaming of like having a life like that, like doing something you really like and earning your money with that as a living.

However, when the time came to choose a direction (profile) at school from three options, economic, technical or artistic, Oliver went for the technical one.

And I was thinking, like, I want to become an artist or designer, I wasn't sure yet, but to be safe I chose the profile that gave me both options. So I didn't choose the art profile that was more attractive to me, (…) but I chose a profile with the technical part, so that I had the options open to also become architect if I changed my mind or to decide to become an architect later.

However, Oliver combined this technical direction with art courses, so that he could continue the work he enjoyed. The technical direction did not make him happy.

I didn't really enjoy, like, you see the flow of it. I didn't really enjoy the direction I had chosen. (…) I still enjoyed the art direction more, but I knew

this was what I had to do to come into for architect school or design school, because design in Holland in university level is engineering.

Oliver was not happy and started to doubt his choice. He attended art school preparation again in his 5th grade '*to keep all options open*'. He worked to be prepared for both, art school and technical university. At the time, he also had an internship in a famous and booming design studio in Holland. He was looking forward to the experience and was enthusiastic about meeting the people at the studio to find out what they did and how they made their business work. However, the experience made him confused.

> *But it became really confusing for me, because it sort of demotivated me to go on with this really technical profile that wasn't really fun for me. (...) I could do it, but I didn't find joy in it. And I spent also most of my time in this course that I liked [Oliver points to the art course on the upper part of the paper]. So it was kind of difficult period, I thought like why would I spend 6 years doing something I don't like, if I can do 5 years and then go to design school, where all the people that were working here came from. And do something I like to do.*

Oliver's confusion can be understood, since he had an idea what type of skills and competences would be needed to become a successful designer. However, he met designers, whose educational path differed from his and despite that they were able to run an acknowledged design company. Oliver talked to his parents about his thoughts and pondered about his choices; however, he came to the decision that *he should finish what he started*. He also referred to his technical studies as being a good achievement in his curriculum vitae, and that he would have more options if he did not quit university.

> *I made the final decision, more rational decision, because I thought that going to the university of technology will be the best choice for my future, because I have the most options to find good jobs and earn money, and the field of design is quite insecure and I can still switch after going to university to art school but the other way around the option would not be there.*

> *So I chose this way but the line goes down here (see Figure 69). Because again I wasn't doing what I liked to do and having in my mind that I could have gone to that other school that was constantly like disturbing and [in my school] like only one project I really enjoyed.*
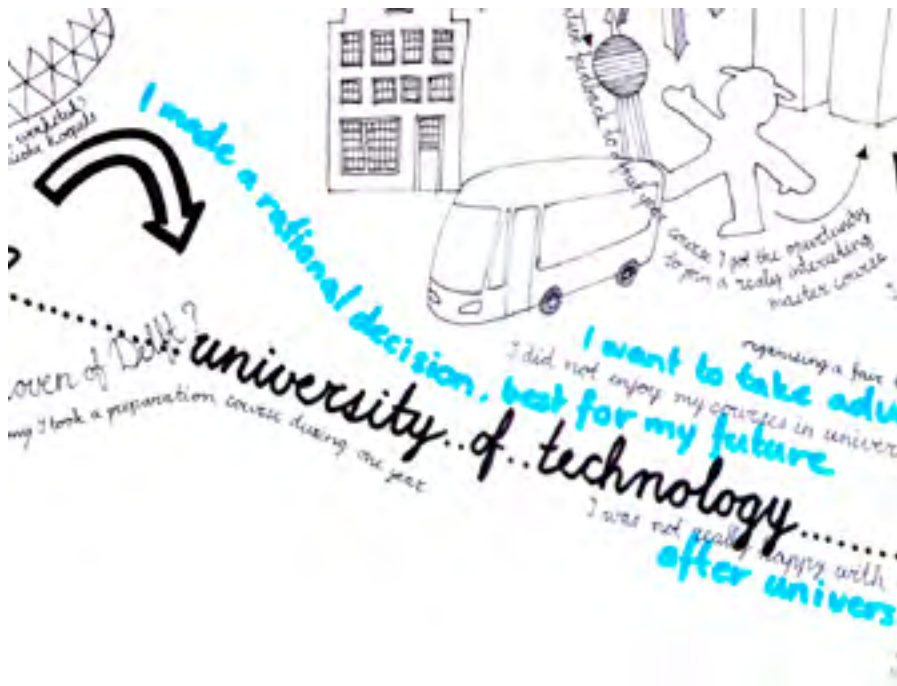
Figure 69. When Oliver presented this part of his story, he moved his finger along the visualization, where the curve '*I made a rational decision*' goes down and explained how the visuals reflects the level of his satisfaction.

Having made up his mind to stay, Oliver tried to '*make the most out*' of his choice. Oliver's narrative shows conflicting stories of *passion* and *rationality* (or *safety*). These stories are tied together even though they are also constantly competing over Oliver's energy and focus. Mishler (1999: 83-110) discusses the similar conflict and tension in craftartists' narratives. He illustrates how these conflicting demands or desires, such as a passion for art and a role as a mother, are managed and dealt with. Taylor & Littleton (2012) use the term 'double life' to describe how creative work is sustained alongside work that is done to earn money. This term describes well the narrative of Oliver, who balanced between artistic and technical areas as a student.

6.6.2.3 Moving Towards Own Thing

Oliver continued to attend competitions alongside his studies, since his study choice did not provide him with the '*fulfilment*' he was looking for. He tried to find his happiness in the artistic activities. Winning the competitions started to pay him '*real money*' and he made more contacts with people. He started to feel that finally he is going in the direction he wanted to go.

And the work that I did beforehand to develop some skills started to pay off, and I was asked to become student assistant drawing, so at that moment I was really positive again and happy and it felt that I was going to the right direction, so the line goes up.

Soon came the time when Oliver needed to do his Bachelor's thesis. This made him stressed, since he wanted to show everything he had learned during and alongside his studies.

And that went really, really bad, because I couldn't show what I wanted to show, and I did not get the fulfilment out of that, and I realized again that this industrial design engineering field that I was in and the school I was in was not the right one. Like what I felt already. So the line goes really down, I was really like towards depressed (see Figure 70).

Figure 70. Oliver visualized his experience of making the BA thesis, final project, with a descending curve.

Oliver felt insecure with his work and his home situation was not good either. Oliver got some counselling to help him find out what to do next. He decided to apply to study in Finland.

> I went there [Finland] like with no idea what would happen to me, and I was trying to get into nice courses, but on forehand that did not really work so it was sort of an open start like how would it begin?

Oliver's period in Finland brought him many good things, such as meeting new people with different backgrounds. He felt lucky to get into the DEE course, which allowed him to reflect on his identity and choices.

> That gave me a lot of good things, because finally I had the time to, like, think about what I was doing. Think more about my direction in design I wanted to go, and also develop the skills I could not develop here [shows the time at the technical university] and worked more with my hands to get like I did during this stage [shows his childhood time], but didn't do here that much [indicates his student time in the Netherlands]. So it gave me a lot and I became more secure in my work again.

Oliver considered the DEE course to have been meaningful, specifically since it provided him with time to reflect on his life. He also realized that the hands-on work he likes also released his pressure. Consequently, when he didn't experience such strong pressure, he was able to develop his skills faster and '*go further*'. As he saw his skills developing, he became more confident in his choice to do what he really wants to, instead of forcing himself to follow a route against his emotions.

At the moment of presenting his narrative, Oliver was hesitant about what to do next, which is the reason the line in his narrative goes downwards towards the end. He had recently finished his BA degree and felt uncertainty in in the face of the open situation. However, in comparison to similar previous uncertain situations, Oliver felt more confident and relaxed. Referring to his father's health situation, he noted that worrying does not make sense anymore.

> In the end it's about enjoying life as much as possible, and I want to have… in the end I hope to have freedom in my work, but now I'm more open to see how it will go, because you cannot influence everything although you would like [to].

6.6.2.4 Pressure

In comparison to the other stories, Oliver's story featured a great deal of internal pressure. To give an example of internal pressure, Oliver elaborated on his early study years when he worked the whole day and even through the night with the energy from just one breakfast – to save time.

> *I wanted to really achieve good quality work and I was really like going far. And also like with my friend I was also really ambitious. We decided that we didn't want to sleep 8 hours a day anymore, because we saw that as a waste of time.*

During his presentation, Oliver mentioned time-related things frequently, such as schedule and delay. This was specific for Oliver's narrative and embedded in his storytelling, and showed that Oliver found speed to be significant in his life as if he would lose something if he relaxed more or did something 'useless'. In comparison to this restricting word, Oliver also referred to luck many times in his story. He described winning or being accepted as if these achievements were more based on luck than on his actual skills and knowledge.

In the light of the whole story, Oliver's strong pressure did not come from the need to show his skills and competence to others, but rather from the need to feel safe and competent when faced by challenges. Due to this, Oliver pushed himself to work hard. In addition to making him more productive, the pressure also worked against him. Under a lot of pressure, it was not so easy to to enjoy his work anymore.

Oliver himself was also aware of this pressure. He was aware that it came from him, not from outside – even though meeting others, for example, young students who had achieved a lot, made Oliver develop more internal pressure. Oliver spoke about an urge to '*go on and on and on*' when he was in a hurry or a bit dissatisfied with where he was at that moment. The pressure came mostly from the fact that Oliver felt he was in the wrong school, '*wasting his time*', since his desires did not match with the school's focus[43].

However, due to his experiences abroad, Oliver had realized that there are several schools that fitted him better than his home university. He wanted to continue with the making and hands-on direction that gave him enjoyment, released his pressure and as a result also enabled easier learning.

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[43] Part of this pressure came from the Dutch system, where minors are forced to make big decisions at an early age, at 15. The choice directly influences these youngsters' future opportunities. Seeing other systems outside Holland broadened Oliver's perspective, and being able to do what he wanted made him more confident and happy.

And I noticed that that's in the end the most important thing, that you enjoy what you are doing. And then, like, the rest comes itself, sort of naturally, at least at that time [it] went a bit like that, went in a sort of a good flow.

Even though Oliver had lived a double life for quite a long, Oliver did not regret his engineering studies. He gained many good things from them, such as connections, business skills, an understanding of industrial production and an engineering way of thinking.

Oliver's story features hard work and passion for drawing and 'making'. In addition to the story, this can be seen in his visualization, which is taken further than a mere draft. He was persistent in his goal of becoming a highly competent professional designer. However, he expressed some stress and worry about not having achieved enough early enough, and that caused him pressure. Even though Oliver's main character can be seen as agentic and independent (McAdams 1993:134-148), it was the acknowledgement and recognition he received that pushed him forward in his identity development, specifically in the first half of his story. Oliver's dream of becoming an artist can be seen as unchanged throughout his story, even though he built a strong foundation by studying in engineering for his dream profession. This contradiction between rational choice and dream is strongly present in the narrative, as if Oliver had two sides that, despite being developed separately, support one another. From this point of view creative design that combines art and design engineering works for him. Oliver's storytelling is reflective and clear, and he justifies his decisions in a similar way to Monika.

6.6.3 Sceptical Artist

The last story is the story by Lauretta, whose account featured two parallel narratives that were in tension, as in Oliver's story. The name Sceptical Artist comes from Lauretta's strong passion for art that troubled her since she did not choose an artistic education. Instead of letting herself try out where art would have taken her, she rationalized down its value and possibilities. Before Lauretta presented her visualization, she wanted to share the '*usual story*' that she typically told when someone asked about her design history. Lauretta's Visual Narrative differed fundamentally from that.

Lauretta's Visual Narrative consists of four different pieces that form a pictorial narrative of the most significant moments in her life (Figures 71-74). The illustrations have small descriptions beside them that crystallize the main point of the experience. Lauretta called her visual representation a '*story*'.
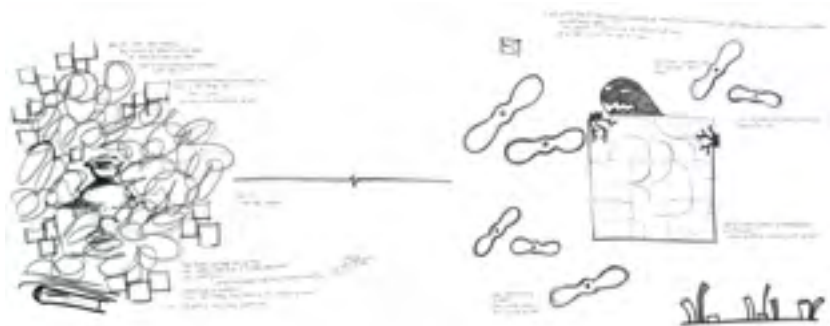
Figures 71-74. Lauretta's Visual Narrative consisted of four separate papers. See Appendix E11 for larger images.

6.6.3.1 'The Usual Story'

Lauretta's usual story started with her childhood. She liked to draw and paint, and her dream was to become an artist. When the time came to choose either the artistic or the scientific high school, her mother advised her to start at the scientific school, since it was located much closer to her home. She also promised that if Lauretta went to the scientific high school, she would pay for her studies at the art academy. This suited Lauretta, since she was quite good at school and the combination seemed like a good deal. However, when the moment came for Lauretta to start the art academy, her mother told her that whatever university she chooses before art academy, she will pay for both schools. Lauretta started to study philosophy, since she did not want to become fixed with a certain mind set, such as engineering or economics. She chose philosophy with the wish to keep flexibility in her thinking. After she had finished her philosophy studies, her mother said that it was then time for the art academy. However, Lauretta was thinking that a degree in philosophy and a degree in art would be '*useless pieces of paper*' if she wanted to work one day. She wanted something creative and concrete, so she chose design.

The usual story shows the huge impact Lauretta's mother has had on her life. On the other hand, it also shows how Lauretta justifies to herself why she let go of art and made the choices she has made seem more rational.

6.6.3.2 Books or Action?

After the usual story, Lauretta told the story about her visualization. She emphasized experiences that related to hands-on work and the enjoyment it brought her. As a 2-3-year-old little girl, she was playing around with a pen, and managed to open it and make a huge, complex drawing on the pillow case. Another similar type of experience she had as a 6-7-year-old when she hammered nails into the living room table (Figure 71).

> I really, really, really enjoyed it and I still remember how much fun I had and I still have so much fun hammering nails.

She called the first experience a '*destiny sign*'. Even though she did not explain what she meant by it, it became clear later that she found hands-on work to be crucially important and enjoyable – and she considered these positive emotions to be signals, or signs she should follow to feel good.

Her visualization and spoken story both contrasted books and abstract knowledge strongly with concrete, bodily activities. The huge pile of books illustrates her frustration with abstract knowledge and school (Figure 71). She felt the school system was a burden.

> *I mean you just sit there and you just study what they say in the way they want and with notebooks they choose for you and the pen they choose for you.*

Lauretta's burden was related to the forced passive role she needed to take at school. This notion was in strong contrast with the joy of 'making' she experienced as a child when drawing on a pillow case or hammering nails into a table. These activities were fun, but also against what is typically allowed for a child. Making them significant afterwards also implies that Lauretta experienced something enjoyable in these 'anarchistic' acts where the enjoyment of making overrules conventional rules. Criticism of top-down instructions at school further strengthens the assumption that Lauretta was not satisfied with the given conditions. Her story revealed a critical, sensitive thinker who made sharp observations of her surroundings.

Hands-on work had a strong, even spiritual, impact on her. She described her experience in an international summer camp as a 14-year-old in the following way:

> *And it was 8 hours a day throwing pots, and it was great, because I was just working with my hands, and it's not really thinking or designing, it's just trying to get something out of the clay and the wheel. And it was [a] really deep experience. And I think [at] that point I started to really seriously think with my hands. And... but that was a hobby (see Figure 75).*

Lauretta's notion of '*thinking with hands*' was not discussed before in any of the presentations. However, her experience is not unique, since many people have reported similar thinking through hands in a making activity (see e.g. Pallasmaa 2009). This concept of thinking with or thinking through hands is acknowledged in practice-led research, where the making activity is an essential part of the research process (Groth 2017, Groth & al. 2013, Nimkulrat 2012; 2009).

6.6.3.3 From Philosophy to Design

Even though Lauretta enjoyed creative work, she was good at reading and abstract thinking. She started to study philosophy (Figure 76).

> *I loved it and liked it, but in a way I felt that it wasn't my passion. I mean I went for a coffee with my mates and they used to talk philosophy language while having coffee, and I was like why should you say – just you know, use common words! Why should you perform this kind of show for nothing. And I thought maybe that's not my thing. And these things, these are because I love to study, I was good at it, but I really missed some hands on work.*

Figure 75-76. Details from Lauretta's Visual Narrative.

Her description reveals her underlying frustration. She had experienced something enjoyable and deep, but she had to leave that behind, since it was just a hobby, not her professional choice.

Lauretta's description of her philosophy peers shows how Lauretta did not feel at home in that '*culture*' and '*discourse*'. This does not mean that she was not good at philosophy, but rather that the *way* philosophy students acted and talked sounded like a performance and act to her. Her approach was more pragmatic and down to earth.

Lauretta became interested in design, but did not remember exactly how. She found Alessi's products interesting due to their humour and hidden functionalities, and wanted to write her thesis about that. However, she was unable to find any teacher to support her, so she ended up doing her thesis about the philosophy of medicine. However, design found her again in a Milanese design museum, where she saw an exhibition of design chairs.

> *You could try any, choose yours and sit there, and there were the design students running here and there for planning some kind of exhibition. And I had my calling.. yeah… design is the thing. I must come and study design.*

Lauretta started to study design in the same scientific-technological university that Emilio chose. However, coming in with a '*philosophy mindset*' she found the start of her studies at the technical university very difficult. She had read a lot of books but was not used to think about '*design, art or aesthetics*'. She made a picture of the university in her Visual Narrative that expressed how she felt (Figure 77).

The texts next to the picture imply that the university's focus was not in the area that Lauretta found enjoyable. However, in her story she also mentioned that she was not used to doing what felt enjoyable, so the threats she
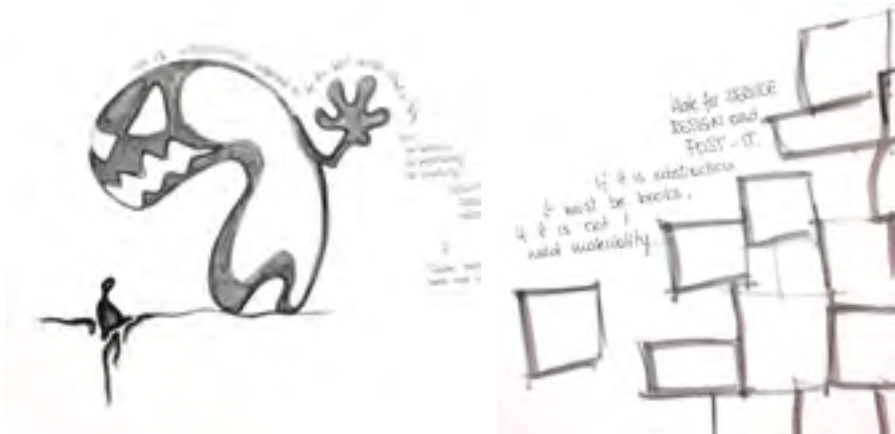
Figure 77-78. Fragments of Lauretta's Visual Narrative. The 'monster' in the illustration on the left represents Lauretta's home university, herself being the human figure that 'drowns' into the ground. The squares in the right illustration represent Post-it™ notes.

felt came both from outside and inside of her. She felt threatened by free creativity, but also by rules and conventions.

Due to the technical focus of the university, Lauretta decided to apply for the MEDes programme. She visited both Stuttgart and Helsinki, and became more convinced that the conceptual approach, such as service design[44], was not her thing (Figure 78). Even though service design does take place in the material world, it does not typically include studio working, hands-on work and human-material interaction in the 'making' sense, which is more common for Applied Art and Design. During the DEE course in Helsinki, Lauretta was able to work again with her passion, ceramics.

> *I had already some experience with ceramics, so it wasn't too difficult; it was just fun, it was just me doing what I wanted, what I liked and... free. That was amazing. And then I was really, really enthusiastic, I thought I found my thing, that's my thing, I'm gonna be at the workshop for the next months and I was super happy.*

Lauretta's vocabulary changed quite dramatically when she spoke about hands-on work. This stayed consistent throughout her narrative. She also defined this hands-on work – and specifically working with ceramic material – as *her thing*. A common feature across the participants was that their *own thing* was described as an emotionally rewarding, pleasurable activity. This

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[44] Service design had not been in design universities' curricula for long at that time. It began to emerge due to the growing service sector in most of the developed economies (Sangiorgi 2009: 416).

own thing can also refer to a certain material that feels their own, natural to work with (Taylor & Littleton 2012: 57).

6.6.3.4 Models Don't Work – I Need to Think with My Hands

In parallel to her studies, Lauretta took part in some competitions; she felt that they were good but also frustrating, since she tried to merge all the knowledge she had gained during her studies in her competition proposals. Since this did not make sense, she felt that her studies, specifically at her home university, worked against her.

She went on to describe her MA thesis for her home university, which she described with words such as '*trauma*' and '*nightmare*' before she elaborated further on it. She had to do her thesis while she was abroad in Glasgow.

> *We had necessary to work on a thesis accordingly to the [mentions the name of her university] style. But I was in Glasgow and there were no products and I had to design a product. And I had to design a product that way you know, this amount of research, this amount of and this way and it's really, really, really strict. And alone not knowing what to do, every now and then phoning, calling my friends (…) you're there all alone… you don't know what to do (…) so I had this much of research and then at the end I had to design the thing, it was a lamp. And I found out that I couldn't design, because we were trained on you know research and technical stuff and business models and all these things and then you put the limits and borders and the limits and limits and at the end the only thing that makes sense is that tube or a sphere or a cylinder… as nothing else makes sense, so it was really difficult and tough to learn that we actually needed a design work to graduate in design. Some of my close friends, they said it was the same for them.*

Lauretta described how frustrating this '*style*' by her home university was for her. She felt the teaching culture to be strict, and the university focus differed from her core interests. She was tackling an important issue of the problems each designer needs to face: how to have an interesting, innovative idea and how to carry out and frame your work in a way that still holds the interesting part of your idea but is also possible to realize.

Because of the frustration involved in trying to meet all needs for design, Lauretta applied for an internship with an artist. She thought that the artist would not ask her anything about production or costs, since his focus would be on aesthetics.

And I got in, and from the first day this artist, he was really much into teaching me something useful for my design career. So from the first minute he started to say, you shouldn't think about aesthetics, you should think about functions, you should think about production, you should think about innovation…

Then I was in a huge crisis, and I just decided to ignore him and do my own stuff and that was possible for the time being. I worked for three weeks with the technicians and it was super great and they were really kind and they just let me (…) do whatever I wanted.

Again Lauretta expressed her ownership of free hands-on work, naming it her '*own stuff*' (see also Figures 79-80). Lauretta summarized her experiences by noting that she felt that she had '*two extreme ways of working*'.

I can think a lot, because of those books and things, I have analytical skills and things, but when it's about design just the thing that… or creativity or something, which is the thing that I really enjoy, my brain should switch off and I should think with my hands. But I'm not trained in that, I feel that I need a lot of it.
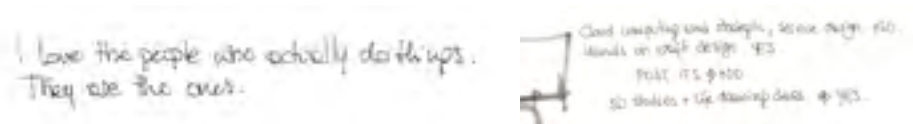
Figures 79-80. Lauretta expressed very clearly what she enjoyed both in her spoken and Visual Narratives.

Figure 81. Lauretta succeeded in what she began, but this did not make her happy.

Lauretta further explained how hands-on work makes her '*happy*' and '*alive*'. Her notions imply a fulfilment that contributes to personal well-being. Her craving for engagement with creative bodily work seems to contain such a strong desire that the impact of her work could even be therapeutic, a pattern that can be seen in art students' narratives (Taylor & Littleton 2012: 58).

She continued to explain how attending different schools has made her to *try to learn everything*, but concluded that it did not work (Figure 81). She had tried to study things she did not enjoy, and now the focus had changed. Having studied and considered different aspects in design, she returned to a very fundamental question:

> *Now, I'm really trying to understand what I, how I work and what I want and what makes me happy, because that's the only moment where I work well. And so it's being good in a really holistic way. (…) Yeah, this be good goes back to philosophy, knowing yourself and knowing your attitudes and knowing what you enjoy to do, and I was thinking so much about what's the market, what's the future, how is economy and where should I fit best to work and get a job and things… but then if I don't like what I'm doing, I'm doing it badly and it doesn't work. So of course there are lots of products and of course there are sustainability issues and (…) democratic side and there is the cost cutting and everything, but if I'm good in another thing, and I enjoy that one, why shouldn't [there] be some space for me. (…) I mean I feel good when I'm good in something that I like. I can be good otherwise, but it's a superficial way of being good.*

6.6.3.5 That Was the Dream!

Lauretta's story is built around the conflict of her dream of an artistic, hands-on field and her studies in other fields. She is motivated by hands-on work, which gives her profound pleasure. Art seems to be very close to her heart, a very precious way to express herself. However, she has not really let herself study art or immerse herself in it fully. There is a paradox between her 'dream' and her 'reality', since she cannot see any possibility of her succeeding as an artist. When she is asked about the possibility of this artistic path, she responds with a frustrated and loud voice:

> *That was the dream!*

The comment brings the discussion back to the chapter that dealt with creativity and rationality and the choice between arts and sciences. Lauretta explained that her experience of the limitations and rules laid by her teachers in her home university was destructive. Paradoxically, she has executed her tasks well and got outstanding marks. In addition, she has taken her mother's opinions very seriously. Her close friend and colleague, Emilio, also pointed out in the discussion that she is very good at things she does not like to do. It is fair to say that learning and applying what has been learned has not been

the problem for Lauretta but rather her decision not to follow her love for 'making' in her work. (See Appendix D for Lauretta's installation.)

Lauretta appears as an analytical, profound and critical thinker. She defines herself as '*super critical*', and her narrative has features of irony and sarcasm that can be seen as strategies negotiating between the tensions in her story. Her way of expressing herself is powerful, contains strong opposites, dreams and, for example, '*destiny signs*'. Lauretta's *own way* so far has been mostly in conflict with her *desired own way* that relates to art. However, there is another current of analytical, philosophical thinking that is also *her thing*. This latter seems to come easily to her and make sense to her, whereas hands-on work has remained as a passion but not something she would seriously see leading to a profession or occupation with which she could make a living.

6.7 The Enjoyment of Hands-On Work and Experimentation

Most of the students emphasized the significance of creative exploration, hands-on work, and experimentation with materials and techniques. Their experience of making was as an enjoyable activity without any external goal, such as success or financial reward. This refers to Sennett's (2008) idea of a craftsman, who does good work for its own sake. A craftsman's goals relate mostly to good work. He experiments with materials to develop his craft skills and material consciousness to get better results. The students also enjoyed the workshop environment that is the craftsman's home (ibid., 53-80), a place to learn and share different ways to work with materials. Some of them even chose their MEDes schools in order to have an opportunity for this experimenting. This human-material interaction – 'making' – is one of the main design-related themes emerging from the data.

The stories revealed frustration at the dominating immateriality in design studies. Based on the discussions during the workshop, all the design students acknowledged more conceptual design areas as a part of design realm, but they did not mention getting satisfaction from more theoretical courses, such as design history or service design. These courses were considered relevant and good to know, but they seemed more to serve intellectual purposes than emotional engagement with design. This raises an important question regarding design education. How do we as educators design the curricula in a way that these two, material and immaterial dimensions of design, can be combined in a creative way to support one another?

This theme has already been recognized and studied in design research, where Camilla Groth and her colleagues (2017; Groth, Mäkelä & Seitamaa-

Hakkarainen 2013) have presented how designers think through their hands. Groth's focus is on embodied knowledge that we bring into our work and everyday life. In design, this knowledge is specifically important, since we design experiences, services and products for people who are multisensory by nature. Groth & al. (2013: 7-8) propose that when one touches a material, she also feels herself and becomes aware of 'being'. "In this sense, making can be considered a way of being in contact with oneself." (ibid. 8) Our own connection with our body, its senses and their connection to our wellbeing are thus essential specifically for designers, who design the future we will live in. (See also Pallasmaa 2009).

## 6.8 Visual And Verbal Ways of Expressing Narrative Identity

These five stories have illustrated some of the key events and main challenges the students have faced in their journey towards finding their own way. The Visual Narratives that were done without cues, in a more free manner, provided personal illustrations of significant experiences. The visual language created another level alongside the spoken stories (see also Bach 2007) and created a rich dialogue between the visual and verbal narratives.

The students' stories, like some of the design entrepreneurs' stories, revealed the birth of a constructive, dialogical narrative tone, as in Monika's case. The influence of powerful childhood experiences could be seen in the stories, such as the role of drawing in Oliver's case. Even though the stories were unique and unfolded in different ways, all of them referred to an explorative, curious identity that was shown, for instance, via travelling and enthusiasm towards new experiences. The narratives also revealed tensions between emotion and reason that link them to contradictions between internal and external motivations as well as with social and cultural beliefs concerning how one will manage in life. What felt good, such as doing art, did not necessarily feel right if it did not seem a realistic choice to make living.

One's own way – what was considered meaningful and enjoyable – was constantly calling for those who tried to rationalize too much. For those who followed this calling, such as Yvette, their own path developed without strong tensions. However, Yvette's narrative also revealed doubts and critical moments that made her question and renegotiate her design identity. Life brought challenges to deal with despite their commitment and self-confidence within the chosen professional field, as could be seen in the internship experience in Monika's story. In such events, where old conceptions are questioned, identity work becomes more active and requires identity negotiation.

Despite the tensions, experiments and detours, the participants expressed their enjoyment of the hands-on work, which was pursued within or outside their chosen area of education. This highlights the importance of making as an activity that had in many cases begun in childhood. It also links the accounts to the concept of agency in the way that McAdams (1993) has defined it. Some of the stories illustrated dominating agentic aspects, such as Emilio's story, which revealed the importance of placing himself in the centre of his life and connecting to others from that position. However, aspects of communion were also strongly present in the narratives, for instance in the form of the importance of collaboration, such as in Monika's case.

The five stories presented five unique paths. Lauretta's story has been left until last since, of all the participants, her story called most for improvements in design education. It raised the question of how can we help students to listen to their dreams and wishes, and support them in intuitive but also rational decision making when it comes to major decisions, such as choosing their education. The next chapter moves the discussion into the context of design education and presents different ways in which design students find and create their own ways through creative processes.
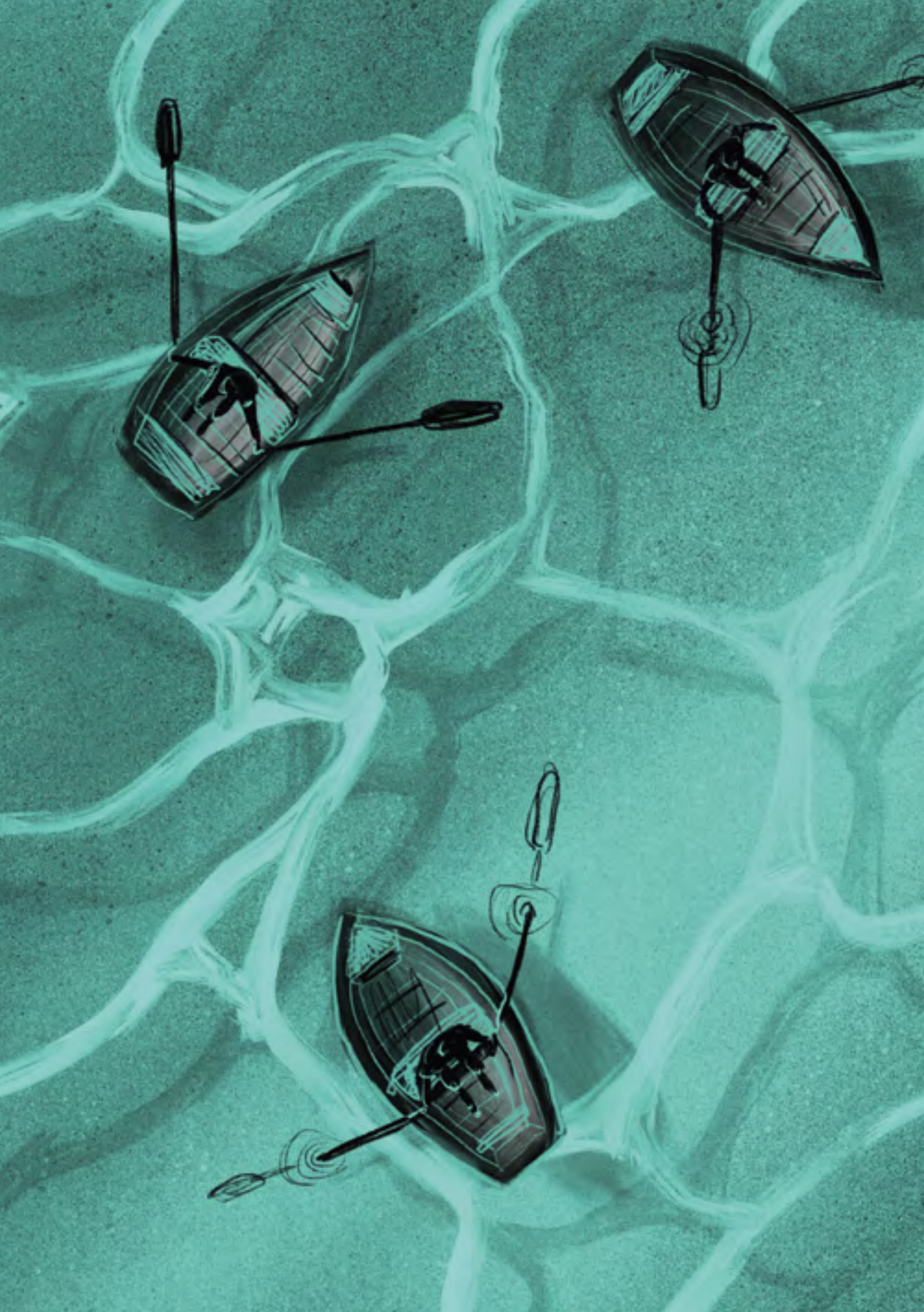
DESIGN STUDENTS EXPLORING IDENTITY THROUGH A CREATIVE PROCESS
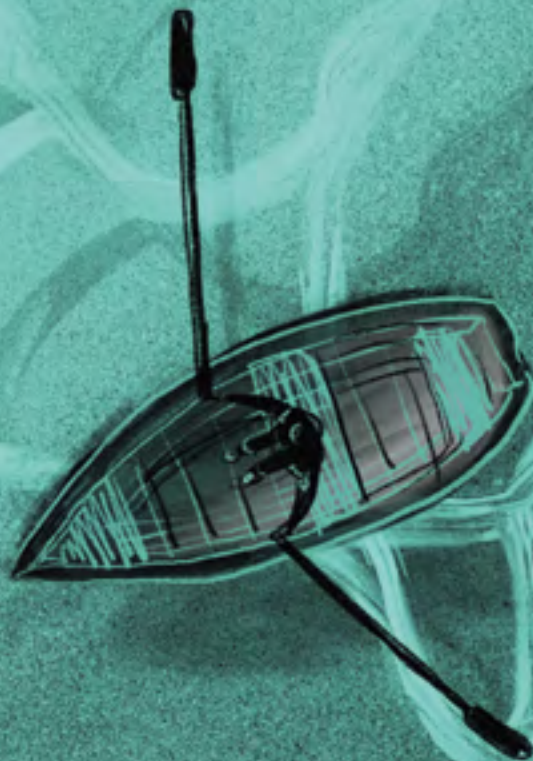
*If we are able to stay with a situation,
it will carry us to a new place.*

Shaun McNiff (1998:22)

7 Design Students Exploring Identity Through a Creative Process

The personal narratives revealed how some of the most significant experiences influenced identity formation. However, this perspective missed what doing design, the design process, could reveal about professional identity development and its links to personal narratives. In art and design, tangible artefacts and tools have a significant role in mediating the learning and thinking processes (Seitamaa-Hakkarainen & al. 2013: 5; Goel 1995:127-128), and consequently influence how designers navigate their ways in design.

This chapter, as the last chapter of the empirical part of the study, continues to illustrate how design students have explored identity in a design course and navigated their ways in creative processes. Thus, the discussion moves from significant experiences in life histories to key events, drivers and methods in creative processes. I chose to study creative processes with a similar approach to that with which I studied personal stories[45]. Stories of significant experiences cover a long period in time, whereas creative processes are only about one project. However, both are stories that can be examined from the point of view of narrative identity. There are also many similarities in developing a professional identity and developing a creative process – and how finding one's own way takes place in both paths.

In reporting the findings, I aimed to maintain an ethnographer's mindset and tried to illustrate how these creative processes were experienced and navigated by the students. However, I wrote this chapter after I had already analysed the personal stories presented in Chapters 5 and 6. Consequently, this chapter continues to build on the understanding of narrative identity I had gained in that analytic process.

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[45] Studying the designs by the participants would have been another possible option to gain further perspectives on finding one's own way. However, I could not take this approach, since I had promised to keep the narratives anonymous. I could have examined their designs without showing what they looked like, but I felt that research on tangible design objects without showing what they were would not be valuable. My choice was to concentrate on design processes, since they would show how the processes are managed and design approached. The combination of personal narrative and design process would then show both the storied life and storied process and thus provide two perspectives on identity formation.

7.1 Students Participating in the Design Exploration and Experimentation Course

The findings presented in this chapter are based on data that consists of 26 MA students' creative process reports from the DEE courses that were organized in 2011 and 2012. To give examples of the data, I have selected extracts from specific students of the total who did the course based on how well they represent a relevant theme that has emerged from the data as a whole. In addition, I have done an in-depth analysis of 5 students of which the first three had also participated in the *My Story* workshop (see Chapter 6). These examples are rich in storytelling and different in approach, thus they illustrate different ways in design. Selecting students that had participated in the *My Story* workshop enabled me to link their creative processes with their personal narratives. Furthermore, I refer to the courses that were held in 2013 and 2014 when they offer essential insights.

The findings presented stem mostly from the course that was held in 2011, when the theme of the course was Identity. This theme triggered more identity reflection than the other courses and illuminated identity questions and definitions in a rich way. However, the theme was not the only trigger for identity reflection but the whole setting of the course. This setting – the DEE course, presented in Chapter 3 – influenced the degree to which the participants reflected on identity and wanted to reveal these ponderings, and how the creative processes were navigated and managed.

The chapter continues by illustrating how students came to the course with different ideas of identity, and how their personal and cultural background influenced their identity exploration. After that, I will present five examples of individual processes, through which I can illustrate different drivers and methods to create one's own way in a creative process that could be identified in the reports. These findings point to a more abstract model on how design identity is created in interaction with self, others, design and the environment. Hence, this model is presented and elaborated next, followed by findings and a discussion on creative crisis and its impact on one's own way in a creative process. Before summarizing the chapter, I will take the discussion back to the course and briefly evaluate how it has functioned as a platform for individual identity work.

7.2 Personal Experiences and Identity Perspectives as Starting Points

In 2011, the students approached the course theme, Identity, from diverse points of view. These perspectives covered most of the areas typical for identity research: cultural, personal, professional, narrative, gender and sexual identities (Hall 1999). The way identity was perceived and specifically what view on identity was considered interesting, affected how students created their project. For instance, Corinne, who saw identity as stories, collected stories in her project.

> *Speaking about identity makes me talk about my family and my roots. Identity is definitely connected to people's stories.*
>
> *Corinne, final reflection*

For some students, cultural identity rose to the forefront. This was probably not an intentional choice, but it was triggered due to the course setting. To give an example, one Korean woman created her project around a concept that was familiar for her from her own culture. However, she did not find a counterpart for the concept in English, so it was hard for her to explain it to others. During the course she used a lot of energy in trying to understand the differences between her culture and Finnish culture.

This identity perspective together with personal experiences affected the starting point of the project. In the course context, the most powerful personal experiences happened during the excursion. In 2011, a 5-day excursion was made to Koli, located in eastern Finland. The excursion included presentations by the students, teachers and local contacts. We made trips through the beautiful snowy countryside, baked Karelian pies and went to sauna together (Figure 82). The purpose of the trip was to both feed students with inspiration and to create trust and group cohesion (see also Kosonen & Mäkelä 2012).

The excursion became a meaningful, even crucial, part of identity exploration. The students were inspired by their surroundings, the lectures and the discussions and described these in their weekly reports[46].

> *The most memorable moment on this trip was our nightly saunas. It was a ritual where we... all [females] together in the sauna bathe, reflect on the day and converse about anything... I realized that this significant event of being*

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[46] Each year, these excursions have been regarded as significant and inspiring by almost all the students (Mäkelä & Löytönen 2015).

nude in front of the people that I barely know somewhat allowed me to truly be myself.

Nina, final reflection

For some, however, the Karelian nature and excursion experience was a lot to digest. Isadora described this experience in several weekly reports after the trip, and even at the beginning of her final reflection she noted that she was still feeling overwhelmed by the information and visual stimulation she experienced in Karelia.

I am still recovering from what I saw in Karelia. The landscape I had the privilege to interact with is still in my mind as a delusional memory.

Isadora, weekly reflection 3

Isadora's experience shows one example of the different starting points that foreign students had in comparison to local students. Particularly those students who came from another continent used a lot of energy to digest and understand the Finnish natural environment and culture. This naturally also influenced their identity work.

Figure 82. The students and teachers explored the snowy scenery of Koli during the excursion.

The experiences and observations during the excursion triggered the students to think about their previous experiences, and in this way the interaction between the already known and the unknown began. Even though many students focused on exploring Karelia, most of the students also reflected on their personal past experiences. In some cases, the reflection reached back until childhood:

> *The need I feel for working with my hands and the feeling of missing something probably also comes from the fact that I was used to work[ing] with my hands when I was young. From the age of 5, I went to art courses next to school where I worked with my hands, for instance painting or ceramics. At home I expressed myself with drawing.*
>
> *Oliver, weekly report 1 & 2*

Oliver, whose creative process we will explore more carefully later in this chapter, reflected on his childhood to explain his orientation and interest within design, and specifically hands-on work. Mary, instead, explained how her idea to explore nature originated from her childhood home and the professional orientation of her parents:

> *I think my interest in nature stems from my childhood. Until I was 18 I lived in the countryside near one of England's National Forests. Our house is an old farm house and the garden, with my parents being herbologists, was filled with many interesting species of plant.*
>
> *Mary, weekly report 1 & 2*

These notions are expressions of narrative identity. They show how identity is linked to childhood, and the link to the present is drawn from previous experiences to create a narrative that ties early experiences to the current moment (see also Taylor & Littleton 2012: 47-55). The way in which we relate to our previous experiences shows how we make meaning of those experiences and what experiences we still carry with us. The link to these experiences is essential, since the knowledge we use in the design process may originate from experiences that are far removed from the current project (Lawson 2004:21).

During the excursion, students observed their surroundings and gave meanings to the objects and events that influenced on them. Different issues triggered different reflections in each student. What was felt inspiring, touching, puzzling or shocking also varied from student to student. These notions are in line with symbolic interaction, according to which we give meanings to the things we interact with and our interaction is influenced by those given meanings (Blumer 1986:2)

Yvette, who started to ponder on identity in a philosophical way from the very beginning of her creative process, saw snow as an allegory for identity, and used this observation to describe her thoughts on identity:

> Indeed, if snow covers up objects and shapes, it does at the same time reveal these objects differently, and puts them in a new perspective. If we would compare snow with identity as I have tried to define it, the object which is to be covered is the person him/her self. The snow would then represent the view others have on this person, or the manifestation of the person's inner thoughts and feelings towards the outside world. The shape created by the snow would consequently represent identity, being the reaction between the original object's shape and the falling snow.
>
> Yvette, weekly report 1

These individual experiences were used as fuel to start the creative process. However, some experiences during the course influenced several students in a similar way. These were for instance a visit to an Active Life Village[47] and children's quotations that Child support workers presented during the 2012 course. The issues, which were related to how we treat our close ones, children and relatives, triggered strong emotions in the students. These emotions became drivers for the processes, since something was felt to be wrong in our society and our humanity.

> …the whole place [Active Life Village] reminded me of a dystopian, Orwellian kind of 1984 monitoring room, where big brother is constantly watching and aware of your every move and thought.
>
> Mikael, final reflection

> What struck me the most of all the inputs we got was the child welfare presentation – in particular the quotes of children.
>
> Rasmus, final reflection

The examples have shown how personal experiences and a personal perspective on identity both influence the way we take during creative process. In addition, the methods the students used to communicate their ideas varied from visual expressions to analytical texts. Whereas one student discussed and explained most of her ideas with words, another expressed and stated his

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[47] www.activelifevillage.fi

insights mostly with illustrations. In the next two sections, we will take a look at these drivers, strategies and methods that together form a big part of our own way in a creative process.

7.3 Individual Drivers and Methods in Creative Process

Close inspection of the creative processes reveals how the creative act was driven differently. These drivers, or motivators, were individual and based on previous experiences and education. To illustrate the different drivers that motivated the actions, as well as the strategies – their *own ways* – that consisted of the methods with which the creative processes were navigated, we will take a closer look at five processes. These ways of navigating a creative process are considered as expressions of developing professional identity.

7.3.1 Emotions and Envisioning Guiding the Process – Case Emilio

Emotions and envisioning were strongly visible in Emilio's creative process from the very beginning to the implementation of his work. His process was intrinsically motivated and it expressed a strong engagement with visual thinking. Emilio's work started with research on Karelia, but his first weekly report was mostly focused on describing strong visual images.

> *I am thinking of situations like fires, earthquakes, a boat sinking, and then I have the image of a seal just before dying, killed by the spear of a hunter.*
>
> *I could feel the violence and the tension on my skin.*
>
> *Emilio, weekly report 1*

Emilio's envisioning work had a special feature in it. Instead of developing potential 'new' ideas, he linked his visions, imaginary concepts, to existing art pieces from the very start (Figure 83-84). This way he positioned his possible creations among already realized pieces. So instead of being left as abstract ideas, his envisioning became more 'realistic' and graspable, part of the existing world. In addition to envisioning, Emilio wrote in his diary a great deal. At moments when he searched for an even stronger connection with his emotions, he used his mother tongue (Figure 85).
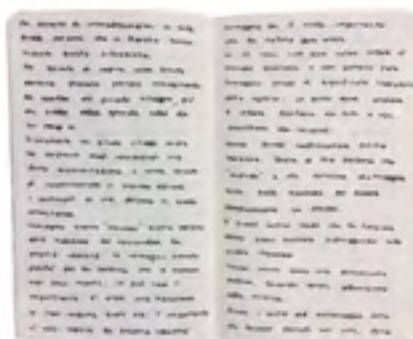
Figure 83-84. Emilio's working diary.

Figure 85. Emilio's ponderings in Italian.

Emilio's engagement with emotions and envisioning lasted the entire process, even though his focus shifted towards realizing his concept in the end (Figure 86-87). Emotions were essential and critically valuable for Emilio, who wanted to convey his feelings in his work.

The fourth week has been a week with many uncertainties, but at the same time it is the week of decisions: time is running!!

I looked at my diary again and I found many images in it, many ideas but [it] still wasn't clear for me which was the way I wanted to take. I tried to concentrate on the images and on the feelings I want to communicate. This is something important because it should be clear; once this is clear I can think how to express my feelings.

Emilio, weekly report 4

Emilio's emotions also gave him strong agency, since he did not depend on answers from the teachers or others. He was inspired by what happened around him, but focused on his own work. In this way, he gained strong self-confidence concerning the message he wanted to convey, and which he found very meaningful.
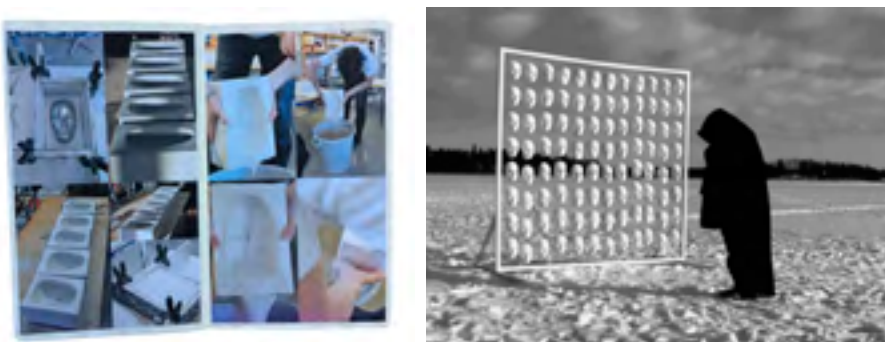
196

Figure 86-87. Emilio casting 100 masks of which he broke 99 in his video.

I feel very confident because I have a lot to say, many reasons to break masks, many reasons to communicate something.

> *Emilio, weekly report 6*

Even though Emilio used the DEE platform actively by participating in the discussions and mentoring sessions, his work expressed strong independence in decision making. He used the resources to feed his work, and despite some challenges in his process, he maintained his emotional connection with the work and grew confident in sharing his repressed thoughts during the course.

In the beginning, nobody knew what I was doing because I wanted to keep my work quite secret, the topic was for me too personal that I didn't want to explain everything, I just wanted to work defining how to give shape to my idea. (…) I decided to break the personal borders to bring my identity in my work. (…) My wish to speak of homosexuality is something present in the last years. That voice was always repressed and I am happy that I didn't repress it also this time.

> *Emilio, final reflection*

Emilio's tendency for envisioning can also be seen in the way he made and presented his Visual Narrative in the *My Story* workshop, as explained in the previous chapter. He went through the past experiences in a relatively rapid manner and was much more interested in the present moment and the future. In the installation exercise at the workshop, he was the only one who refused to make the installation about a past experience. Instead, he focused on what he will do next.

7.3.2 Self-Reflection on Professional Identity as Driving Force – Case Oliver

Since the project allowed considerable freedom, some of the students were inspired to do things they had wanted to do for a long time. For Oliver, the course became an opportunity to reflect on his professional identity and work in an area he had not had a chance to work on. Oliver, who, as mentioned above, also participated in the *My Story* workshop, reflected on the DEE course at the workshop in the following way:

> *… finally I had the time to think about what I was doing, think more about my direction in design I wanted to go, and also develop the skills I couldn't develop here [points to a his technical studies]. And worked more with my hands to get like I did during this phase [points to his childhood in the visualization], but didn't go here that much [points again to his technical studies]. So it gave me a lot and I became more secure in my work again. (See 6.6.2. for Oliver's Visual Narrative.)*

Oliver's example shows how he directed his activity and thinking during the DEE course in the direction he had been unable to at his home university.

Like Emilio's, Oliver's process, too, started with research, according to the given task. However, his very first report revealed that the theme triggered profound self-reflection:

> *When I went to secondary school, I more and more went in the technical direction, but always tried to combine it with art and culture (what I preferred more than the technical stuff). When I needed to choose a University I finally chose for Industrial Design Engineering, but I always had the feeling that I missed something and tried to do projects beside my studies where I could express myself in a different way.*
>
> *Oliver, weekly report 1-2*

Here, we can see that Oliver's identity work started in the DEE course and continued in the *My Story* workshop that took place half a year after the course. In the *My Story* workshop, Oliver reflected on the same issues in a quite similar manner (see 6.6.2.2).

Oliver's motivation to examine and re-direct his professional identity guided the process right to the end. During the third week, however, his self-reflection became intense, blocking his activity.

A thing that controlled the third week was thinking about my identity as a designer. (…) Why do I feel insecure [at] this moment? I was always very secure about myself… at least I pretended [to be] secure, because behind the mask there was a very insecure boy. I have always been very critical and had high expectations towards myself. I could not always reach these expectations, what made me feel insecure. (…) The discussions about identity we had in this course made me feel insecure as well. I realized that the person I am and the way I design is not only because of the way I developed myself as a person and a designer but also because of [the] influences of other people and the experiences I had. The fact that I cannot control these influences and experiences, makes me feel uncomfortable. I started doubting the way I work as a designer.

> *Oliver, weekly report 3*

Peer students' comments and discussions in the group made Oliver feel more insecure and doubt his way as a designer. He started to compare himself with others and self-critique became a heavy burden for a while. A personal tutoring helped Oliver to realize that he will always be influenced by others, but his qualities and his way of combining things in design makes him unique. This one-to-one discussion helped Oliver to trust himself, his knowledge and the creative process more. Oliver started to look for the balance to be open to others' comments and ideas whilst, however, also holding onto his own view.

> *…we all have different qualities and I need to believe in my own qualities.*

> *Oliver, weekly report 3*

Oliver became aware of his demands and self-criticism. He felt uncomfortable realizing that he cannot control the things that influence him, but also noted that he can, however, influence his future and the way he 'creates himself'.

> *I need to trust my intuition and trust the process. I need to let go and start exploring, without reminding myself on all the knowledge of previous projects.*

> *Oliver, weekly report 3*

He also noted that making things he loves makes him more self-confident. To deal with the pressure Oliver reminisced about the freedom he had had as a child.

I will try to be less serious and get back the freedom I had when I was a child, not aware of all what was going on in the world and not allowing any pressure.

Oliver, weekly report 3

During this profound self-reflection in week 3, his artefact was not developing (see Figure 88). However, the internal dialogue and internal pressure Oliver experienced paved the way for a more holistic and grounded starting point for the artefact. By going through this self-reflection, Oliver was able to connect the discovered understanding of self to the starting point of the artefact and ground his ideas in his personal wishes.

After discussing and tackling this pressure, Oliver looked for a way to release the stress and get the process going forward.

This week, I tried to get rid of the pressure I had put on myself because of my expectations. (…) A very important thing that they [=people Oliver spoke to after the presentation] made me aware of was that I had to start doing things more and maybe question less. It is good to ask questions, because in a way that is what drives designers, but when I stay asking myself questions I won't produce anything.

Oliver, weekly report 4

Figure 88. The visualization shows how Oliver's focus on reflection and action changed during the creative process. The graph shows the 'identity crisis' on the third week, when the reflection was directed only towards self and identity, and the concept design development did not proceed – even though it proceeded via this exploration to his own identity, since Oliver wanted to establish a ground for the concept that fits with his perception of his hoped-for identity. Thus, this exploration was necessary in order to redirect actions by exploring new, possibly more satisfying, routes instead of carrying out what he has already done before.

He found a solution for his overloaded mind in hands-on work. Weaving with a weaving loom turned out to release Oliver's pressure and relax him. In addition, he remembered how drawing works for him.

> *To become more secure again and to get rid of disturbing thoughts, I started to work more with my hands. (…) When I did not know how to deal with my thoughts, I started drawing something; drawing made me feel satisfied and after drawing my mind was open for the project again. (…) Most important is that I stop over-analysing things and start doing. For my own mental health, I need to do things I love and that gives me satisfaction. Life is simple and I need to trust my intuition.*
>
> > *Oliver, weekly report 4*

Whereas hands-on work released Oliver's pressure, drawing served as a method to overcome a critical moment in his process. When Oliver visited Stockholm furniture fair during the DEE course, he saw many prototypes in which many ideas he found similar to his were implemented. This made him feel uncomfortable. However, quite soon he directed his thoughts into his own project in a conscious way:

> *After I felt bad a little time, I reflected on myself and started to think that I should not let this block me in my project and screw up my day. I forced myself not to think about it anymore and tried to have a closer look at my own idea and the direction I was going. Thinking like that gave me a good feeling and I was open for new inspiration.*
>
> > *Oliver, weekly report 5-6*

Oliver spoke about the meaningfulness of drawing also during *My Story* workshop (see 6.6.2.2 and 6.6.2.3). Also, his Visual Narrative included finalized drawings and he used more time to work on it than the others. Oliver could rely on drawing; hence, this was one of his strategies he used to go forward in his process. However, in his process writing also had a significant role. Oliver framed his developing design artefact by writing and rewriting its description and purpose for the weekly reports several times during the course.

Oliver was driven by his passion to dig deeper into his professional identity. This self-reflection work was the main driver in his process that he managed by drawing and writing. The outcome that Oliver named '*Dealing with feelings*', was a concrete artefact that conveyed how hands-on work may

release pressure. Thus, the artefact represented his creative process in a concrete way.

7.3.3 Critical Reflection and Experimentation – Case Yvette

The identity theme triggered reflection also in Yvette, who started the project by questioning and redefining identity for herself. Her comprehensive reflection was directed at identity as a concept, design as a field and herself as a designer.

> … identity has something to do with defining a group or a person, and separating it from others or from surrounding environments. Identity therefore seems to be definable, through comparison or contrast with something else, by separating it from other subjects. By changing the surroundings which the subject is compared to, the definition of [the] identity of a subject will therefore change as well.
>
> If I take myself as an example, I realize that according to the person who I am talking with, I will adjust my speech and the nature of my conversation, or even my behaviour in general. I have remained the same person, but nevertheless, the impression I have given of myself will be different according to the person who was standing in front of me.
>
> Now, the question is whether identity is the different impressions I have given of myself to others and which therefore change, or if it is the inner-self which I have manifested in different ways with different people, but which remains the same in its nature. In the first case, we see that indeed, the people I am surrounded by will determine the identity I will have. For the second case, the identity remains the same, but it is only revealed partially according to who is around.
>
> I believe that both views only give a fragmented definition of identity. Perhaps, identity is a mixture of them. Finally, I would define identity as the encounter of the 'inner-self' with its 'surrounding', and as the reaction which is produced through this meeting. In its fundament, a person's identity does not change, but it can never manifest itself fully at one moment, and it is always only partly revealing itself to its environment and thanks to its environment
>
>   Yvette, weekly report 1

Yvette's reports express the strong analytical thinking that she maintained until the very last report and further elaborated on her final reflection. She used writing as the main tool to work on her ideas about identity.

Yvette's ponderings reflect the internal dialogue presented by Mead (1964) that happened in Yvette's mind during her work. Being able to capture this and make it visible in a textual format, writing served Yvette's attempt to define identity and her professional position within design as well as decision making. In parallel to critical reflection, Yvette made several experiments with paper and porcelain.

> *This week I have done several different types of experiments. All of them relate to the way I try to represent my idea of snow in its abstract way. (…) These first experiments have not satisfied me at all, and I do not have any clear idea of the direction they will take me towards. Nevertheless, I have been going through exactly the same uncertainty phase with previous experimentation projects, and I am therefore not very worried.*
>
> *Yvette, weekly report 2*

She developed the project in three areas:

> *I am waiting to see the result coming out of the kiln, before deciding how to continue with the material exploration. Nevertheless, I have tried to develop the project on other fields at the same time, which are the conceptual aspect, and the field of colours.*
>
> *Yvette, weekly report 3*

However, her work stayed at quite an abstract level, so Yvette found it hard to find a way to materialize her reflection on identity.

> *When it comes to expressing the concept which my project revolves around, and how to translate this into an artefact, I am still very much searching [for] a way to express my ideas clearly.*
>
> *Yvette, weekly report 3*

Yvette's deep reflection proceeded to self-reflection on her position in design and the meaningfulness of design later in her process, after questioning and discussing creativity, materiality and immateriality from several perspectives.

Indeed, from all creatives, I believe designers are best in capturing and re-transcribing emotions, aesthetics and sensibility in the field of products. By leaving the field, designers would therefore participate in the impoverishment of products.

> *Yvette, weekly report 3*

Yvette's process was very reflective and intense in a similar way to Oliver's process. Her process had the drivers of identity reflection and experimentation, which she tried to combine in her final artefact.

I decided to transform the ideas into a tangible research with porcelain.

> *Yvette, final reflection*

However, the outcome shows that the experiments and the critical reflection did not reach synthesis in such a way that the outcome had materially and visually communicated her thoughts on identity clearly. Yvette's process would have benefitted from a little extra time. Spanbroek (2010:117) recalls the critical role of *thinking time* when we aim to educate students to develop analytical skills, critical thinking and their own design aesthetics: "It takes time to analyse the form, experiment with materials, research construction techniques and develop appropriate design aesthetics; without sufficient dedicated time these critical aspects of design become incidental."

7.3.4 Concept Creation and the Art-Design Dilemma – Case Mikael

Mikael, who took part of the DEE course organized in 2012, started his creative process by observing, becoming inspired and creating a concept. His attention focused on a specific service, the Active Life Village for the elderly that all the course participants visited. Mikael started to reflect on how the elderly are taken care of both by relatives and society.

Is it really so that monitoring systems and surveillance technologies are the best alternative when taking care and looking after the ones in our society who cannot take care of themselves that actively anymore?[48]

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[48] All the extracts are from Mikael's final reflection.

He got inspired by Critical Design[49] as a method to express his concerns in a sarcastic, humorous way.

> *Critical design can, in many cases, be sarcastic, satirical, ironic, and play around with meanings by turning things upside down.*

However, this approach was not familiar to Mikael, who had become competent in doing design though the 'industrial design process' with a design outcome.

> *The design process has the quality that the premise usually lies in an external need, whereas in art the need stems from the doer (artist) himself. (...) Art is hard, in my opinion, but it's not so much the outer circumstances which make it hard, but rather your inner mind game (...) I believe it has something to do with self-confidence, with concentrating in what you want to do instead of what you should be doing.*

These extracts show how Mikael balanced between art and design, trying to find an appropriate approach for himself in the study. Due to these reflections, his concept creation phase continued until the very last stages of the course before he finally realized his idea.

> *I was trying to wait for the ultimate idea to pop up in my mind though, and I wasn't really getting anywhere due to that. (...) I wasn't doing anything practical, just rotating the same themes in my head, and I was losing time. (...) I should've used techniques learned during design processes: prototype, brainstorm, get tangible etc. I was trying to solve this mystery in my head. (...) I thought the artistic process was so personal that I simply didn't dare to do something secondary. (...) I wanted to get the golden idea first and then just implement it.*

However, the long conceptualization work paid off and he was happy with the final concept that he developed with the help of one of the tutors:

> *We started joking around on the subject of the Tamagotchi-granny. (...) Then, all of a sudden (...) I just came up with a remotely controlled IV-bag stand, which you could control from your home with a game-like iPad application. Feeding your granny the right medication on each given hour, through your iPad, would be a disturbingly 'cool' game. You could also share your scores on Facebook and compete with your friends about whose granny is most*

[49] More on Critical Design, see Malpas (2017)

effectively kept 'happy' with the medication. 'Oh shit', I thought. That was it. I had a concept! The craziest concept I had ever done!

Realization of his idea was a courageous act and a new way for him to work in art and design. In his final reflection, he reflected on the process in a profound way.

> *My biggest learning point of this course was at the point I decided to go with my idea, not caring too much if it would fail or be too strange or eccentric or too provocative.*

For Mikael, the driver in his project was related to emotions and ethics: why do we treat our close ones this way? However, another driver became apparent as the project developed. Mikael wanted to make an artistic project and step outside an accustomed way to do design. This required a lot of self-reflection and reflection on art and design. It also required Mikael to take a risk in a similar way to what Emilio did with his sensitive topic, even though Mikael did not reflect on the topic by referring to his own experiences. However, Mikael exposed himself to a new situation without any idea of whether his message would become clear to others. Before exhibiting his work, he was still doubting his way of presenting his concept.

> *I was still worried that people would, for some odd reason, not get the message of my work. That people would be just rather flabbergasted and puzzled on what on earth had I tried to achieve with it. I didn't have too much trust in my own message and the communicative qualities of my work.*

His work was received well by the audience, which gave Mikael an experience of success when making things his 'own way'. At its best, this is what design education can do: provide a space, time, resources and support for all kind of projects that help students to test their abilities as designers. For Mikael, this also meant re-establishing a connection with his creativity and intuitive thinking.

> *Getting all the positive reactions and having all the interesting conversations with different people during the [exhibition] opening really showed me that all my fears and anxieties had been unnecessary and self-inflicted. I had been quite uncertain with my work, because I had never done anything like this before, and in the end I was really happy that I had still done it in my own way. I didn't make compromises with my work, and it was as provocative as I originally had planned it to be.*

The aspect of creativity has not been stressed so much in my recent studies in our masters' program. The industrial and strategic design program is moving more and more into the direction of designing intangible things, such as services, and also focusing more on research than implementation. I wanted to get back to the roots of my creativity, back in doing something only from my own starting points. I personally still believe that one of the most important assets designers have, is their creativity. Designers have been educated in sensitizing themselves with their inner creative streams and keeping up this trait is extremely important. Intuition, although hard to define, is an important personal tool for any designer. And art is the key path into one's intuitive thinking. That's why art is a good way of learning about your own creative process.

Mikael's project illustrates how different programmes in Aalto ARTS focus on emphasizing different skills. This is the natural consequence of the attempt to educate students to match with both the needs of cultural creation and the needs of industry and society. The programme of Collaborative and Industrial Design emphasizes collaborative and strategic skills, and in contrast some other programmes, such as Product and Spatial Design and Fashion, Clothing and Textile Design value artistic self-expression and good practical skills with materials and techniques more. Both approaches aim to educate designers to become committed, collaborative designers with innovative ideas and a realistic view of the profession. From the students' perspective, however, this separation into more theoretical-abstract and more concrete-hands-on may be puzzling. In design practice, most designers need both skills: to verbalize, analyse and communicate their ideas and relate them to current discussions and to carry out drawings and prototypes, and in some areas also create the final versions of their designs.

7.3.5 Drawing as Communication – Case Blue

The last example presents Blue's process by concentrating on the method – and strategy – he used in his creative process. In contrast to other students' weekly reports, Blue's reports were highly visual. Throughout the course, Blue made illustrations and communicated his ideas visually. His first report contained some text and explanation of the illustrations but the further he moved in his process, the less he explained his actions via words (Figures 89-91).

During the excursion, Blue paid attention to the feeling of loneliness in Karelia. When he was alone in the kitchen in the hostel we stayed in, he felt lonely, but then noticed that the radio was on. This made him think of how

Figure 89-90. Illustrations from Blue's weekly reflections.

loneliness can be interrupted by radio, which formed the theme of his project (Figure 90).

Blue's driver was to convey an experience through an artefact, which made him focus on drawing and model making. This driver was also emotional, since he wanted to communicate the feeling of loneliness and how this feeling changes when the radio is on (Figure 91). Blue's approach was quite distinctive in its warm nature and rich visual language. Even though it did

Figure 91. Blue's eighth – and last – weekly reflection in the course.

not reveal much reflection on identity or self with words, the illustrations expressed identity reflection on the place, Karelia, human-object relationship, and emotions. Even though Blue's words were few, he wrote enough to convey the message: the personal experience of loneliness in relation to the current state of affairs in Karelia, a place from where people are moving away. His illustration captured both personal and cultural loneliness in a poetic way.

With the eyes of a design educator, both visual and textual ways are valuable and accepted means of communication. Blue, among other students, expressed skills in 'visual thinking', which is intrinsic to design (Valentine

& Ivey 2008), and when executed skilfully, can express more than thousand words.

The examples have shown some of the drivers, methods and strategies that were found in the data. The main point of these examples is to show the wide variety of different processes and focus attention on the individual ways in which the creative processes are constructed and executed. One of the common features in each project was the significance of emotional connection with the work. This factor we will discuss further in the next section.

7.4 Creating a Design Identity Through Interaction

The examples presented of students' processes have shown how students had different drivers that prevailed throughout their processes. These drivers were motivating and helping the students to keep going in their work and create their own ways in creative processes. Emilio held a strong connection to his emotions and by envisioning looked beyond the current moment, directing his way into a desired, imagined, visualized and poetically described outcome. Oliver dived deep in self-reflection with the motivation to understand his professional dreams and re-direct his activities accordingly. Thus, he became motivated by an envisioned new, clearer professional identity that he also wanted to be manifested in the concrete artefact made on the course. Yvette, who also dived into self-reflection to clarify her ideas on her design identity, used writing as an argumentation tool that illustrated her internal dialogue. In addition, she made material experiments and prototypes to further study and illustrate her identity ponderings.

Mikael's example showed how the process could be handled mostly through thinking and dialogue, when the emphasis remained on a conceptual level. In contrast, Blue's case illustrated how the ideas can be made visible right from the very beginning by drawing. These two examples also emphasized the role of emotions in a creative process. Emotions motivated and produced questions to be solved.

To make sense of the given assignment and to fulfil it, the students explored and documented their surroundings, acquired new information by reading and visiting places, discussed with others both in and outside organized meetings, presented their ideas and experiments to their peers, mentors and friends, documented their processes by writing, photographing, drawing and painting, and created ideas by visualizing and materializing their ideas. The way in which these methods were used, that is, which of them were used the most and how exactly they were used, made the processes unique. Whereas

Yvette and Mikael relied on their analytical sense-making, Emilio relied on his strong, poetic visions. Oliver, who had a tendency for critical self-reflection, found relief in hands-on work and drawing, which were also at the core of Blue's creative process.

The examples showed how identity work varied from a very personal topic (sexual identity) to a cultural (Karelian identity) and professional identity. Oliver, Yvette and Mikael, who all reflected on their professional identity, raised issues such as their own position in the field, the meaningfulness of design and a designer's work, the role of hands-on work in design, and the difference between artistic and design process. These topics were explored by developing tangible artefacts that facilitated the discovery of their own identity. As the tangible artefact began to take shape via material drawings, material experiments and prototypes, so their thoughts on identity also became clearer. Hence, a dialogue occurred between the student and the developing artefact that influenced the student's perception of her professional identity. This process was also influenced by what others (peers, mentors, teachers and friends) said about the developing artefact and design as a field in general, as Oliver's example showed.

All these examples point to interaction in identity discovery and creation. Finding one's own way in a creative process is a configuration of how one works through the process alone and with others, which tools and methods one uses in a creative act, and what drives and motivates her to carry out the work. Next, we will look more closely at these interactions.

7.4.1 Interaction with Self, Others and the Developing Artefact

The described drivers and methods form parts of a designer's own specific way to navigate the creative process via interaction. Finding (or creating) one's own way in the creative process took place through interactions between the designer, others and the developing artefact. This was influenced by the provided environment, the given context. In addition, these interactions were affected by an internal dialogue, the reflection and meaning making process of the designer. This meaning making was also fed with previous experiences, future wishes and interaction with environment (Figure 92).

Following these notions, the design outcome (concept, product, service or artefact) can be regarded as a result of these interactions that take place in the creative process. What makes each process special and unique is the emphasis on some of the interactions and the way in which these interactions are handled. These emphases construct the designer's specific 'own way' in design.
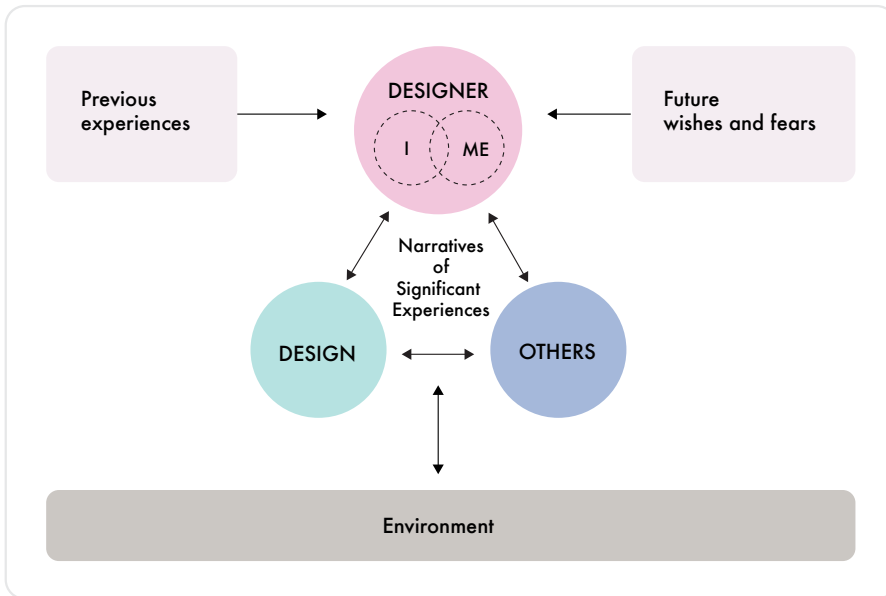
Figure 92. Framework for Narrative Design Identity (See Chapter 4 for detailed description of the framework).

We have already discussed in the previous sections how previous experiences, future wishes and environment influenced individual strategies and drivers. In the following sections, we will take a closer look at some specific features in the interactions between the student and herself (I–ME), student and others (DESIGNER–OTHERS) and student and the developing work (DESIGNER–DESIGN). In addition, the way the student observes others' relationship with their work and design as a field (OTHERS–DESIGN) also influences the process. These interactions cannot be analysed in complete isolation, since they influence one another. However, the illustration aims to help in pinpointing where each process has its emphasis. Based on this, we can discuss some general interactions that were typical for many students.

From the point of view of managing the creative process, the relationship between the student and her work (DESIGNER–DESIGN) is the most essential. We will first explore how this interaction took place in the processes, and later how the other interactions fed this relationship.

7.4.2 Ways to Maintain the Relationship with the Developing Artefact

The creative processes examined revealed some ways to initiate and maintain interaction with the developing idea / artefact. The methods that the participants used to interact with their work were: 1. Envisioning, 2. Drawing,

3. Writing, 4. Material exploration and experimentation, 5. Conceptualization, 6. Incubation, and 7. Visualizing the Process. These methods are not presented as an inclusive list of all the different ways that were used. Instead, they are examples of methods that the students frequently used in their processes or relied upon at a critical moment of the process. From this point of view, they formed strategic parts of the design students' 'own ways'.

7.4.2.1 Envisioning

Envisioning, which could be seen, for instance, as poetic images in Emilio's work and as written descriptions in Mikael's process, is a key aspect of design work (Lawson 2005: 165). Envisioning creates links to the future, to places and things that do not yet exist; hence, it helps to create the future. From the identity perspective, envisioning work relates to *possible selves*, what we fear or wish to become (Markus & Nurius 1986). In a similar way that in which we build our identities in relation to different potential ideas of ourselves, we envision imaginary concepts in design. Without this visionary work, it may be more challenging to innovate and see beyond what already exists. However, envisioning can be replaced or complemented with experimentation, where making leads the way instead of visual or conceptual thinking.

7.4.2.2 Drawing

Drawing and sketching are the most typical methods in design. Lawson (2004: 50) notes that designers, usually being very visual people, make extensive use of drawings in their work. These drawings are manipulated directly, and they play a central role in the thought processes that take place in the creative endeavour. Drawings and visualizations guide the creative process and function as a visual 'memory bank' that can be revisited (Seitamaa-Hakkarainen & Hakkarainen 2000, Lawson 2004:52). Drawing as a strategy emerged most strongly in Oliver's and Blue's creative process. Oliver leaned on drawing during the most difficult phases in his process. For Blue, the drawings led the project and communicated the essence of the project powerfully.

7.4.2.3 Writing

Writing the weekly report was considered beneficial by several students, such as Mikael.

> *Writing and putting abstract thoughts into words on paper or computer screen have always helped me in understanding and crystallizing my own thoughts.*
>
> *Mikael, final reflection*

For Yvette, writing could be considered critical. She literally discussed with herself on the paper from the very beginning of the course until the final reflection (see 7.3.3). As Tracey & Hutchinson (2016) note, reflective writing can function as a tool to explore identity and manage uncertainty. In addition to reflection, writing helped in defining and redefining concepts in the process. This act of defining and redefining the work week by week also helped the students to crystallize and communicate their ideas better verbally.

7.4.2.4 Material Exploration and Experimentation[50]

From the cases presented previously, Yvette's process contained material experimentation as one of the main methods. Material exploration and experimentation also served as a freeing, stress relieving manner. This became visible in Oliver's process, when he realized that hands-on work released his pressure and started to weave. Oliver used making as a way to 'ground' his thinking and get a feeling of satisfaction because of getting something concrete done. However, experimentation does not only release the mind from pressure, but it also helps to learn to make mistakes. Sennett (2008: 160) notes: "In order to develop in a skill, one has to learn to make mistakes, to be willing to commit error – and to recover from this. This recovery is not a personal trait but a learned skill. Only through error we learn to do something well. If a student is given only the right way, she will suffer from a false sense of security. Experimentation through error develops the skill to do correctly."

Trying out different materials and tools in design is similar to trying out different roles in identity work. Through envisioning and experimenting we discover what works for us.[51]

7.4.2.5 Conceptualization

In most of the studied cases, such as in Emilio's case, experimentation and concept creation was balanced and the two happened in parallel with one another. In this way, these different acts nurtured one another, keeping the process alive and moving forward. However, some students, such as Mikael, remained long in the ideation phase or on a conceptual level, which caused problems for him. Mikael developed his concept by thinking and speaking with others, but did not make prototypes or tangible representations during the process. He realized his concept at the very end of the course close to the deadline. He had been accustomed to develop his ideas until they were 'ready' at a conceptual level by thinking before executing them.

[50] In this study, material exploration refers to the act of trying out new materials and their behaviour, whereas experimentation refers to making experiments with different techniques and materials.

[51] For the significance of material experimentation and it's impact in creative process, see also Mäkelä & Löytönen (2015) and Groth & Mäkelä (2016).

> *I wasn't doing anything practical, just rotating the same themes in my head, and I was losing time.*
>
> > *Mikael, final reflection*

In some cases, the conceptual and the experimental did not reach synthesis at the end. Yvette's process can be regarded as an example of this. As we saw, Yvette was analytical and reflective from the very beginning. She also made a lot of experiments, and got further with her experiments with porcelain, but ran out of time to reach a result that would communicate her concept in a powerful way. The impression that was conveyed through her reports was that she did not engage with the material exploration in the way that she let the material speak back to her and contribute to her concept. Her concept was thought through to such a degree that she essentially sought to impose it on the material. This illuminates the delicate and difficult relationship between conceptualization and actual realization.

7.4.2.6 Incubation

The ways presented were examples of maintaining the relationship with the developing work by engaging actions. However, another important issue was also the skill to let go of the work and let it incubate while focusing on something else. This was well described by Kim, a Korean student in the DEE course.

> *In my design or art process, incubator plays an important role as a connecting bridge between [the] inspirational concept and hands-on form. (…) During this process, all I need to do is to put it aside and spend my time to do anything unrelated to my design or art work.*
>
> > *Kim, final reflection*

Incubation relates to the ability of letting go and trusting the process. When the focus is temporarily taken away from the creative work, subconscious parts of the mind work on the problem (see also Sapp 1992: 24; Sennett 2008:151; Csikszentmihalyi 1997: 101-102). This sort of distancing can also be done with idling, which Mikael describes in the following way:

> *Idleness as such promotes creativity. (…) The initial phase seems to take proportionally strangely longer than the actual implementation phase. (…) As if the 'doing nothing' part [were] (…) actually (…) an essential part of the process.*
>
> > *Mikael, final reflection*

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This idling that can be referred to 'hanging around' but not taking action can serve as a way to control stress and possible overworking of the idea. However, if idling or incubation become procrastination, they change from interactive methods to avoiding methods.
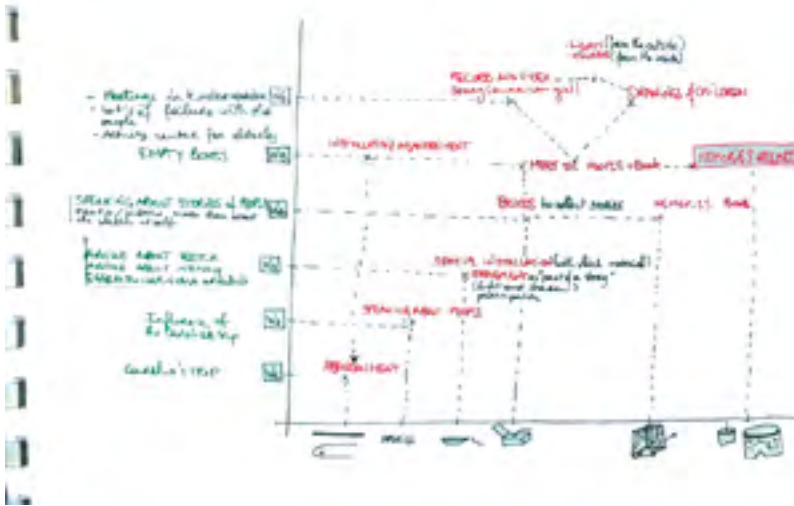

Figure 93. An example of a visualization exercise from Corinne's final reflection.

7.4.2.7 Visualizing the Process

In addition to engaging with or distancing oneself from the work, a meta-level understanding of the process was found beneficial. This was done several times by revisiting documentation, writing and rewriting, but also by visualizing the creative process (Figure 93). During the DEE course in 2011, the students were asked to visualize their creative processes. Many students found this task beneficial.

> *I really liked making the graph of our process. It was a nice way to see how my ideas had developed and to realise how all my thoughts came together in the final artefact.*
>
> *Oliver, final reflection*

The visualization exercise helped the students to construct a story of their creative process in a condensed format.

When one has to visualize one's process, the reasons for decisions become more obvious and understandable. For others and for oneself.

Monika, final reflection

This task was similar to the Visual Narrative exercise conducted in this study, just on a smaller scale. The comments highlight how visualization and storytelling supported the overall understanding of the creative process and brought clarity to the design student's own work. Visualisation made the student's own way in the process more visible.

7.4.3 Meaning Making and the Relationship to Self

The relationship with the work was influenced by internal processes, such as emotions, meaning making and self-reflection. These interactions, which can be located as internal dialogues and the I–ME relationship, influenced the choice of topic, decision making, argumentation and self-confidence in critical moments, for example.

7.4.3.1 Emotions and Intuition

Emotions had a critical agency in the creative processes, as we could see in Emilio's and Oliver's processes. They influenced and guided making (see also Seitamaa-Hakkarainen & al. 2013; Groth 2015). These two examples show that emotions link to the personal meaningfulness of the work. It is hard to consider something meaningful if it does not cause any emotions in us. Both students justified and explained the work through their feelings in order for it to become meaningful for themselves and the world.

In Emilio's process, the motivation was personal but reflected an identity crisis in general and the need for redefining his identity in the eyes of others. Making his personal experience visible also influenced others, and triggered a reflection on identity and the masks we need to wear because of others. In Oliver's process, both his own position as a designer as well as the role of his artefact in the world were meaningful for him. He defined and redefined the desired meaning of the artefact and its significance for others in his weekly reports. The writing of these descriptions, stories of the artefact, was one way in which he created the artefact. This meaning-making and redefining took place in parallel with the actual model making and prototyping, and thus these processes influenced one another. Oliver's example shows how design identity is interlinked with emotions and the feelings they trigger in us. In cases where feelings, thinking and acting do not match, a need to solve this mismatch emerges.

Emotions drove the design work specifically when the work tackled something personal, but otherwise, too, since the creative process itself provokes several emotions. Spendlove (2007: 157) writes about the significance of dealing with emotions, since that also helps in dealing with uncertainty and possible failure. In addition, the capacity to process one's own emotions increases the ability to move on in the process. Hence, emotions also influence our own way in design, the way in which we use emotions or let emotions guide us in our process.

> *When you have some feelings and some intuitions, it is difficult to explain why I did: I had images that came to my mind in a very natural and spontaneous way and that brought me to the definition of my final work.*
>
> *Emilio, final reflection*

Emotions were critical, but not sufficient to get the work done. Planning and organizing were used to manage the project and to keep fears of failing or stress in control. Planning and clarity of subsequent steps provided comfort and support.

> *Having made a workout plan for the realization puts me now into great time pressure, as the wrapping and soaking of wood is a time-consuming procedure, but at the same time the plan gives me confidence. By experience I know I will soon have to confront several problems, which will arise during the creation of the pieces, but since I can follow my own 'master plan', step by step, it takes the weight off my shoulders and makes it easier. Not that I don't like this weight, this heaviness of not being sure where to go next and what will come, but for me only a good balance between both leads to a good result.*
>
> *Monika, weekly report 7*

Monika's comment shows how she had experiential knowledge that she relied on. She was aware of the upcoming challenges that she felt as 'weight on her shoulders'. Her strategy was to follow a '*master plan*' step by step to release the pressure concerning the future so that she could concentrate better on the present moment. This strategy was part of Monika's own way, an approach and a method she used in her process.

Despite the significant role of planning, important decisions were not made by rationalizing what should be done, but rather based on a 'gut feeling' that emerges in body, which according to Polanyi (1966:14) contains man's highest creative powers. Emotions and intuition, or 'gut feeling', seemed to

co-exist in the stories, and they were referred to mostly as something that guides the person from inside. Mary's example shows how it was the feeling she had that guided her decision making, even though she then justified this feeling by argumentation on why it was also rational and served her purpose.

> *Do I need a table? Can I just create a tray or install my medium on to any surface? It is my feeling that I need to create a frame for the interaction of the glasses and the medium to display the concept effectively. The concept is not just about the glasses but about the interaction of the glasses and the surface and I feel this will come across more powerfully if I can create a strong framework for this interaction.*
>
> *Mary, weekly report 5*

7.4.3.2 Self-reflection and Self-Support

The role of self-reflection varied in the processes. As shown, Yvette, Emilio, Oliver and Mikael did profound self-reflection on identity during the DEE course. Most of the weekly reports, however, focused on describing the process and revealed only few references to questioning, defining or redefining self and one's own developing professional identity. However, they showed how the surroundings and events that took place on the course were mirrored with previous experiences and own perspective.

In Oliver's process, too much of self-reflection caused anxiety, but also made Oliver's identity concept more clear to him. This example shows the pain and reward of reflective work. To ease the heaviness of self-reflection, Oliver also used self-supporting strategies that helped him to strengthen his self-confidence and focus his thoughts on positive possibilities. He did this by sharing his thoughts, and he also sought actively for others' opinions. He gained comfort from hearing that other students also felt insecure; some of them just hid it better. He also found a new viewpoint on other designs he previously found threatening; they can also be seen as inspiration. In addition, he wrote encouraging notes for himself (Figure 94).
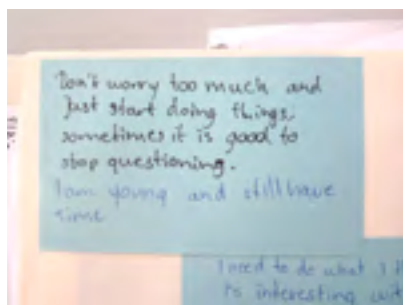
Figure 94. Encouraging sticky notes that Oliver had placed on the wall and later attached to his sketchbook.

Even though self-reflection caused anxiety and took time, it provided an understanding of self and one's own process. Reflection develops metacognitive abilities that serve in guiding one's own creative process better (Hargrove 2011). This, eventually, leads to a better understanding of what one does in one's creative process, that is, awareness of one's own way.

7.4.4 The Pros and Cons of Sharing the Process

Feeling, emotional work, and meaning-making can be mostly considered intrapersonal work. However, this work is constantly influenced by others around us and others' interpretations of us. The relationship with one's own work was nourished by sharing the process with peers, teachers, friends and experts. Thus, others influenced how one found – and created – one's way in the creative process.

7.4.4.1 Informal Discussions

Discussion fed the internal meaning-making processes, providing them with new viewpoints and ideas. In Mikael's process, informal discussions with one of the tutors were crucial when Mikael tested his concepts. They helped him to clarify and build his concept before he realized it.

> *Talking and joking around with others about your ideas somehow humanizes them, and takes the exaggerated seriousness and stiffness away from them. It kind of externalizes them, helping you to look at them more holistically and more relaxed.*
>
> *Mikael, final reflection*

Some doubts could be solved by sharing them with others, as Oliver did when he reflected critically on his choices and identity. Instead of staying on the level of self-reflection, he sought contact with others to hear their opinions and experiences. Sharing his doubts with others, he found that others have undergone or are going through similar doubts even though they may not express or talk about these hesitations. Oliver used a similar strategy to Monika in relation to the painful experience at the design office (see 6.3.2.6). Monika, too, shared her concerns with others to obtain support in dealing with the situation and to make decisions that would help her to continue her path in a more fulfilling direction.

Monika used discussion as a key method both in her creative process and her life in general, thus discussion can be seen as one of the strongest elements in her making of her own way. Her personal narrative showed that dis-

cussions have been very important for her, specifically at critical moments. In her creative process, too, she sought to discuss with many people in order to gain a broad understanding of the topic that was troubling her. In this way, she was feeding her ME with many perspectives and concepts. Monika could be called a 'connected creative' (Taylor & Littleton 2012: 60), who benefits from dialogues and knows how to connect with others to feed and frame her own work. However, being exposed to many different viewpoints and opinions required the patience to listen and follow several processes in parallel to her own making. This also required the skill to separate her own thoughts from the thoughts of others and find a good balance between different ideas.

7.4.4.2 Feedback Sessions and One-To-One Mentoring

The final feedback session, or *critique*, is an embedded practice in art and design education, specifically in studio teaching and learning. These feedback sessions inside the school echo real design practice: there are several voices, perspectives and discourses that co-exist in the field. In these critique sessions, students experience how subjects are open for interpretation, meanings are more slippery than absolute, and knowledge is uncertain (Winters 2011: 93).

Even though only the final feedback in the exhibition can be considered as a critique, all the other discussions were also part of this evaluation work. Listening to others' presentations allowed the student to observe the interaction between others and their work, which provoked reflection in relation to each designer's own way.

> *I loved this week's presentations from my class mates. To see what gets them going, to get to know their inspirational fuel, was also fuel to me. I was fascinated by the artists that they presented, but more by how they react to them.*

> *Isadora, weekly report 5*

Some of the presentations raised intense discussion that influenced the whole group. One of them happened after Oliver's presentation on a specific artist, which caused the students to critically discuss art and design and the role of designer.

> *The first subject of the discussion which caught my attention was about questioning the relevance, necessity and justification around design. Is there any need for the objects we design? Who creates this need? Is it the market, or*

is it the user? If it is the market, is it legitimate to design for it? What is the responsibility of the designer?

> Yvette, final reflection

Even though the weekly presentations and discussions were mainly referred to in a positive manner, some of them also revealed challenges. An example of this comes from Oliver:

> *After the conversation around the table, I started to think about the way I worked. Before the presentation, I was finally happy with the idea I had chosen, although I thought that it was too simple in the beginning, and I was ready to start building the chair and define the final shape. I did not really like to step away from the idea because I just had made the decision to just do it. The idea of stepping away from it made me feel a little bit uncomfortable. A thing that Simo said during the conversation around the table and what stayed in my mind, was: "Break your way of thinking about things. It is important to open your inside structure to be able to accept new information."*

> Oliver, weekly report 5-6

The teacher's comment made Oliver feel uncomfortable for a while, since it made Oliver question the way in which he had become used to work. Despite his reluctance to rethink his piece of furniture, Oliver proceeded by drawing new ideas. Drawing helped him to question his approach and allow his original idea to open up for new thoughts.

Mentoring and discussions were both beneficial and challenging from the perspective of creating the students' own ways. On the one hand, you need to listen to others to broaden your perspective. On the other hand, if you take in and try to digest and integrate all that is said to you into your own thinking, it requires a lot of energy. This dilemma was put in words well by Monika:

> *As different tutors were tutoring this project, I got at a later point very confused. I started to question my project and my decisions very strongly and went through all the steps and decisions I made, asking myself if they are justifiable and if the concept is strong enough. Criticism, in my point of view, is helpful in the development of a project, but at some stage it can be also very disturbing. (…) Talking to other students can also be both confusing and helpful.*

> Monika, final reflection

Monika's thought highlights the fact that from the point of view of one's own way it is critical to note when sharing helps and when it confuses. Further, it is critical to learn to deal with different comments and learn to make decisions so that the feedback does not prevent but rather advances the process despite its content. After one mentoring session, Emilio rejected the ideas presented by his tutor, and continued the work his own way.

> *During the week, I had a review that didn't help me and for that reason I decided to take one day of break. I think that day helped me to continue, listening just to what I want to do.*
>
> *Emilio, weekly report 7*

During the DEE course, Emilio participated in many one-to-one mentorings and found most of them useful. However, in the last stages of his project he had already built such a strong concept that he was self-confident enough to reject the advice and also note this in his report. He was already sure of his own way, and the extra viewpoints were no longer necessary for him.

However, some students were following the tutors' ideas to the extent that the influence of the tutor on the work became very visible. One of the students changed her course of action many times after advice from the teachers. It became hard to read whether this student was questioning the feedback coming from the tutors. Perhaps for those students who felt a bit lost in the process, it was easier to follow the advice they received without questioning them as much as those who were more agentic in their processes.

Since meanings in art and design can be regarded as shared narratives that we maintain and question (Carroll 1988), the meanings in a piece of design can be considered products of collaborative meaning-making. This collaborative effort impacts upon both students and teachers, since in the process both students and teachers bring in different meanings. Some of them come with more conventional and generally accepted ideas, and some question these understandings. One's own way, consequently, can become more difficult when one swims against the current.

Sharing one's own design work, exposing oneself to critique can be a delicate thing specifically when the idea or approach contains something sensitive and personal, or something that the student presents with doubts in mind. Identity questions can block the person or cause anxiety if these doubts are not responded to empathetically by teachers and peers. This type of concern was not reported in any of the documentation, but some students might have gone through difficult situations and not reported these. Even though the course was designed to flatten the hierarchy between students and

teachers, there was an embedded issue of power involved, since the course was graded by the teachers.

7.5 Embracing Doubts Outside the Comfort Zone

At some stage in an exploratory project there typically comes a critical point where the designer has some doubts about what she is doing. This situation can affect one's own way – and thus also influence the developing professional identity – in a critical manner. Rasmus and Santeri, who participated in the DEE course during 2012 when the course exhibition was held in Design Museum, reflected on their thoughts and feelings about the upcoming exhibition in a powerful way:

> *Especially one week was tough, bringing me close to giving up on the course entirely. I rarely arrive at such low points in a project. (…) I never imagined how emotionally I would react to the feeling of being completely lost. (…) The project only got air under its wings again as soon as I was willing not to look for hiding places anymore but trust my senses and instinct instead. I had to admit that it was now me and my work connected with one bold, straight line.*
>
> *Rasmus, final reflection*

> *At this point I was totally out of ideas and quite stressed because time was running out. (…) [The d]ay that we had our next group meeting I almost gave up and stayed in bed. I really did not want to face the reality that I have nothing.*
>
> *Santeri, final reflection*

Rasmus's description locates the problem right between himself and his work with a '*bold, straight line*' without any excuses, such as blaming the environment or others for his own challenges. Both students described the situation of a 'creative crisis' or 'creative frustration' in their own way. According to D. David Sapp (1992) we have 4 typical strategies to relate to a creative crisis, but only one of these leads to new growth (Figure 95).

Sapp (1992) notes that when the frustration point arises and the solution cannot be seen yet, the best results are gained by tolerating the situation – uncertainty – and continuing to work. There is a risk that the frustration or stagnation will become overpowering and the person will settle for a familiar, old strategy or even give up on the project. By using this familiar way, however,
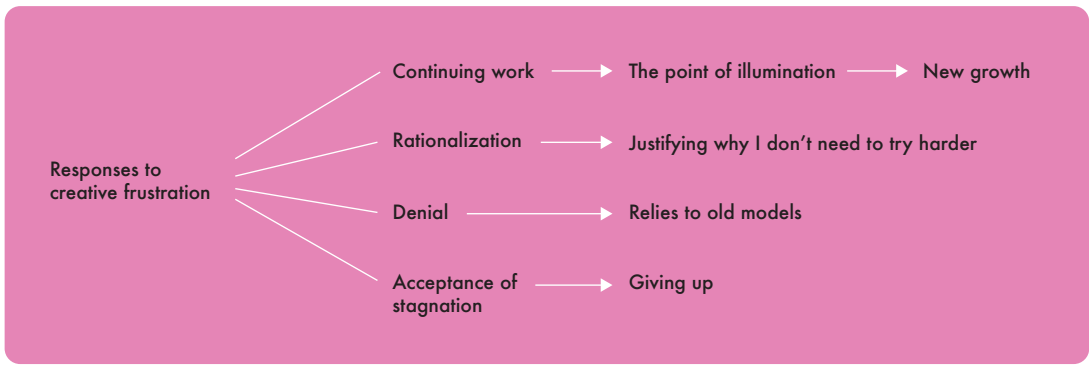
Figure 95. D. David Sapp's (1992) conception of the typical ways to respond to creative frustration.

we gain no new experiences of different ways and their suitability for our problems, which prevents our perspective becoming broader. In a similar way, one's identity does not evolve and develop without redefinitions that can be painful and frustrating. However, when we overcome this uncertainty and reach new insights, it is also rewarding and productive.

Creative frustration is an emotional state and a natural part of the creative process (McNiff 1998: 24). Seitamaa-Hakkarainen & al. (2013:15) note that productive creativity requires "successful working through temporary obstacles and frustrations". Ultimately, the main function of these strategies is to prevent us from giving up.

> *I seem to have lost orientation. So here I am, with only a vague idea of where I might have come from. And where to go now? Once more, I don't really know. I might have to keep experimenting until it starts making sense.*
>
> *Rasmus, final reflection (Reflection on week 5)*

Despite the strategy we use, the most essential act is to stay with the work and learn to tolerate the uncertainty of not knowing and the fear of not being able to solve the problems – yet. This tolerance may become very beneficial for us, as Shaun McNiff (1998:22) notes: "If we are able to stay with a situation, it will carry us in a new place."

Uncertainty is seen as an integral part of design (Cross 2011, Lawson 2005: 114-166, 219), which requires the students at least to tolerate, and ideally even enjoy uncertainty, which itself can be both frustrating and motivating (Anderson 2006). This gives a special tone to designers' own ways, where uncer-

tainty is embedded in their work. Tolerating uncertainty is not an easy task, since an uncertain mind may also block the designer. Uncertainty can function as a driving force as long as it does not escalate into hopelessness or depression (Pallasmaa 2009:110).

The key methods presented in the previous section illustrated some of the ways in which students dealt with these challenging moments or prevented them from deteriorating further. Previous experiences also gave comfort to some of the students who had already acknowledged uncertainty as a natural part of the process:

> *I was confident that this uncertainty and dissatisfaction was part of the process, as I have been going through exactly the same uncertainty phase with previous experimentation projects, and therefore this did not worry me.*
>
> *Yvette, final reflection*

Changing his focus from thinking – be it conceptualization or reflection – to making worked well for Oliver and calmed his mind. This change of focus has also proved to be successful in other creative processes (see also Mäkelä & Löytönen 2015). Moving from reasoning to bodily activity gives room for the body and embodied knowledge to take over (see also Groth 2017).

Artist and art therapist Shaun McNiff (1998) has studied creative processes and the frustrations and blocks that emerge during creative work. He proposes that trusting the process will eventually lead you over doubts, fears and other challenges that are natural parts of a creative process. When the problem is not addressed directly, but put aside for a while, the solution may appear in a natural way (see also Mäkelä 2016). This 'letting go' is similar to 'incubation', and differs from abandoning or closing the project. It is a gentle way of putting the work aside and returning to it when the time is right to work with it again. Directing the conscious mind elsewhere may also let the more holistic problem solving system, intuition (Raami 2015) take over.

The DEE course encouraged the students to learn new skills and methods, which required them to step out from their comfort zones and develop their own ways. Remaining in the comfort zone does not enhance learning, since the familiar zone is easy to navigate. When a student steps outside her comfort zone, she steps into an unknown area that may cause uncomfortable feelings (Mälkki 2011: 33). However, if this uncomfortable feeling is accepted as part of learning, a new understanding may take place. Oliver and Rasmus reflected on their experiences outside their comfort zones afterwards in the following way:

I normally did not really like to step away from my main idea because it made me feel a bit uncomfortable. I zoomed out and criticized my own idea. In this project, I was able to step away from my first idea and realised that it did not mean that my whole idea changed. Because I had the courage to step away from my main idea, I got my project to a deeper level.

   Oliver, final reflection

It was good to see that it can work to let go of old frameworks one grew used to and still create meaning. Although I was not good at it just yet, I certainly have more confidence in listening to my instincts from now on and believe that with enough practice one could achieve real mastery in it.

   Rasmus, final reflection

The presented drivers and methods to navigate one's own process, and methods to overcome creative frustration all form parts of one's own way. As shown, these ways differ from one another and are influenced by several factors within and outside the course platform.

7.6 Providing Space for Identity Exploration

Thus far, the focus of the analysis has been on individual processes and how a student creates her identity in interaction with her self, others and her work. Since these processes took place in the DEE course, it is good to take a look at how the course itself functioned as a platform for identity exploration. The course structure, content and purpose influenced the creation of the reports in a similar way to that in which the VN workshops influenced the created Visual Narratives. The empirical evidence for this brief evaluation comes both from the students' reports and my own experiential knowledge of the course.

   The DEE course as such was not designed for identity reflection. However, the explorative but also clearly structured and supportive nature of the course provoked reflection on identity. In 2011, due to the topic *Identity*, some works became very personal, such as the work by Emilio that we discussed earlier. The outcome expressed an identity crisis with strong visual language. In his final reflection, he noted that he did not want to share his thoughts at the beginning of the course but grew confident in sharing and working on them later on. Whether this was caused by the course or other simultaneous events in his life cannot be found in the data. However, he used the course as an opportunity to share his experience concerning his sexual identity. His process

shows that he managed well what he shared and when, and the course setting, teachers and peers supported him in his delicate identity work.

Most of the students in 2011 connected identity with Karelia and kept the shared reflection on a more general level, referring only to some personal experiences that could not be considered as troublesome or critical. Emilio's and Oliver's processes were in this sense distinctive due to the intensity of emotions, reflection and sensitivity of these topics.

Other DEE courses with the themes Family (2012), Religion, Belief and Faith (2013) and Journey (2014) also provoked reflection on professional identity and personal issues. These themes can be considered personal or even intimate, which implies that by introducing these themes, the teachers intended to provoke reflection on personal domains. The teachers did not specifically encourage the students to explore sensitive topics, but neither did they forbid them from doing this. However, if the student explained that she felt it hard to deal with the emotions in relation to the topic she had chosen, she was advised to consider another topic to work on.

> *The theme [Family] of the course felt heavy for me due to a sudden illness of one of my family members. (…) I decided already at an early stage of the course to not to get too deep in the topic, and the mentors advised me to approach the issue by concentrating for instance to aesthetic or material matters and try out different ways to work.*
>
> *Taru, final reflection*

The reflective work was mostly focused on positioning one's own process between 'design process' and 'artistic process'. Some industrial design students, such as Mikael, found it hard, or even scary to work in an artistic manner. Mikael had chosen to make a piece of work in the field of critical design, which was closer to art than his familiar domain, industrial design. In his final reflection, he elaborated on one of the reasons for his procrastination concerning concrete work:

> *The art piece you do is your expression of something, a part of you. You kind of strip yourself naked in some way. (…) It's emotionally more daring to do art than to design something, at least for me.*
>
> *Mikael, final reflection*

Even though the course did not ask the students to make art pieces, the way the course was structured pushed many students to learn a new way of car-

rying out a creative process. The open-endedness, excursion, exhibition and requirement to work alone instead of in a group, all created a setting that was perceived to be closer to an artistic way than a designerly way. Some students were also missing beauty in design.

> *I recently became aware that the beauty seem not to be much of a concern to design anymore. Therefore, I felt like exploring beauty for myself.*
>
> *Rasmus, final reflection*

The biggest challenge on the course was related to support when the student began a deep self-reflection process. The student was supported in group meetings or one-on-one tutoring sessions if she was sharing her concerns. However, none of the teaches had a therapeutic education, and only one had studied pedagogy. The course setting, however, was carefully planned to support various processes, even delicate ones. One of the supporting elements was the weekly reporting, since the writing task itself helped the students to make their concerns visible.

> *The 'weekly diary' method, which I have followed during the project, seemed to me a good place for writing about these questions, even though they were not directly related to the project. Nevertheless, I consider them a very crucial part of the process, since these reflections influence my ideas and choices, and therefore indirectly influence the direction in which I take my projects and the way in which I turn ideas into tangible matters. Besides, writing about them helps me in trying to find out how I should work and position myself in the field of design.*
>
> *Yvette, final reflection*

This documentation proved to be essential to the students when they needed to look back on their process. Everything that they had included in their diary could be revisited and some things that at the time felt unimportant could be re-evaluated and understood with the benefit of hindsight.

> *Writing this weekly working diary is in a way very helpful. Reading the pages of the previous weeks helps me to understand what changed in my point of view concerning this project. What developed? How? And how did I see this problem one or two weeks ago? With the pressure of keeping this diary I am*

forced to reflect, to note everything down, but at the same time I am able to reread and think about my own words.

Monika, weekly reflection 5

Even though the course did not provide support for active identity work in a similar manner to, for instance, ID workshops (Mahlakaarto 2014), it was planned to enhance a safe atmosphere through the shared excursion, various exercises, sharing and spending time together (see also Kosonen & Mäkelä 2012). The teachers came from both design and art fields and were familiar with identity work though their own practice. The teachers participated in the process by sharing their work, approach and experiences during the excursion, as well as in the weekly discussions and tutorials when they felt that their own experiences might benefit the student. This personal approach was appreciated by the students[52]. The teachers' highly personal and clearly positioned presentations gave the students reference points and a clearer view on where each teacher 'comes from'. This helped the students to position themselves in relation to these 'characters'.

7.7 Identity Explorations Through Interactions in Creative Processes

This chapter has presented how design students explored their identities in a design course. Due to their different backgrounds, the students came to the course with various views on identity, which influenced the design work they did connected with the given course themes. Some tackled professional identity, whereas for some the identity work happened at a very personal level. The reports revealed how self-reflection became intense and blocked making activity for a while, as in the case of Oliver, and how self-reflection on professional identity proceeded as a form of dialogue in a written format, as in the case of Yvette. Furthermore, the role of environment, such as the excursion location and the course setting, came through from the reports.

The creative process reports revealed different drivers, such as self-revelation or self-reflection on professional identity, that initiated and kept the process on-going. The students relied on some methods, such as drawing, ex-

[52] After the teachers' presentations, I asked some of the students how they felt about the teachers' presentations, since the presentations were lengthy and very focused on the specific personal ways in which these teachers worked. At that time, I remember worrying that the students would not follow their own ways but be too heavily influenced by these strong figures, and I doubted whether that kind of self-referential (Nias 1989: 5, 25) and self-highlighting presentation would serve the purpose of supporting the students to find their way. In contrast to what I expected, all the students I talked to considered the presentations beneficial.

perimentation and envisioning, to interact with the developing design work. In addition, they used different strategies to interact with others and make sense of the feedback that others provided. For some, such as Monika, the discussions with others were very important, even though these discussions also blurred her own vision for a while. In contrast, others, such as Blue, proceeded in their processes more silently and independently via drawing and making.

In this chapter, I have illuminated how a creative process and design identity takes place through interactions between SELF (ME and I), OTHERS and DESIGN, that is, the developing artefact and the field, and the ENVIRONMENT. Furthermore, the creative process, as well as design identity is fed with previous experiences and future wishes. Whereas we draw from the past to understand the present, we also look to the future to anchor our identities and ideas in something we wish to become and create. These aspects of identity formation came through in the ways in which students pondered their previous experiences and envisioned their possible futures.

The openness of the course task – the creation of a self-framed artefact with self-decided methods and materials – caused pressure for many students and pushed them out of their comfort zone. At a critical moment, the students relied on something familiar, a method or strategy, such as drawing in the case of Oliver, or previous experiences of the known obstacles in the creative process, as in the case of Yvette. Some students relied on the group and the course, and even though they felt devastated, they came to the agreed meetings and were able to proceed in their work. Those students who felt that they had been able to face and overcome the creative crisis without choosing an easy way out reported that they had learned something valuable and new. As McNiff (1998: 22) has proposed, the courage and resilience to remain with the uncertain situation took them to a new place.

**NAVIGATING
ONE'S OWN WAY
IN DESIGN**
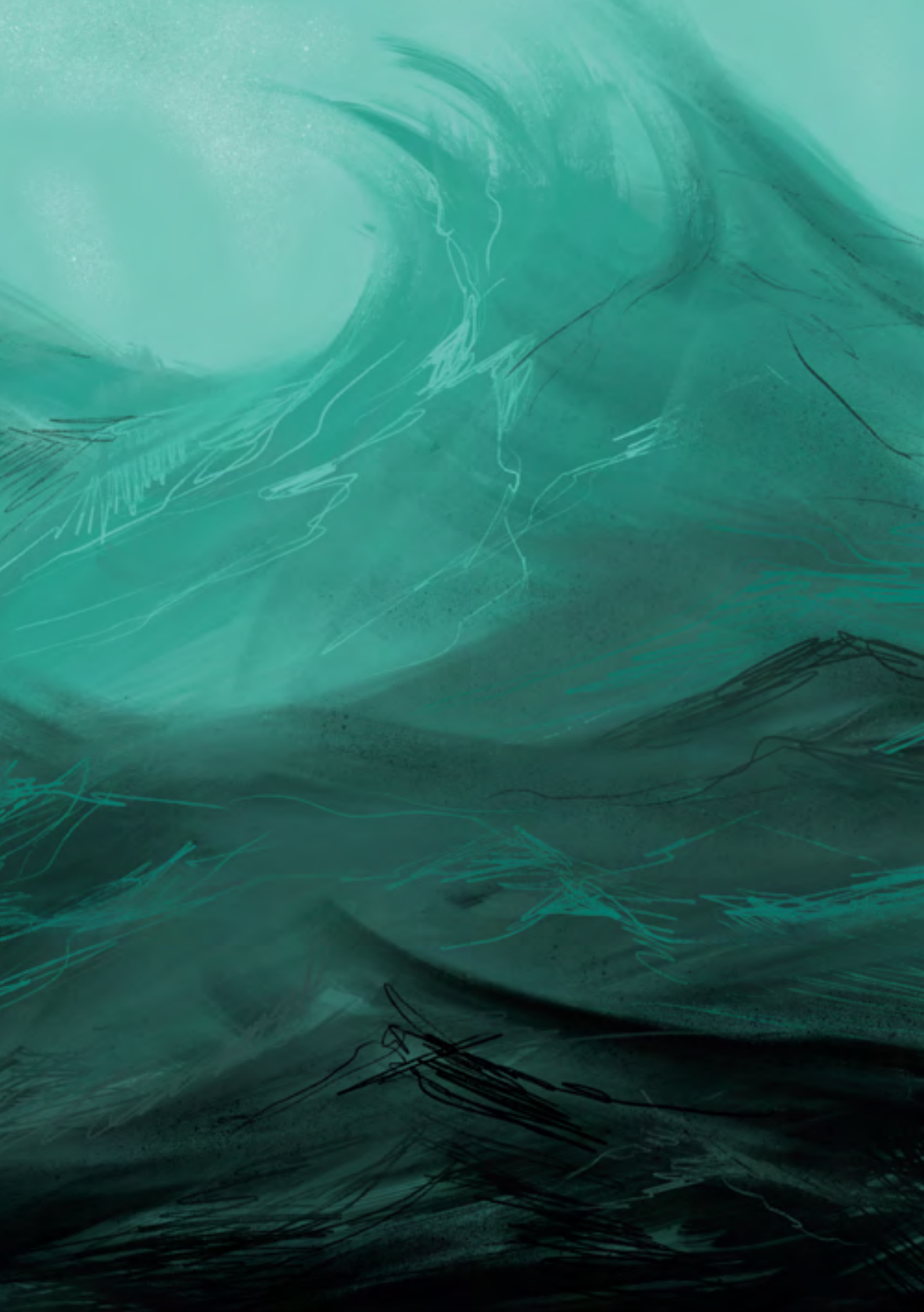
Fears about yourself prevent you from doing your best work, while fears about your reception by others prevent you from doing your own work.

Bayles & Orland (2011:23)

8 Navigating One's Own Way in Design

The aim of this doctoral study was to uncover how designers find and create their ways in design. This interest gave birth to the Visual Narrative method that was used to generate rich data regarding design entrepreneurs' and design students' lives. The main focus in the interpretation of the narratives was on the most significant experiences and how professional identity emerged in the narrations. Since these insights did not yet capture the side of 'doing design', students' creative process reports were examined to further understand how identity negotiations take place in the creative process, and how one's own way is found by doing design.

Both the personal stories and the creative process reports were looked at as narratives that represent professional identity and the navigation of designers' own ways in design. The analysis of the narratives created led to an analytic framework, *Narrative Design Identity*, which is based on a general understanding of identity development that takes place both via an interpersonal and an intrapersonal dialogue that is affected by past, future and the environment (see Fig 32). This framework and the focus of the analysis (see Chapter 4) were developed in parallel with the data-driven analysis of the rich, vibrant narratives. These tools helped in constructing a model of the most important factors in finding one's own way in design that builds on several empirical examples. This model has been discussed in the 4th and 7th chapter, and it is represented later in this chapter with the main findings integrated into it.

The theoretical view chosen, narrative identity, builds strongly on social and narrative psychology (McAdams 1993; Murray 2008). This perspective was chosen since it illuminated how the participants built their identities through the narratives they created. Some of the main concepts within this framework, such as agency and communion and narrative tone, shed light on the narratives and helped in interpreting and comparing them to one another. These concepts, helped to analyse the visualizations that had been framed around the most significant experiences according to the pre-assignment and visualization task guidelines.

The *Visual Narrative method* both helped and guided the making of the narrative, of which the presentation and format was influenced by several limiting and guiding factors, such as the instructions provided and the audience it was presented to (Kosonen 2011a). In a similar manner, the analytical tool created to interpret visualizations, and the Narrative Design Identity framework provided a constructed lens to examine the stories. However, the recre-

ated stories did not lean solely on this analytic framework, since the aim was to remain loyal to the themes and individual paths that the empirical, rich stories revealed.

This chapter summarizes the findings of the study by responding to the research questions that focus on finding one's own way from each participant's perspective. These questions are: 1) *Which experiences do design entrepreneurs and design students consider most significant in their study and work lives?*, 2) *What do designers' and design students' narratives reveal of their self-making and professional identity?*, and 3) *What do the creative process reflections reveal of design students' developing professional identity?* The next, concluding chapter will continue the discussion on evaluating the study and presenting some practical implications of the findings, mainly on how design education can support students in finding their own ways in design.

8.1 Significant Experiences in Design Paths

Design entrepreneurs' and students' personal stories revealed turning points and other significant experiences that the participants considered crucial in their design paths. The perspective of symbolic interaction (Blumer 1986) helped in noticing how each participant had their own perspective and view on somewhat similar experiences. These different interpretations came through in the ways in which the authors presented and gave meanings to their experiences. In many cases, the first significant experience was located in childhood. The childhood atmosphere and early experiences were important anchoring events (Pillemer 2001:128) for a creative identity and the birth of the narrative tone (McAdams 1993; Taylor & Littleton 2012). From this ground, the identities developed through the acceptance by an art or design school, exposure to new experiences abroad, feedback from teachers and mentors, and acknowledgement from peers and the design community. Of these themes, feedback and recognition stood out as the most significant, specifically at the beginning of studies when identities were most fragile and needed positive and encouraging mirroring surfaces (see also Taylor & Littleton 2012:54-55; Nasir & Cooks 2009). In addition, an explorative approach and curiosity towards the new shone through all the narratives.

The role of exhibitions stood out strongly among the design entrepreneurs. This underlined the nature of the practice of these practitioners, who had studied furniture design, spatial design and applied art and design. Exhibitions were annual festivals that gathered together colleagues, broadened networks, and provided a view on contemporary design. In the design students' stories, making and hands-on activities appeared relevant or even

crucial. These activities, described as joyful, relieving, calming and pleasant, were for many participants at the core of professional identity – the reason why they wanted to do design. Lauretta extended this concept to 'thinking with hands', when she could switch her brain off and let her hands take control (see also Groth 2017). Hands-on work made her feel happy and alive. In a similar way, Veera, Inka, Erika, Oliver, Yvette and Monika expressed how much they enjoyed this sort of activity typical to a craftsman (Sennett 2008).

What was considered significant was not only some individual experiences, but also periods in time that served a certain purpose. These periods, such as the basic work that provided income after graduation were important even though they were not considered dramatic or glamorous. The work provided safety and kept the designers in the design community. The balance of basic every day work and more extraordinary projects was expressed clearly in Annika's story. Some key experiences showed a starting point for a long term activity, which turned into a skill and served the person both personally and professionally. An example of this was Oliver's relationship with drawing, since for him drawing served as a protective and soothing activity both in childhood and adulthood.

Some of the significant experiences contained the element of chance or serendipity that Taylor & Littleton (2012: 51) also found in creative workers' accounts. These experiences, such as Sofia's or Annika's impulse to apply for Aalto ARTS were not carefully planned at the moment, but later became significant, since they altered these authors' paths in a powerful way. This shows that not all designers that manage well and enjoy their work as design entrepreneurs have had a calling or similar already in childhood. Sofia and Annika also had a more descriptive and easy-going narrative tone than those who referred to hard work as a way to gain better self-confidence in design. This implies that for the latter, that is, for instance, Jiro and Inka, design is more tied to personal identity and thus also felt more emotionally. Furthermore, these designers also emphasized the role of feedback more than the others, which supports the idea of a more personal and vulnerable professional identity.

The themes of money and competition were touched upon only very lightly, even though all the entrepreneurs had lived one or more periods with grants and they also frequently applied for funding. Commercial work and personal creative work stood out as separate areas among some participants (see also Taylor & Littleton 2012:74). This was seen best in Annika's Visual Narrative, which separated the free, artistic projects in the upper stream from the basic everyday design work in the lower stream (see Figure 52). Further, Sofia noted that the collective she was part of was fun to be in, but did not bring income. However, this polarity did not stand out significantly in other narra-

tives, perhaps since the entrepreneurs defined themselves as designers, not artists, and the students were still studying, not selling their design works or competence.

The stories implied that money did not motivate the participants. Instead, recognition, belongingness and the joy of making were found to be stronger motivators. From the point of view of their own way, the most significant experiences were related to the courage to do something in a different way, for example 'something crazy' against the perceived expectations. These experiences helped the participants to 'listen to themselves', meaning that they could trust themselves on how to solve design tasks in a personal way, leaning on their own thinking and creativity. Whether these activities were powered by intuition, experience or trust in themselves, they all influenced them in the same positive way.

8.2 Self-Making Through Personal Stories

The narrative creation began with the visualization of significant experiences; hence, the visual presentation provided the structure for the spoken narrative. The visualizations revealed how the participants linked experiences to one another and how their own story was named, perceived, organized and illustrated. The *Significant Experiences* workshop produced mostly collage-like visualizations due to the cues given, whereas the Visual Narratives created in the *My Story* workshop expressed more individual visualization styles. These visual stories, such as Monika's organized and layered visualization or 'My Universe' by Emilio, brought greater perspective and nuance to the spoken narration. The visualizations can be regarded as handprints of their makers that represented their makers' identity and spoke about agency and the level of conceptualization and reflection. The visuals broadened the understanding of the spoken stories, which varied in their narrative tones (McAdams 1993: 47-50), rhetoric and linguistic expressions.

The spoken stories varied in their depth and level of meaning-making from descriptive to analytical. The stories by design students were more analytical than the stories by design entrepreneurs due to the more engaging and longer *My Story* workshop. However, the level of reflection also differed between entrepreneurs. Annika's story was mostly descriptive and straight forward, whereas Inka's story showed ups and downs. Those participants who spoke openly about some challenging periods in their paths, also expressed reflection skills over these events. The challenging periods had caused reflection on them and the redefinition of future goals, improving their reflective

and analytical skills. These designers emphasized the significance of doing things that feel good and doing them in their own way.

The narrative tones in the stories varied from hesitating and searching to assured and stating, and gave insights into how the participants interpreted their experiences. The narrative tone revealed feelings about oneself, assumptions and beliefs as well as attitude and relationship to design. These beliefs influenced the entire story and life path, since they were on such a profound level. This was the case, for instance, in Veera's and Lauretta's stories, since they had felt a calling to art and design (see also Taylor & Littleton 2012: 92). The words the participants used repeatedly, such as Emilio's '*unconventionality*' or '*create*' revealed typical expressions. The tone of these words and their meanings revealed perceptions and an approach to their experiences and themselves.

Furthermore, the participants used self-definitions, such as Monika, when she defined herself: '*I am not the person who explodes. I'm a person that tries to solve it in a calm way.*' These were the most direct expressions of their own identity, how the participants perceived themselves. The relationship with their 'own things' was expressed by 'feeling at home' with certain activities, an approach or a way of thinking. This 'own thing' or 'own place' that was spoken of was shaped by encounters with different people, but it was also very much guided by the person herself. The most important factor was to feel good about what one did, as Lauretta and Oliver pointed out at the end of their stories, even though their narratives also expressed tensions between their wishes and actions.

These tensions, or conflicting interests, formed competing plot lines within the narratives (Mishler 1999:80). Some of these tensions started as far back as the moment the protagonist needed to choose their school, college or university and compromise between what was *felt* to be a good choice and what was *thought* to be a good choice. The way in which the participants dealt with challenges and followed their passion, varied. For instance, Monika realized after only one year that business school was not for her. Oliver's response to conflicting interests was quite different, since he wanted to hold onto several domains to develop himself quickly. So instead of choosing one option over another, he decided to choose both and also work most of his free time. This revealed a similar type of tension to that which was present in Lauretta's story.

When creative processes were compared with their respective life narratives, some typical approaches could be identified. Both perspectives, personal story and creative process, showed Emilio's agentic approach and Yvette's analytical and exploratory approach, which were further supported with visualizations that reflected these different ways.

8.3 Identity in the Creative Process

The study examined students' creative processes in the DEE course. The creative processes revealed how students defined themselves in the design field, what drove their creative processes, and how they interacted with their self, others and the design work via different methods. Examination of these processes revealed turning points, identity negotiations, a need for feedback, support and other similar features that came through also from the personal stories. In addition, creative processes revealed how students dealt with critical situations, such as creative frustration, critical feedback or the pressure of upcoming exhibitions. These ways and methods form a part of participants' typical ways in design and thus construct part of their design identity and 'own way'.

Each student came to the course with a personal, unique background that influenced the creative process (see also Goel 1995: 99). At the beginning of the creative process, the students revisited their previous experiences to make sense of the topic provided and their environment. The influence of previous experiences could be seen in the way students connected these experiences to the current moment and gave meaning to them. In a similar way, students had different ideas and perspectives on identity. Whereas some concentrated on the identity of Karelia, some explored professional or personal identity, going deep into self-reflection that started emotional processes in some students and stopped them making for a while. As the examination of Oliver's process showed, reflection helped Oliver to realize the role of making and hands-on work for him, and made him more aware of his professional dreams.

The students' case studies presented illustrated how different drivers and methods, such as envisioning, self-reflection, conceptualization, experimentation and visualization served as main strategies that the students relied on in their process. Even though many of the methods, such as drawing, writing and material exploration, are widely used and common in design practice, they possessed different meanings for each student. For Oliver, drawing was not just a way to represent or visualize ideas, but also a way to feel better and release stress. For Yvette, writing served as a tool to negotiate with herself and make visible her internal dialogue on identity. Meaning-making regarding the topic, environment, own emotions and ideas were done in visual, tangible and linguistic ways.

Some students started to work on sketches and prototypes from the very start of the process, whereas some, such as Mikael, postponed prototyping to the very last stages of the process. These differences show how some students relied more on their intellectual side whereas others relied more on their manual skills to move on in the process. These different strategies that

balanced between making and reasoning also showed how previous assumptions and education became visible in an exploratory creative process. This was most clear in the case of Mikael, who had studied industrial and strategic design, and found that the way he had learned to carry out a design process did not suit his artistic project. In most of the cases, however, both thinking and making were equally present and supported one another. The findings support Goel's (1995) notions on design processes. Goel (ibid.: 123) notes that designers differ significantly in the ways in which they go through their creative work. These differences come from various factors, such as training, personal preferences, and personal style.

Each student had also his or her own handprint and way of expression. This 'tone of voice' in the creative process varied from analytical to descriptive, simple to complex and verbal to visual. In a similar way to the narrative tone in the personal stories, this tone of voice gave a special flavour to each process. Yvette's analytical and philosophical way differed radically from Blue's visual and concise style. The designer's own handprint and expression also relates to the materials that the designer likes to use. For some designers, part of their own way is thus also the discovery of their 'own materials' (see also Taylor & Littleton 2012: 57-58), which links to material consciousness (Sennett 2008:119-146), the dialogue between human and material. For Monika, wood stood out as a familiar and interesting material, whereas Lauretta craved for putting her hands in clay.

Creative frustration and problem points were dealt with in different ways to re-establish a connection with work that had been interrupted for various reasons, such as a destructive comparison, lack of trust in their own abilities, or critical comments. These ways, such as discussions with mentors or peers, self-support, writing, drawing and hands-on work were used to address the problem of not knowing how to proceed. Documentation, which included both drawing and writing, enabled the revisiting of previous thoughts and ideas (Kosonen & Mäkelä 2012: 234) and was found useful specifically at critical moments. Documentation can therefore be considered to be a critical supporting strategy in the process for many students.

8.4 Narrative Design Identity

The analysis of both personal stories and creative processes led to the analytic framework *Narrative Design Identity* presented in Chapter 4. The framework revealed the interactions that take place in the creation of a design identity and one's own way in design. The findings of this study show that certain aspects were emphasized in these interactions within one's SELF, with OTHERS, the
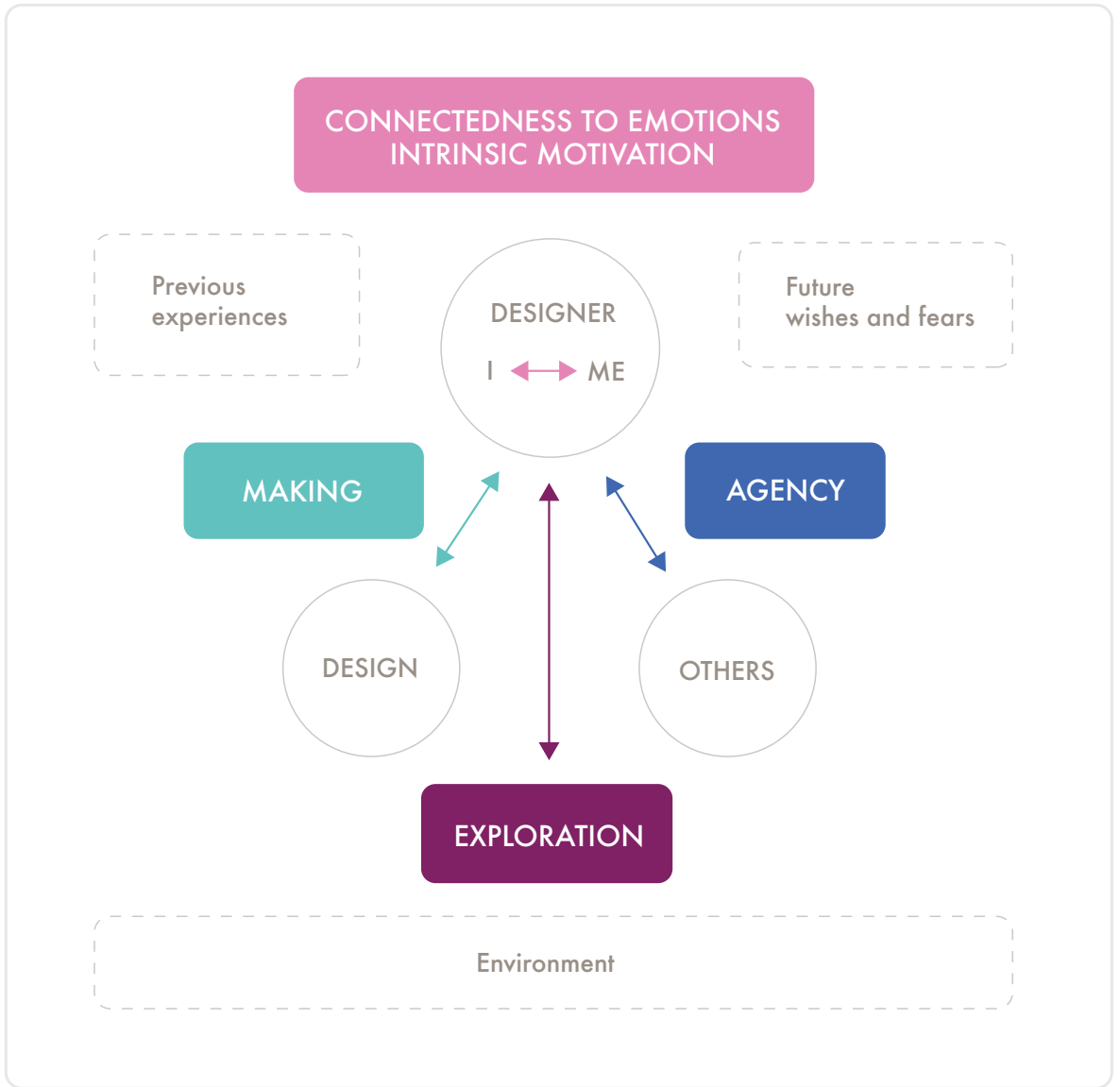
Figure 96. The Figure illustrates the main aspects of Narrative Design Identity amongst the participants, who can be broadly described as intrinsically motivated, agentic, emotional, and explorative makers.

DESIGN work or field and the ENVIRONMENT. Thus, the framework has been supplemented with these aspects: Connectedness to emotions, Intrinsic motivation, Making, Agency, and Exploration (Figure 96).

These aspects are found to form a strong part of the participants' main character (see 4.4.2), that is, how their narrative identity is manifested through the stories they tell about who they are and how they navigate their creative processes as designers. These orientations emerged as those most valued and enjoyed and were returned to after doubts or critical phases. Even though these aspects dominated the main characters in the narratives, the stories also featured the opposite aspects, such as extrinsic motivations, communal orientations and conceptual thinking. Examples of these could be seen in Jiro's story, which showed the importance of becoming acknowledged, Monika's story, which highlighted the importance of collaboration, and Mikael's creative process, in which Mikael relied mostly on his thinking and abstract concept creation. These supported and balanced the embodied, curious, self-reflective, emotion-based and self-managed core activities. In the following, we will examine the dominating aspects more closely.

In the interaction with others (DESIGNER–OTHERS), most of the narratives pointed towards agency in design. The stories reflected a main character that is independent, a bold and active maker of her own way. Even though many collaborated and were part of a community, the main character was however adventurous, looking for her own path and own way within the different communities and environments. Entrepreneurship itself can be seen as an agentic professional choice, since it does not provide similar support to an organization as an employer. Students' stories featured similar types of self-management and independence to those needed as an entrepreneur. Communion, the opposite polarity to agency (McAdams 1993: 133-161), was also present in several narratives in different forms, such as the need to be part of a community, enjoyment of collaboration and in the search for feedback on one's own work. However, these aspects were not dominant in the way that they most probably would be for, for instance, a nurse or a nanny.

Making activity – physical, hands-on work – stood out as one of the most motivating aspects in the interaction between the designer and her work (DESIGNER–DESIGN), and the maker as a character can be defined as agentic (McAdams 1993: 144-148), which further strengthens the analysis of agency as a part of design identity. In addition to making, doing design by sketching, drawing and manipulating materials helped the creative process to make progress. Making also enhanced well-being and released stress. Some participants had an internal desire – or a calling – for making activities that was also expressed in their personal life, not only in their design work. However, some processes, such as Mikael's or Emilio's, were driven more by envisioning and

conceptual thinking than making. For them, making was for the role of execution instead of an exploratory inquiry as in Yvette's case.

These aspects, Agency and Making, reflect the educational background of the 11 European participants, of which the majority had studied Applied Art and Design. In comparison to strategic design, for example, Applied Art and Design has much more practical and hands-on approach in education and is typically based on studio education in contrast to a more theoretical orientation in strategic design. The creative processes showed that, for some, it was easier to take some material and start to shape it, whereas others liked to discuss their ideas with many people or just think for days without any visible activity. This highlights the co-existence of the polarities of making–conceptualization and agentic–communal activities among the participants.

Falin's (2011) study has presented another view on these aspects of design identity, based on data that consists of designers that work in design organizations. Her findings point to the separation of design skills from design expertise as parts of design identity. By 'design expertise' she means knowledge-intensive design work, such as strategic design or coordination and other roles where communication has a significant role in the everyday work. 'Design skill', instead, links to making in the framework presented here (Figure 96).

Falin's (2011) study suggests that *knowledge* in design expertise has become more important than '*skills of the hand*' (ibid. 89). However, some participants in Falin's study also expressed a longing for hands-on, concrete design work (Falin 2011:85), and some showed a reluctance to accept managerial positions, where the object of the design work has changed from the concrete and visual to the linguistic (ibid.:112-113). When the present study is compared to Falin's (2011) study, it is essential to notice that Falin's data consists of interviews from designers that work in the design industry as in-house designers or via design companies (ibid.: 41), whereas this study builds on design entrepreneurs' and design students' stories. The present study highlights the side of design identity that builds mainly on studio-based education and a personal desire to create with one's hands and thus builds on the same discussion that Falin has contributed to, albeit from another angle.

Most of the narratives revealed intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci 2000), which is connected to both making and doing something for the pure enjoyment of doing it (Sennett 2008:9; Taylor & Littleton 2012:112). Neither money nor power seemed to motivate the participants, even though they needed feedback and to be connected to others. Hence, extrinsic motivations also existed in the form of the need for acceptance, recognition and belongingness to a community. These motivators, however, cannot be seen as dominating in the way that they might be seen in the story of a person who pursues a high position and is motivated by high income or power over others.

Since intrinsic motivation – that is, the urge to do something personally meaningful – co-exists with extrinsic motivation, these can be discussed as interactive motivations. Whereas intrinsic motivation points to the questions of what one wants to do and how one wants to do it, extrinsic motivation can be linked to the structure of doing design work that includes deadlines, presentations, meeting the degree requirements, gaining money and other framing elements. One example of the complex intertwining of these two motivations can be seen in the stories of Oliver and Lauretta, who loved making activities, had chosen paths where making – or artistic activities – was not the focus. The choices made were made by the participants, consciously, since they thought that these choices were ultimately for the best and helped them to manage better in their lives. However, the choices did not provide satisfaction and caused frustration and hesitation.

Emotions, intuition and beliefs proved to be significant intrapersonal processes (I-ME) in decision making and guiding the participants in the creation of their own way. The beliefs can be linked to trust, faith and intuition, depending on how the participants spoke about them. Some of them can be seen as the most enduring concepts of self that were held onto despite challenges. Veera's strong internal faith and desire to become a designer helped her in her path in a similar way to Emilio's commitment to his personal dreams. The narratives showed how doing what felt right also gave personal satisfaction and meaning to their work. In creative processes, an emotional attachment to the work helped to survive the creative crisis without a lowering of ambition. These processes within the designer happened in a holistic way, including emotions, intellectual and physical processes.

However, intuition and emotions were also questioned and pondered upon in the creative processes, since justification was considered important in most of the works. Most of the students seemed to demand functionality, rationale, significance and other reasoning for their design work. Some struggled with the open-ended process, particularly when they pursued an artistic work or had the impression that it was art, not design, that was required from them as the outcome of the DEE course. Going by the plan or doing what felt good or right fluctuated throughout the processes. Decisions were, however, many times justified simply with a 'gut feeling' or other feelings that were not specifically named – it just felt the right thing to do.

These findings emphasize the role of human-material interaction and self-consciousness in a holistic sense in design identity. This view covers both awareness of one's own internal meaning-making processes and connectedness to body and emotions and their creative use. In addition, the findings highlight the curious, explorative nature of design (Cross 2011) and the internal motivation that holds agency in creativity. This agency builds on

open-minded exploration of one's surroundings (DESIGNER–ENVIRON-MENT), one's own self and others. On the one hand, it is an adventurous, curious attitude that features an open-ended approach and the desire to 'see how things unfold' against a planned, programmatic or 'ordinary' approach (see also Taylor & Littleton 2012:92; Buchanan 2007). On the other hand, it reflects the enjoyment and desire to create and contribute to the world with one's own hands, visually and tangibly, in connection with the self and in contact with others and the environment.

In the context of this study, the relationship between DESIGNER and ENVIRONMENT points to the contexts in which the stories and reports were created, that is, the Visual Narrative workshops and the DEE course. From a wider perspective, it also refers to the past education chosen and the location of the institution where design is currently being studied or practised and how this place enables and values creative work[53]. However, even though the environment might be fruitful, it does not serve a student who does not know what she wants nor is committed to what she has chosen. Thus, ultimately the question of one's own way and the motivation to create that way goes back to the intrapersonal process of finding 'who I am' and 'what do I want to do'. Ultimately the question is personal and unique for each one of us.

Even though in this study design identities were defined by the characters that stood out in the stories examined in the specific situation in which they were told, these identities are not stable and unchanging constructs. Identities change and develop, as we could see in Emilio's story. His story showed how his agency grew stronger and his extrinsic motivation became more intrinsic as a response to negative feedback and self-acceptance of own sexual identity. This change in approach is part of Emilio's own way that reaches beyond professional identity.

8.5 'Own Way' and 'Own Thing' in Design

This chapter has presented the process of finding one's own way through the lens of *Narrative Design Identity* via the means of examining and contrasting different features in the narratives, such as narrative tone and various polarities. The concept of finding one's own way in design is thus very close to professional identity. However, I have decided to use the concept of 'own way' throughout the study, since I see it as reaching beyond professional identity, even though it can perhaps be considered analogous to it. In this section, I

[53] A highly respected university in a vibrant city gives many more different opportunities to create a creative career than does a more disconnected and less valued institution (Taylor & Littleton 2012:100).
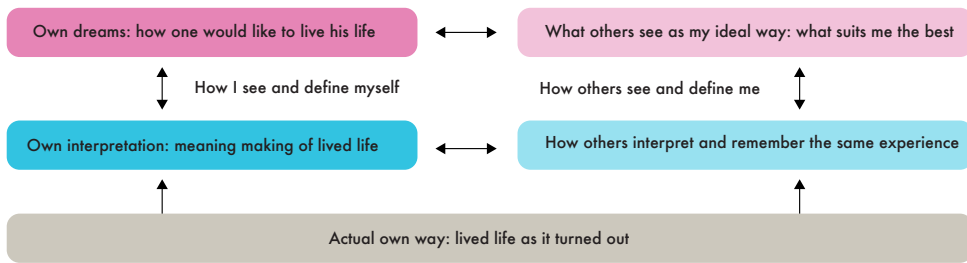
Own dreams: how one would like to live his life	⟷	What others see as my ideal way: what suits me the best
How I see and define myself		How others see and define me
Own interpretation: meaning making of lived life	⟷	How others interpret and remember the same experience
Actual own way: lived life as it turned out		

Figure 97. One's own way is found both via introspection and in interaction with others. It is affected by our dreams and fears, and eventually equates to the path we have walked, the 'actual own way', which may be close or far from our 'desired own way'.

discuss the relationship between Narrative Design Identity and 'own way' in design.

Narrative Design Identity responds more to the questions *who* and *what,* whereas one's own way responds mostly to the question *how.* If professional identity were a boat, and the lake the domain, one's own way would be the way in which the boat is navigated on the lake. Thus, for instance, the way in which the participants were reflective, analytical, visual and passionate about something spoke also about their ways as individuals, not only their professional identities. Yvette's analytical and sensitive approach and Oliver's ambitiousness and love of drawing were deeper than the construction of a professional identity, since these features could be seen in the way in which they expressed themselves, and also in their life stories in relation to several experiences outside the professional domain.

One's own way, like professional identity, is negotiated between the person, others and the environment. Firstly, the person has to recognize what her thing is and her way, what feels like her, good, own, right, satisfying. However, one's own way is not a only subjective thing, since it also needs validation from others. The wish to be, for instance, an excellent craftsman with great social skills does not make one such if others perceive the person in a very different way. The others may help in pointing out how they perceive the person and what they find natural and best suited for her, and in this way guide the person towards her possible own, natural way. However, eventually the person has verify what really feels their own.

I define 'own way' as a combination of what is desired – or feared – and the actual own way that is defined in interaction with others (Figure 97). The desired element makes us show our paths in a positive light and also encourages us to make our actual own way and our desired own way meet. In a similar way, our fears may influence us to interpret ourselves in a negative manner

and thus affect what goals and dreams we create. One part of one's own way is to recognize *what* (which things, activities) and *how* (which approach, method) feels like one's own. Another part is to become aware of one's current own way and whether it matches with the desired way or not. Finally, a third part would be to actually carry out the person's recognized own things and ways and develop them to better match their own dreams and goals. This last requires the desire for change.

How the participants recognized their own ways could be seen in the stories, for instance, in the way they spoke about how they enjoyed something and how that felt like their 'own thing'. Some of the visualizations also revealed, for instance, a curve, as in Oliver's case, that described how the sense of satisfaction towards one's own work grew when the curve turned upwards. Hence, the originally descending curve eventually proceeded to things that were found more satisfying and natural. Some participants seemed to recognize their own way and own thing better than the others. An internal definition of their own thing could be seen when the participants spoke about what felt like their own, gave satisfaction or was related to their own professional dreams. Definitions of their 'own way' could be seen in the ways in which the participants wanted to study and work, what they wanted to engage with and how they wanted to operate. One's own way, however, is not static and easily defined, since it evolves all the time. Furthermore, one's own lived life may not correlate with one's own dreams and wishes, as could be seen in Lauretta's story. Hence, Lauretta's own way could have been to become an artist, since this is what she seemed to desire the most. However, her way had not thus far been the way of an artist, since she had made different choices.

Based on these definitions, the concept of 'own way' in design is closely linked to professional identity. However, I have decided to use '*own way*' as the key term throughout the study, since I find it flexible and adaptable term that fits well with the narrative nature of identity. One's own way is like a path we walk. It contains exploration and hesitation, coincidences and a bit of the 'mystery' of life, since we are not able to explain everything in our paths. Narrative and way are both paths that we create, thus they focus on the ways in which things unfold and they have the element of time integrated into them. I wanted to keep this flowing, moving, exploring feeling – which the idea of 'own way' represents – at the core of the study, since that is what came through from the stories. Furthermore, the participants spoke about their 'own way' and 'own thing' using these specific terms, whereas professional identity was mentioned very rarely.

I consider the concept of 'own way' to be tapping into something deeper than the construction of professional identity. It aims to extend to the dreams and wishes that may not be shared in official situations where professional

identity is performed. One example of this comes from story by Lauretta, who shared both the 'official story' and the more revealing story in the workshop. The latter story revealed more of Lauretta's fears and wishes. This implies that 'own thing' and 'own way' can be things that are also kept behind the official practised story, specifically if the practised story aims to meet the needs of certain audiences. Professional identity as a term is loaded with different interpretations, whereas 'own way' is more ambiguous and represents the ambiguity of finding one's own way better.

The 'actual own way' eventually becomes the one we have lived, since that is what really happened, even if it were not the one we would have liked to choose. From this point of view, 'desired way' and 'actual own way' are different things. The 'desired own way', if one exists, is the ideal that the person looks for, but the 'actual own way' is the real lived way. There is also a possibility that one's own way is not found, and the things we do do not feel our own or evoke strong emotions, provide inspiration or make us commit. Since others influence us, others may help us to find our ways. Other people may help us to see our potential, what is distinctive about us, in which areas our skills and competences are in comparison to others. Also, others may push us away from our desired way, or perhaps make us realize that the way we have chosen is not good for us. Thus, achieving one's own way is a collaborative effort.

One way to look at the idea of 'own way' is to imagine what it would be ideally. In an ideal scenario, one's own way is something that makes your eyes shine and makes you want to fully engage with what you do. It inspires and brings satisfaction, both to the person and to others that are affected by her. It provides so much pleasure that one is willing to overcome obstacles and challenges in that area. It is something one loves or feels to be important, brings out the best in the person and makes her feel that she is where she always wanted to be. This commitment and inspiration also becomes visible for others, who may then begin to define this person and her work with specific terms that define her way.

The main point of finding one's own way is to become aware of the way one has chosen and the way one wants to go. If there is a big difference between these two, recognizing this difference may bring awareness of the factors that cause this. Furthermore, making these issues visible helps in tackling them. The idea of becoming aware of one's own way is to raise consciousness of one's own choices and actions. From a wider perspective, one's conscious own way is not a selfish act, since consciousness of our own way also increases our consciousness of the consequences of our own actions for others. Ideally, we could say that our own way is in harmony with the ways of others and in line with the wider common good. However, these ethical and moral questions are beyond the scope of this study and are left for each one of us to ponder.

SUPPORTING STUDENTS TO FIND THEIR OWN WAYS
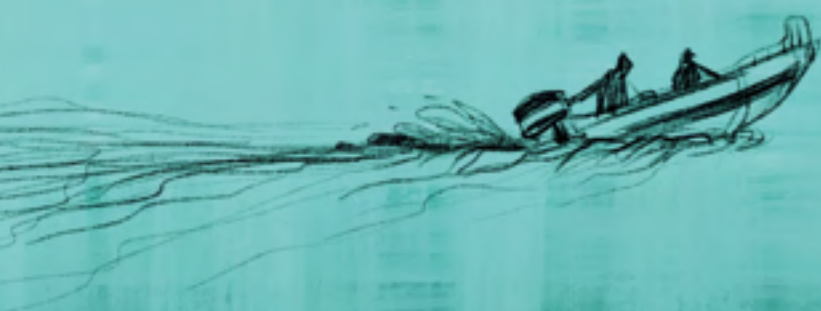
Don't walk behind me; I may not lead. Don't walk in front of me; I may not follow. Just walk beside me and be by friend.

Albert Camus

9 Supporting Students to Find Their Own Ways

The main purpose of this study was to make visible how designers create their own ways in design. This study has shown how each story and process unfolds differently and consists of different strategies, methods and drivers that stem from the personal approach and background. These ways have been developed in relation to design as a field, own design work, and specifically to others, whose meaning was significant in each story. The narratives revealed that feedback, acknowledgement and recognition were specifically important in the formation of creative identity. The students longed for constructive, open, holistic discussions and for presence for their unique approaches. Thus, the environments in which the identity exploration took place also had an impact on students' identity work.

In this study, this process of finding, or creating, one's own way was revealed through interaction by visualizing, writing and speaking about one's own experiences, ideas and thoughts in two specific contexts, the VN workshops and the DEE course. The findings suggests that this type of context enhances students' identity work by providing a space where identity exploration and expression can take place. These notions direct the attention of this last chapter to a discussion on how the findings of this study could be utilized in design education, which is a forum that strongly shapes design identities. Furthermore, the findings point to the question of how design educators could support students to creatively find their ways in design.

To tackle these topics, I will first discuss the learning environment where the individual design paths start to develop on a general level. Then I will evaluate the Visual Narrative method as a tool to discover one's own story and go on to discuss the DEE course as an educational platform to enhance finding one's own way. Based on these notions, I suggest how students could be supported to find their own ways in design. To conclude the chapter, I present an evaluation and the limitations of this study and give suggestions for further research.

9.1 Different Voices and Ways in the Learning Environment

Both the students and the educators live in a complex setting in which different domains, voices, interests and opinions overlap and compete (Taylor & Littleton 2012: 17). Finding one's own way in this setting requires an un-

derstanding of the traditions and approaches that are acknowledged in this realm (see also Carroll 1988:143; Nasir & Cooks 2009), even if these traditions can be questioned.

Taylor & Littleton (2012) have presented two specific narratives related to design identity that creative workers tend to relate to. One is the image of an individual artist that works independently in her studio, valuing traditions, and the other a *connected creative* (ibid. 66, 74) that uses networks and the skills of others as a part of their own creative work. The story of the individual artist in the design field correlates with 'star designers' that are known by name and are typically linked with Applied Art and Design (see also Falin 2011: 65-66). In contrast to that, designers who work for design brands have to adjust their handprint when working under the company brand and there is little space for individual artistic expression (ibid.). Based on the findings of this doctoral study, design education in Aalto is still experienced in this dualistic manner, where artistic expression and strategic thinking have not yet found a peaceful coexistence, at least based on experiences of students such as Monika and Mikael.

This polarity of 'individual artist' and 'designer in service' can be linked to the 'self-expression–collaboration' dimension in the polarity illustration (see Chapter 4.4.3, Figure 36). Both polarities aim to explain how creative work may be more focused on personal, artistic expression or collaborative effort. These dimensions do also co-exist, since a person who wants to do uncompromising artistic work, may also be very collaborative and connected. The core question is whether the creative expression is a shared effort or whether the collaboration happens in other ways, leaving the creative decision-making to the designer. In the latter case, the designer takes both ownership of and responsibility for the artistic expression, style, outlook and aesthetics of the work even though other decision-making in the design work is a collaborative act.

Different voices in design education also relate to the multiple intelligences design students and educators possess. Howard Gardner (1999) has presented a theory of multiple intelligences[54] as a critical response to the confined, traditional IQ tests that favour certain type of intelligence. Many of the intelligences, such as linguistic intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, spatial intelligence, interpersonal intelligence and intrapersonal intelligence (ibid. 41-44) seem relevant for designers. Gardner notes that bodily-kinesthetic intelligence is important for craftspeople, and spatial intelligence for architects and sculptors. Further-

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[54] Gardner (1999:33-34) defines intelligence as "a biopsychological potential to process information that can be activated in a cultural setting to solve problems or create products that are of value in a culture".

more, linguistic intelligence and logical-mathematical intelligence can be seen as relevant for designers to communicate, research and analyse design problems.

Making visible and explicit these different voices, intelligences and narratives that exist not only at the personal level but also in different faculties and programmes, could benefit both designers and educators. Different voices, approaches, interests and practices in design education form the ground where the personal narratives gain their forms. Vice versa, personal narratives make these larger narratives and conceptions visible. To obtain a wider perspective on their own position in the design domain, students could examine their personal stories and strategies as a part of these collaboratively maintained narratives. Furthermore, analysing their own designs and their narratives would bring more dimensions to the awareness of their own professional identity.

Even though creativity can be seen as fundamentally social (Taylor & Littleton 2012: 17) and design – like art – can be seen as a cultural practice and a narrative that is collaboratively maintained (Carroll 1988), designers also build design on their personal experiences, emotions and intuition with different strategies and methods. The configuration of these elements is what makes each designer different, even though we all are influenced by others and our environment. If either the personal or social dimension is neglected or over-emphasized, they may lead to a narrow interpretation of a designer as only a social product or as a 'gifted' or 'talented' individual. Between these extremes there are the valuable, individual, own unique relationships to 'own things' in the creative field.

9.2 Self-Reflection and Exploration

Next, I will evaluate the Visual Narrative method and the DEE course from the point of view of how they have influenced on students to find their own ways. In the Narrative Design Identity framework (Figure 92), both can be regarded as the ENVIRONMENT in which the stories were created and which also influenced the stories. However, the stories referred not only to these educational environments but also to other environments in which the shared experiences had taken place. Thus, the stories drew on various environments inside and outside the context in which they were presented.

9.2.1 The Visual Narrative Method: Benefits and Limitations

The *Visual Narrative method*, the main aim of which was to capture significant experiences and facilitate the formation of a story around these experiences, provided rich data for the study (see also Kosonen 2011a). The Visual Narratives created functioned as memory tools for spoken stories and facilitated the meaning-making of the participants' own experiences. In comparison to an interview, this method allowed experiences to be approached indirectly, via an artefact that in this case was the Visual Narrative. This indirect approach provided the participants with more time for reflection and the freedom to choose the depth and privacy level of their narrative.

The method initiated thought processes in the participants that can be considered to support the discovery of their own way. Insights into their own way happened both during the making of the narrative and when it was shared, and particularly when they compared their own story to others' stories while listening to them. The main role of the pre-assignment thread was to stimulate the memory and initiate the reflection process. Many participants also used the thread as a structural tool in the Visual Narrative. As an object, it was felt to be stimulating but also difficult, since sometimes the user could not remember what each knot represented, and in some cases not all the knots fitted onto the thread.

The goal of the Visual Narrative was rather clear, but the execution had many possible variations. Since the visualizations were created around the most significant experiences, the experiences formed the 'skeleton' of the visualizations. However, the guidelines did not really direct the participants towards a certain form. Due to this, the participants needed to find a way to organize the experiences that would make sense as a design path, their own way in design. This organization, too, had several possible forms, from a systematic, chronological presentation to a free theme-based structure. Most of the narratives proceeded in chronological order, travelling from left to right, and some of them had years marked in the presentations. However, some narratives differed from this fundamentally. In addition, the ways in which experiences were illustrated, varied between participants. Each participant used certain means of expression, that is, tools and methods, such as cues, colours and drawings to create their own personal story. These factors, (1) structure and organization and (2) means of expression formed the main aspects of examination of the Visual Narratives.

The personal narratives examined were made in the workshops for research purposes. This purpose, the workshop setting, the Visual Narrative method, tools, facilitators and the other participants all influenced the

outcome produced. The created narratives can thus be called unique and dependent on the context where they were created. If a participant were to be asked to redo the assignment, it would likely be somewhat different. The making process also included elements of serendipity, such as in Monika's case. She cut a paper for her visualization that proved to be too short, so she added an extra paper to the existing one. This formed a line between the two papers. Even though this line was unintentional, it became a part of her story, since the narrative had a strong turning point exactly at the point where the two papers met.

The visualizations done in the *Significant Experiences I* and *II* workshops and the *My Story* workshop have critical differences. The visualizations from the *My Story* workshop were more diverse and personal, expressing more the style and approach of the participants than the visualizations from the *Significant Experiences* workshops. There were many reasons for this. Firstly, the *My Story* workshop was longer and the students already knew one another, having spent time together during the DEE course and also as friends. This made the atmosphere more relaxed and supported reflection and opening up. Secondly, it was suggested that the Visual Narratives in the *Significant Experiences* workshops be done with the help of provided cues. These cues influenced the visualization style, content and structure.

Many participants mentioned that they had not done this type of backward-looking exercise previously, and some called it therapeutic. Even though the stories were not analysed at the workshop, the storytelling itself proved to increase self-awareness. However, self-reflection may not serve everyone, and as suggested previously, this sort of exploratory and reflective work should always be voluntary. However, it can be argued that self-awareness is needed in design work, where our individuality gives the distinctive character to what we do (Sennett 2008:105-106). Accepting our inadequacies and the modesty it brings along are necessary to achieve this type of character (ibid.). If students are not interested in reflecting on what is meaningful for them and their peers, where do their interests stem from, how do they influence others, how will they learn to stand up for themselves and their work? How do they discover and create their ways without this consciousness?

However, self-reflection on identity also has its dangers, since it may make us think about those things that we have not done, those things in which we have failed, and in this way bring up our weaker parts, the fragile parts of our identity (Mahlakaarto 2014:63). According to Mahlakaarto (2014: 55-56) the facilitator of an ID workshop needs various skills due to the nature of identity work. Firstly, the facilitator has to know how to build a safe, accepting environment that respects the participants and supports co-operation. Secondly, she needs to know how to guide social interaction and have experience

of mentoring groups and individuals. Thirdly, the facilitator needs experience of her own identity work.

Mahlakaarto (2014: 56-57) names three key roles for the facilitator: unifying, guiding and coaching. The unifying role gives understanding and support for the participants' own experience, feelings and meaning making. It is non-judging and expresses no critique, but instead focuses on enhancing group cohesion, recognizes group limits and generates a positive atmosphere. In the guiding role, the facilitator sees possibilities and envisions constructive futures. She inspires, energizes and enhances positive, strengthening changes. In the coaching role, the facilitator acts as a change agent, influencing, sharing knowledge, co-producing and organizing the shared experiences into a shared understanding.

In the *Significant Experiences* workshops, I had the role of a colleague and friend, and my role was mostly unifying. The guiding and coaching roles did not feel appropriate nor necessary, since I was with colleagues, who had already worked as design entrepreneurs for years. In the *My Story* workshop, my role was both unifying and guiding. I gave encouraging comments and positive feedback to the students. This came naturally, since I had already been mentoring and teaching them previously. Furthermore, I was able to hear them better, since I had started to work more actively on my own identity. However, I had comparatively little experience of organizing similar workshops, thus my role was more of a designer-facilitator and a novice teacher-mentor than of an identity coach. To support my work, my advisor attended the *My Story* workshop and participated in all the activities and presentations. His empathetic comments and feedback came from long experience as an ethnographer, which made the workshop atmosphere safer for the students. This accepting and safe environment is essential for identity work (Mahlakaarto 2014:55).

The way in which the method is used and the outcomes it produces depends on the participants, their relationship to another and their willingness to examine and share their stories. However, the skills of the facilitator also play a powerful role. If the facilitator is not self-aware and conscious of her own story and the factors that may trigger unpleasant emotions in her, she may subconsciously reject or neglect a story from a participant who awakens these feelings in her (Josselson 2007:546-547). This may lead the participant to feel that she was not heard fully, and prevent her from opening up her story and ideas more. Thus, it is important that the facilitator, too, has done self-reflection on her own identity and is aware of the risks of the use of the VN method. Furthermore, it is recommended that the facilitator is aware of the general idea of Identity methods (Mahlakaarto 2014) and ethics related to the

generation and study of personal narratives (Mahlakaarto 2014; Bach 2007; Josselson 2007)

9.2.2 DEE as an Educational Platform to Enhance Finding One's Own Way

The DEE course fed the students with several inputs and encouraged them to discover new areas, methods and tools in art and design. The course created a safe atmosphere that minimised the hierarchy between students and teachers, enabling informal discussions between everyone (Kosonen & Mäkelä 2012). That supported exploration and the freedom to experiment that can be seen to be at the heart of creative work (Sennett 2008:27). The explorations took place in a supportive frame that consisted of weekly tasks, mentoring and reporting requirements. This balance between freedom and support (Kosonen & Mäkelä 2012: 237) was valued by the students. However, sometimes the joy of exploration was interfered with by pressure. One of the causes of this pressure was the public exhibition that took place at the end of the course. Showing one's own work publicly felt on the one hand motivating and helped in finalizing the work in time (see also Mäkelä & Löytönen 2015: 15), but on the other hand also devastating, interfering with exploration and experimentation.

Even though the DEE course was not created for identity work, it transpired that it enhanced identity reflection due to its supportive structure and strong presence of teachers (see also Kosonen & Mäkelä 2012: 237). McAdams (1993: 92) points out that in the ideal course for identity formation, the young person should feel safe to explore new roles and views to find the ones she wants to commit to. DEE responded well to this notion, providing space for identity exploration. However, for some students the open-ended artistic process was new and thus caused discomfort. Some students struggled with deciding upon what to do and how to frame their work, since there was no brief, nor specific expected outcome. Thus, this freedom and the exploratory nature of the creative process evoked reflection on their own position within the design field, a field that contains competing voices that direct the attention towards user experience, one's own artistry or anything in between (see also Mishler 1999:102, 130).

The course challenged students' thinking and orientation in design and even led to profound identity ponderings, including tackling the tricky relationship between art and design (Buchanan 2007). This sort of platform and tool that enhances reflection, self-reliance and independence can be regarded as facilitating engagement in valuable meta-cognitive thinking (Winters 2011). The students valued the opportunities to reflect on their identity and

own story. Since the students reflected on their identity with their teachers as well, the teachers' self-awareness mattered concerning the kind of reflection surface the students experienced. These experiences varied from empowering to frustrating, as Oliver's, Monika's and Emilio's examples showed, thus influencing the processes. To soften the dive into identity work, the course could have outlined the possible challenges of self-reflection, identity work and choosing a highly personal topic in a creative process.

From the point of view of supporting students in finding their own ways, Korthagen's notion of the teacher's professional identity is relevant. Like a student's developing identity, the teacher's identity is a construction as well; thus, teachers, too, make more conscious choices as their self-awareness of their behaviour and beliefs increase (Korthagen 2004). This implies that to support students, teachers should also understand their own professional identity and ways in design. If teachers do not recognize their own doubts, fears and dreams, it might be harder to stand by a student who is exploring hers. A teacher who has a strong understanding of her professional identity may help the student to reflect on her identity and position herself in relation to her teacher. Even if the teacher may not represent a person that the student looks up to, a strong sense of self radiates from the teacher and makes it easier for the student to take a position against or for the teacher instead of just remaining passive without an opinion (See also Page 2012).

From the point of view of the reliability of the analysis, it is essential to note that the content of the weekly and final reports was influenced by the fact that they were to be shared with the teachers. Teachers read the reports before the weekly presentation and discussion session and also gave credits for the course partly based on the final report after the course was over. These facts influenced what was shared in the reports, and the reports or lack of reports consequently influenced how the teachers and mentors guided the students. Some of the reports were more revealing and open about struggles and challenges, whereas some were descriptive and spoke little about problems. The level of reflection and communicating of internal processes varied. Naturally, this did not show the true experience for each student, since the reports revealed only a part of that, but in a similar way to the personal narratives, these narratives provided some information on the students' experiences.

Whereas the Visual Narrative method supported the narration and discovery of one's own way by looking at one's own experiences, the DEE course supported the discovery of one's own creative process. However, in both cases the analysis of one's own creative process or design path was left to the participant. From this perspective, these platforms presented here can be seen as only initiating these reflection processes. To better discover and reach the meta-level of our own way more examples, tools and concepts to lean on are

needed. Some of these examples and tools I have presented as a result of this study in the form of the reconstructed narratives and by introducing the model of Narrative Design Identity.

9.3 Supporting Different Ways in Design

Based on the insights stemming from the Visual Narrative workshops and the DEE course, the combination of a visual self-reflective method and a course that supports creativity could support designers in discovering their current ways in design (Figure 98). Reflection supports backward-looking that helps in becoming aware of our own actions and choices. Envisioning and experimentation support forward-looking that help to test new ideas and imagine the future both for self and for the work at hand.

Self-reflection on one's own way in the creative process helps to become more aware of one's own approach and methods that may have been used in an automatic way without really thinking about them or questioning them. Analysing one's own experiences provides insights into what one has found significant and how this has shaped one's own path. In addition, this type of self-reflection reaches deeper than the technical and empirical problems we solve in design; it may provide insights into the purposes and values behind our own work and thinking (Buchanan 2007:43). Observing and analysing increases awareness of one's own way and helps in changing the route, attitude or methods if necessary. If this awareness can be reached during studies, it is less likely that students end up graduating still bewildered about their

Self-reflection   Creativity

Observing
Analysing

BECOMING AWARE OF OWN WAY

CREATING OWN WAY

Envisioning
Experimenting
Making
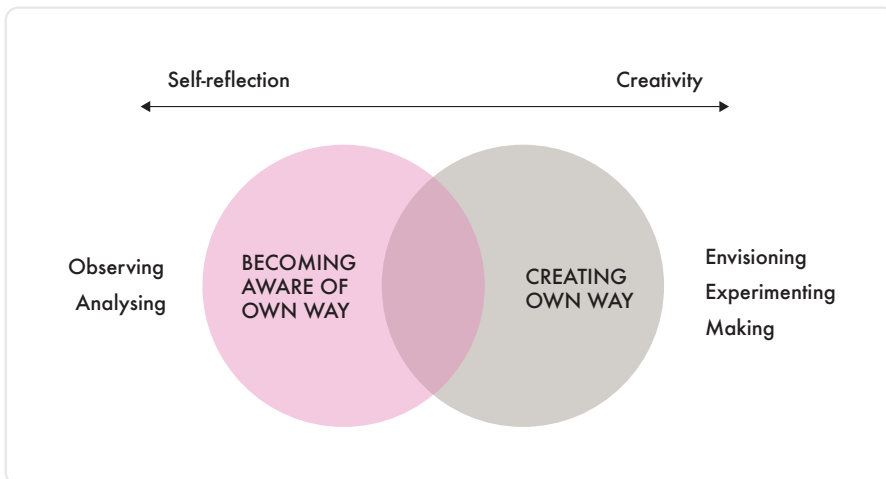
Figure 98. The combination of creation and self-reflection helps in finding one's own way.

design identities. They may also be able to position themselves better in the field, which according to Mahlakaarto (2010:17) is no longer a voluntary but inevitable act to survive at work.

Exploration and experimentation open new avenues and opportunities for one's own way. Education that supports these explorative activities – whether they are material, intellectual, personal or social – in a safe and accepting environment, will most probably make it easier for students to lead their own ways. However, explorations typically go beyond the familiar comfort zone, which may cause discomfort (Mälkki 2011: 33) and pain. When explorations touch upon personal or intimate issues, they call for acceptance, tolerance and sensitivity from design educators. Specifically, they ask for empathy and the skill of listening and being present both from students and educators.

Previous research has shown the impact of mentors specifically for young students and practitioners. The relationship with a mentor may grant or deny access to *material* (the physical artefacts), *relational* (interpersonal relationships) and *ideational* (what is valued as good and how one sees herself as a practitioner / student of this specific field) resources has proven to be crucial in professional development (Nasir & Cooks 2009). Poor student-teacher relationships may prevent the student from becoming a full member of the community and have access to support, encouragement, material resources and information that are necessary in the field to manage one's own practice and overcome challenges (ibid.). Half of the work to maintain a good relationship with the teacher belongs to the student, but half of it is the educator's, who holds a power position that can be used in both a constructive and destructive way.

Envisioning possible selves (Markus & Nurius 1986) can be a useful means to approach the unknown future and gain an insight into self. Possible selves represent different potentials – hopes, fears, goals and the like – of what one might become. They reveal the person's view on their current self and their perception of their possibilities and threats (ibid. 955). Envisioning one's own future and crafting a narrative that continues from the lived life to the future helps in different transitions (see also Ibarra 2010). This narrative creates a continuity between who one has been and who one is becoming (ibid.: 136). Envisioning both an ideal scenario and a 'worst case' scenario could benefit the students in allowing them to become aware of their dreams and fears, both of which influence thoughts and actions. Successes or failures activate these imagined selves, which may influence behaviour and increase or diminish trust in one's own abilities (Markus & Nurius 962-963).

Since uncertainty is a natural part of the creative process (Taylor & Littleton 2012; Spendlove 2007; Cross 2011; Lawson 2005), methods and tools that support students to tolerate or even enjoy uncertainty, also advance creative

discovery. With an open-ended approach and mindful observation[55], students may learn to appreciate mistakes, serendipity and other surprising aspects that would be felt as obstacles in a goal-oriented process. This gives space for intuition and strengthens the connection to self and one's own emotions. It also requires the design education to recognize the need for the *thinking time* that allows students to develop in critical reflection and that tight time constraints in courses prevent (see also Spanbroek 2010).

Spanbroek's (2010) notion of *thinking time* is in line with Buchanan's (2007:45) sharp comment on good teaching: "Only the best teachers understand that time and silence are needed by the student to open imaginative space for finding the problems that are most important for their creative work." Buchanan (ibid.) criticises art and design education of being in a hurry to prepare a good professional instead of dedicating time to "cultivate the sense of wonder and astonishment in students". This critique can be seen as being not so much directed at individual teachers who struggle with limited teaching time but rather at the entire structure of design education and its teaching modules.

To provide time and space for innovation within a limited timeframe, the skill of mindfulness – the capacity to be present in this moment and direct attention to the situation at hand – can further enhance creativity in students. Further, if the focus is put more on the process, not the outcome, which has typically been in the focus of studio-based learning (Buchanan 2007:42; Lawson 2005: 156), it may help in concentrating on the current moment at hand and allow space for a deeper dive into the problem that needs to be solved – both inside and outside the person.

Supporting students to find their ways is ultimately a paradox typical for education: how does one support the other to become independent when she is dependent on the support? (Vehviläinen 2014: 28). Since in design, as in other creative fields, personal and professional identities are intertwined, they are also more fragile (see also Taylor & Littleton 2012:141) and thus the question of support and independence has more holistic meaning than in a field where personal identity is perceived as separate from professional identity. In design, critique of the work may be taken personally even if it is not meant to concern the designer but only the work. Fragility also refers to the vulnerability of identity that may consist of passions, desires and dreams that can be easily crushed by reasoning and requirements for justification. Recognizing this fragile essence of creative identities, we understand that when

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[55] By 'mindful observation' I refer to mindfulness, which can be defined as "a way of intentionally paying attention to the present moment without being swept up by judgements." It is a form of "mental activity that trains the mind to become aware of awareness itself and to pay attention to one's own intention" (Siegel 2011:83,86).

these identity constructions are questioned, they also address the personal level and may cause devastating identity crises.

The design field is, like other creative fields, full of different genres, styles, ways of expression and foci. Teachers have their specific background and interests as well, and may be more inclined to support those students that they relate to in a better way. This raises a question about those who are not understood by the community. Will they be left outside, since they do not bend to the values, interests or methods practised in the community – or will they be approved as valuable members that make visible something the community resists?

Growing independent as a student may sometimes require the 'killing' of your teachers and mentors to achieve a new level of understanding and independence. This is a scary and courageous act, as Brown (2010: 5) notes: "Courage is great, but we need to talk about how it requires us to let go of what other people think, and for most of us, that's scary." However, for some it is a necessary act, and thus when supported in education may produce independent, strong thinkers who have the courage to walk untouched lands.

9.4 Visual Storytelling in Design

Within a narrative identity framework, storytelling is an important part of finding one's own way. People make a meaning of themselves and others through stories that are constructed, presented and listened to, and on each of these occasions meaning-making happens via intrapersonal and interpersonal reflection. In design, however, some do not communicate well verbally, but instead tell stories visually and materially without the need, wish or skill for analysis or linguistic explanations (see also Ings 2014). The Visual Narratives constructed provided a rich perspective for the spoken stories in a similar way to which the photos in the creative process reports enriched the textual explanations. The level of visual expression varied between the participants, which implies that they used different meaning-making strategies that were usually combinations of visual and written language. This is typical for design and other creative fields that construct and communicate meanings visually. From the point of view of supporting students to find their own ways in design, to understand visual thinking requires visual thinking from the design educators, too.

To help in organizing the setting for visual storytelling and self-reflection in design education, this study has provided a Visual Narrative method that could be used to generate and share stories that are built on visualization (see also Kosonen 2011a). Visual Narratives, however, do not have to be limited to

sheets of paper but can consist of installations or similar three-dimensional experiments, such as the installations made in the My Story workshop (Appendixes C-D) and during the Stones as Experiences experiment (Appendix B). The materiality and the three-dimensional nature of installations conveyed personal experiences in a powerful way. In comparison to drawing and other 'flat' visualizations, these installations included features such as shadows and moving elements that made the representations of experiences more alive. Installations, like visualizations, are a way to simplify complex processes and crystallize the key elements of an entity. Since they require hands-on activities, they also possess intuitive and bodily knowledge that is hard to capture via words.

In addition to the VN method, the analytic framework of Narrative Design Identity and different polarities of identity presented can be utilised as visual tools to evoke discussion around design identity. However, if these analytical tools are presented before narrative creation, they most probably influence the narrative making. Hence, I would suggest that in order to provide space for free expression, the VN method should be used to elicit rich stories and the analytical tools presented to elicit discussion in a separate session only after this creative act.

The polarities presented in Chapter 4 illustrate some of the aspects of design identity that can be used as a tool to map and examine one's own orientation in different projects. This self-examining act could benefit the students in finding their own way as they become more aware of how they have acted in different courses and projects. It is also useful for design educators' self-reflection on identity. It is essential, however, to note that the configuration of these different aspects presented may vary in different projects. In one project, one may be agentic and intrinsically motivated and analytical, whereas another project may be carried out in a lighter manner without emotional attachment or passion purely out of the need to meet a required outcome. An examination of these different approaches would lead to very different configurations; thus, it is relevant to examine multiple processes in order to make sense of one's own typical way. This can be done by comparing narratives of creative processes to design path narratives, or this could be done by analysing several creative processes by one person.

9.5 Failing to Find One's Own Way

Thus far, I have discussed ways to find and create one's own way and given suggestions on how to support one's own way based on the corpus of data studied. All the studied designers and students were more or less aware of

their dreams and what felt their own. Hence, none of the stories was of a person who felt completely lost and unable to recognize her own way at any time of her life. To find one's own way meant however, that the participants also sometimes went in the 'wrong' direction when they were exploring the world. This happened, for instance, to Monika, when she went to the business school and found that this was not her way. At that time, she was aware of not heading in the right direction yet was not sure what the right direction for her was. If she had been interviewed at that time of her life, she might have appeared more confused. However, she would have still been able to pinpoint some experiences from her life that she enjoyed and felt like her own things.

Whether all these ways the participants had walked were synchronized with their deepest dreams cannot really be concluded from the stories, since not all of them expressed their dreams as strongly. Some of the more descriptive accounts, such as Annika's account, did not reveal as strong a passion towards art or design as Lauretta's and Veera's stories did. However, this may be just an issue of self-expression, not motivation. Inka's story implied that she had not yet completely found her way, since she hoped that she will get closer to her way through trial and error. Her experiences had taught her what feels good for her and what does not, but the development towards her own way was still ongoing. However, this was the case in all the stories, even though not all of them expressed it so clearly. Finding one's own way takes place all the time; it is in constant movement, never complete and ready.

From a sceptical point of view, one's own way can also be seen as a performance that one makes oneself and others believe in. Without true internal motivation, however, this performance may feel unsatisfying to the person, and the question arises of whether something else could be more one's own? Furthermore, is a performance ever really anyone's truly own way? Performance may serve some other needs, such as becoming accepted, feeling belongingness or achieving status or rewards that may be important for one's own way; however, when these needs are fulfilled, what will be left of one's own way? I would not call my own way an ideal own way if it lacks internal passion and commitment that also exists outside of social interaction, when you are alone and when there is no one else to acknowledge what you do. The ideal 'own way', as I see it, is a thing you do out of the sheer pleasure of doing it, without external reward. However, for someone else, their own way may be very different. At the end of the day, it is only the person herself who knows what feels right and 'own' for her.

How would it then look like if someone were to fail in finding their own way? I suggest that each and every one of us recognizes something that feels 'like me', or that one wishes for; thus, in some ways everyone creates their own ways. However, there must also be situations that do not allow a person to find

her way. For instance, a completely deferential or subjugated person who has no power over herself may fail in finding – or at least carrying out – her own way. Furthermore, one may have recognized what feels one's own, but been actively discouraged and prevented from gaining access to the resources that might have been crucial in taking this position in the world (Nasir & Cooks 2009). To pursue one's own thing without support from anyone may be possible, but it is not easy.

Excluding these situations and keeping the focus on people who have power over their lives and at least someone that supports them, I would suggest that the question of finding one's own way is directly linked to self-awareness, how aware you are of what motivates you to walk that path so that you can claim it as your own. Is it you or someone else, like your parent or spouse, who wants to see you walking that path? Or is it the school that makes you believe that this is the right path for you? Do you agree or do you just walk along?

Even if we have a lot of freedom and power over our actions, it may still be hard to separate others' wishes from our own wishes, since we are influenced by others. To what extent we are aware of how much others influence us can be seen through some of the comments made by the participants, such as when Emilio directly noted that he understood how much others had influenced him. Those stories that did not reveal anything about this awareness of the influence of others cannot be evaluated that well, since a person may be aware of what influences her but not speak about it.

It can be speculated that having found one's own way would show to others as well in signs such as inspiration and motivation that shines outside. However, maybe someone's own way is painful and looks like a mistake to the others, but feels right for the person. To reach this 'truth' of whether the participants were aware of their own ways or whether part of that was performing something that is expected is hard to say.

9.6 Quality and Limitations of the Study

After discussing how this study has responded to the research questions, I want to take a critical look at my work and its limitations. In this section, I discuss validity and reliability, both of which involve the quality of the research. According to Silverman (2010: 275-286) validity refers to the 'truth', that is, how well the analysis represents the studied phenomenon. Validity can be increased for instance by studying contrary cases, using triangulation, and analysing every piece of the data, including anomalies (ibid.). Reliability refers to the consistency and transparency in research, or in other words,

how convincing the analysis is (ibid. 286-290). In the following, I will discuss these issues in relation to the data gathered, the data generating method, the analysis and my own position and epistemological commitment as a doctoral candidate.

I have committed to the constructionist view and been consistent in how I see the data as a co-produced, contextual and temporal construction. Thus, when the validity of the study is examined, I do not claim to have found something that reveals the 'truth' of these lived experiences. However, even though the stories used different rhetorical strategies they were still based on facts and represented their makers' reality. The 'truth' has not been the key question in the study; instead, I have been interested in how we express ourselves and our experiences through stories – thus the validity of this study also needs to be evaluated from this constructionist standpoint.

In this study, the participants' different 'own ways' have been presented as reconstructed stories. The reconstructed stories have been described based on subjective accounts, of which some consisted of direct definitions of 'own way' and 'own thing'. The stories emphasized certain features and elements that gave a distinctive nature to the teller's own way and separated it from others' ways. The description of each person's own way was not defined clearly by the participant, but the storytelling differentiated from the other accounts in a way that made visible what was more typical to this participant. These typical features gave a certain expression, such as in Emilio's case 'an agentic, dynamic, action-oriented person that likes unconventional things'. This impression that I as a researcher gained from the story formed my assessment of his own way. Hence, these 'own ways' in this study have eventually been defined externally, by me, since the participants did not speak about, for instance, intrinsic motivation or agency with these terms *per se*. However, this external assessment was based on the participants' subjective, internal perspectives of their own way.

The polarities presented have helped in the analysis and reconstruction of the narratives. They have provided illustrating tools for discussing the differences and commonalities in the stories. However, they have their downsides too. As polarities, they partly represent the theoretical understanding I have gained from narrative identity and partly the empirical constructions I have found in the data. Thus, the analytical frame is neither purely formed based on data, nor purely derived from narrative identity theory. Polarities are, like narrations, culturally and socially maintained constructions and their very existence can even be questioned. As presented earlier in this study, some polarities do overlap and co-exist, and instead of seeing such elements as polarities the creation of themes that go beyond this dualistic tool could also serve the study.

The corpus of the data was quite small and heterogeneous, since it consisted only of university students and Finnish entrepreneurs that had graduated from Aalto University. This limited the interpretation of Narrative Design Identity based on personal stories. However, even though the participants in the workshops were all European, the students in the DEE course came from Europe, North and South America and Asia and provided a wider perspective.

By looking at finding one's own way both from the perspective of a personal story and a creative process, I used data triangulation as a method to obtain a broader perspective. According to Silverman (2010: 277) triangulation refers to "the attempt to get a 'true' fix on a situation by combining different ways of looking at it (method triangulation) or different findings (data triangulation)". However, I had these two perspectives only from the student participants, not from the entrepreneurs. In addition, examination of the design works by the participants would have made the analysis on identity richer. However, I did not evaluate the design works, since I had promised anonymity to the participants. In retrospect, I could have included designs in the study and studied fewer participants with their permission to reveal their identities. These three perspectives: personal story, creative process, and design works would have given an even more holistic view on design identity.

As shown, the Visual Narrative method and the workshop setting guided the narrative making. The presenters were influenced by the cues, instructions and their peers; thus, the storytelling was not free from constraints. However, this method did not guide the answers in the way that interview questions could have done, and these influencing factors have been openly discussed throughout the study. To further increase the transparency of the study, I have described the analysis process and included several quotes from the participants in the empirical chapters. In addition, I have analysed each story that was born in the workshops; hence, I have not excluded any narrative. However, since the DEE course participants were so many, I needed to make a selection regarding which cases to present. My selection criteria were based on showing variability as much as possible, yet including some of the participants that participated in the *My Story* workshop so that I could compare personal stories and creative processes.

Since the participants participated in the Visual Narrative workshops on a voluntary basis and they knew beforehand what the study was about, that may have attracted participants who are more confident with their choices and own ways. Self-reflection would have been much more painful for a person who intuitively knows that she is in the wrong field and is not doing what she really wants to. From this point of view, the study lacks more challenging stories where the participant had given up on design or felt that she was failing in finding her way.

The validity and reliability of the study could have been improved by using several means, such as collecting field notes, following the participants for a longer period, or by asking other researchers to analyse the data. Having experiential knowledge from the DEE courses, I was able to describe the course frame and see how that influenced the way each creative process unfolded. However, if I had also made ethnographic field notes, I could have gained richer data concerning the setting. Due to this lack of them, my analysis is based on the written and visual data that I asked the participants to construct, not the interactions that took place during the course. In addition, I have partly relied on my experiential knowledge of the course when describing the assignments and other structural elements of the course.

My insider position in design has naturally also influenced my interpretation and analysis process, since I have mirrored the processes studied with my own process. I have needed to deal with assumptions, biases, and things that I have taken for granted in design. Most of these were related to the challenge of seeing both personal and social dimensions of the stories, and how these are intertwined in narrative identity. When I analysed the data, I did not let myself bypass these realizations and frustrations. Instead, I used my emotions as guides, since they revealed to me insights that I tried to resist or escape. In a similar way, I stopped in front of 'anomalies' and tried to understand what they had to say. For instance, Erika's different visualization in the *Significant Experiences* workshop led me to omit the cues from the next workshop, since I found her narrative the richest in storytelling and meaning-making among the design entrepreneurs (see also Kosonen 2011a).

9.7 Suggestions for Further Research

This study has presented insights into Narrative Design Identity and finding one's own way in design. However, this work has also generated questions that could be examined further. In this final section, I present three ideas for further research based on the current study. First, the Narrative Design Identity framework and polarities presented could be examined and developed further by studying actual designs in addition to visual and spoken stories. Second, since the Visual Narrative method was used only for designers within this study, it would be interesting to test the method in various contexts both inside and outside the creative fields. Since the method provokes reflection and increases knowledge of the other participants, it could be used in work communities or schools. In addition, it could be utilized in career counselling (McMahon & Watson 2012; Gibson 2004) and psychotherapy, where stories are revised and reconstructed (McAdams 1993: 11, 31-33.).

Third, the point that I consider most relevant for future research, relates to the problem of supporting students to enhance connection to themselves (see also Purra 2013). The data implies that overcoming creative frustration requires that first we establish a connection with ourselves to understand what we are doing and where we are going. Brown (2010:11) notes that at a critical, confusing moment we can move inward and establish a stronger connection with ourselves and find answers from within. This can be facilitated by talking with others, but eventually the question of creating one's own way is a question of the internal process we have inside of us when others are no longer around. How can we support students to nurture and maintain such a connection with themselves? Can we find tools for this in design education, or could we build tools together with sociologists and psychologists to support this important aspect?

Epilogue

As a part of the study, I, too, needed to discover my own way to be able to engage with the delightful and painful processes of others. This self-reflective work led me closer to my difficult experiences and helped me integrate them into my personal story. This process also made me establish a stronger connection with myself, which further enhanced my ability to dwell in my creative work (see Ings 2014) and face others and their experiences with a deeper compassion.

Even though narratives help us share and understand ourselves and others, they can also restrict us. Bruner (2004: 708) notes that our ways of telling our stories may become so habitual that they start to direct our futures instead of simply guiding the life narrative up to the present. Drawing on this, I propose that it is essential to notice when narrative identity is a construction that helps us examine ourselves, and when it becomes a limiting structure that restricts us from navigating our lives in new, exploratory ways. If we become dependent on our narratives either as individuals or as an educational institution, they may become chains that prevent us from enjoying this moment and reinventing ourselves in a world that exists independent of narrative or identity constructions.

I sincerely hope that this doctoral study helps us to notice that when we listen to and make visible different, beautiful, visual and linguistic unique voices and ways, they can be better understood and supported. When students' different orientations and perspectives are valued and brought into the core of design education, we can learn from them and co-develop creative strategies in design. By accepting uncertainty as a part of the creation of one's own way, we can become more comfortable with doubts and fears as part of the process (Bayles & Orland 2001). We can learn to see the beauty of uncertainty and cherish serendipity, and in our incompleteness walk beside each other as we co-discover the unlimited world both inside and outside of us.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A: Cues

Examples of cues that could be cut out and used in Significant Experiences workshop I and II.

APPENDIX B: Stones as experiences

Stones as experiences was an exercise for doctoral students at a doctoral summer school that was held in Lapland in June 2011. The exercise and its purpose is explained in the seminar paper, *Stones as experiences – Artistic experiments as part of an ethnographic research* (Kosonen 2011b), which is summarized and discussed briefly in this appendix. The main idea of this exercise was to find new ways to visualize exercises. I first studied how stones are present in nature (Figure 99) and then asked doctoral students to visualize their research processes in the form of stone installations.
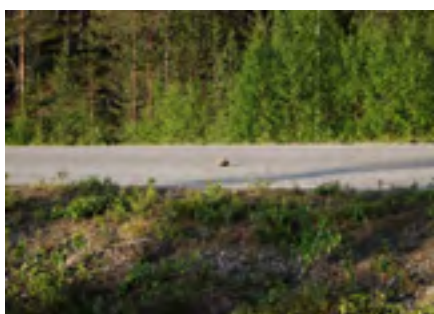
Figure 99. Stone installations in nature.

Figure 100. Stone installations by two researchers. The installation in the left is monumental, separating strongly from its environment, whereas the installation on the right merges into its surroundings.

I consider that the value of the exercise was in the artistic, exploratory approach that enhanced human-material interaction and gave room for bodily activity that could also express non-linguistic (even unconscious) ideas through installation making (Figure 100). The installations held meanings that were blurry and undefined at first, but after making the installation gained their form and could be examined. I made a stone installation myself, too, and I was surprised how I had intuitively, without clear understanding, organized the stones into a structure that made sense to me when I looked at it. When I examined the installation, I realized how strong my feelings were towards some experiences in my research process. I had not realized these emotions and their relationship to one another before the exercise. When the installation was there in front of me, I could look at it and see meanings in it, or give meanings to it. The installation became a third party in the relationship between me and my research and helped me to visualize this complex relationship and highlight some key events in it.

APPENDIX C: Stone that keeps falling off

Monica selected her internship experience for the installation exercise. She chose to make the installation at the lakeside. The installation consisted of two stones, a broad, flat stone and a small stone on top of it (Figure 101). The flat stone was situated right at the lakeside so that the waves went over it. Every now and then the waves moved the smaller stone, and finally pushed the stone off.

> *I was fascinated by the way that every wave that goes over the stone, moves it a bit. (…) Every now and then there is a big wave coming*

Monica tried several stones and tried to find one that 'looked like her'. She wanted the colour and shape to match with how she is.

> *It has some corners, but it's round.*

She needed to find a stone that was just the right size and weight so that it would stay for some time on top of the large stone and not move instantly when the waves came. However, it would need to eventually fall when bigger waves came. In this manner, she represented her painful experience as an intern, whose ideas were not listened to and who was abused.

> *I wanted to stay and work and get through it, but every now and then something would just come and throw me out the way.*

When the stone fell off from the large stone, she went and put it back. This was part of her moving installation and a way to show that despite the misbehaviour and ignorance she faced, she tried to find a solution and negotiate with her employers.

Figure 101. The stone installation is on the left side of the photo right at the lakeside.

APPENDIX D: Touching, not thinking

Lauretta's installation was under the water along the shore of the lake (Figure 102). She chose the spot because she had grown up by a lake and since she wanted to have the feel of the moving water as part of her work. Her installation resembled an immaterial experience that was 'deep' and that she could feel in her stomach.

> *It is little bit like being in a womb. (…) I'm trying not to think. Just do and feel.*

When making her installation, Lauretta did not want to think but feel. She was reluctant to give a name to the installation, since the point of the work was about not to think about things, and giving definitions or drawing boundaries would have been exactly what she wanted to avoid in her installation.

> *It shouldn't be something to be seen, but something to be touched. You close your eyes and just touch it and try to understand it.*

The stones were placed to resemble a human figure, so they can also be looked at, even though touching is more important.

> *When you see you think, but when you touch, it's more direct.*

Lauretta wanted to emphasize the sense of touch to obtain knowledge of things, since we are so used to gaining knowledge through our sight.

Figure 102. Lauretta's stone installation under the water. The installation is in the centre of the photo. The small red stone is in the middle of the human figure.

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EXHIBITION

296

MY UNIVERSE

BE GOOD
AT EVERYTHING

TRY EVERYTHING
AND OUT

BE GOOD.

INTERNSHIP → THESIS

CRAFT
DESIGN
NEW DESIGNERS
EUROPEAN DESIGN
YOUNGER (NEW AGE) ENTREPRENEUR
SERVICE FOR START UP
CORPORATIONS
RENAISSANCE
ITALIAN DESIGN

QUIET PANICING

Krista Kosonen (b. 1975)

Krista is an art-driven researcher, designer
and mentor. In parallel with her doctoral
studies, she has worked in Aalto ARTS as
a teacher and promoted Finnish design
via Imu design, which she co-founded
with her colleagues in 2002. She has also
worked in the ethnographic research team
in PARC, a Xerox Company in the US, and
carried out creative projects via her own
company.
        Krista is interested in connecting art,
social psychology and design. She is
intrigued by the power of visualization
and storytelling. Her passion is to listen to
different life stories and to discover ways
in which we can support one another to
find our own ways and fulfil our purposes
in life. Currently, Krista studies expressive
arts therapy to deepen her knowledge in
creative self-discovery and expression.

The question of how to find one's own way touches the life of each of us. This question is closely linked to our identity, especially when something changes in our lives and questions our prevailing view of ourselves.

Finding One's Own Way illustrates how designers have sought to navigate their life in design. The study builds on individual stories that are viewed through narrative identity research — design entrepreneurs' and design students' visual and spoken narratives and creative process reports, recounting some of the most significant experiences that have influenced their life paths. These stories show how one's 'own way' is shaped by different beliefs, obstacles and successes, turning points and creative crises.

At the same time, the study introduces tools for design research and design education. The *Visual Narrative* method used to generate the data can also be used to support self-reflection and insights into a designer's own identity. The analytical framework, *Narrative Design Identity*, can facilitate the interpretation of narratives.

In this way, the research provides novel insights for designers, design students, researchers and educators — indeed anyone who is eager to dive into identity reflection and gain a better understanding of how to both find and create one's own way in design.

The stringent focus on unpacking the many details in the participants' design identity narratives will give an important contribution to the research field.

Dr. Marte S. Gulliksen
Professor, University College
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I am captivated by the idea of addressing novel considerations and practices for elaborating and supporting individuals' identity work - it spokes to a highly pertinent, but still under-examined area of investigation in the field of design and more generally in working life research. In its entirety, the dissertation produces new knowledge in the field of design, reports candidate's independent work and shows the readiness for academic research.

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