

BIG STORIES, SMALL TOWNS:

a participatory and web-based documentary and exegesis

www.bigstories.com.au

Exegesis submitted by Martin Potter

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For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
Flinders University of South Australia

ABSTRACT

The central area of research for this thesis concerns the most effective techniques for practitioners developing and delivering facilitated participatory media projects for the internet within an institutional setting. Through the development and delivery of a web-based, participatory documentary *Big Stories, Small Towns*, this study explored the complexity of relationships that underlie media participation within public screen institutions such as national broadcasters and screen culture agencies. This involves key principles of trust, power, motivation, access and agency to assist practitioners in managing participatory processes in media practice.

This study was comprised of two parts – a creative component (The project) and a written exegesis. Fifty per cent of the submission for my PhD is comprised of the writing, direction, production and facilitation of *Big Stories, Small Towns*, which is a web-based participatory documentary, produced in partnership with two public screen institutions, Screen Australia and the Media Resource Centre. The project's main public presentation can be viewed online at www.bigstories.com.au. An archived version of the first site can be viewed at v1.bigstories.com.au.

My accompanying exegesis examines a tradition of documentary production underpinned by participatory practices. The exegesis examines methodologies informed by theories of critical practice to discuss the *Big Stories* project in the context of the wider literature drawn from media studies, communication for

development, visual anthropology and cultural studies. The study explores participatory media activity and identifies examples that have influenced the *Big Stories* project.

The outcomes of the study are substantial and diverse original contributions to research and practice including an original contribution to both web documentary and participatory media practice, re-imagining community-based documentary and oral history practice in a digital, collaborative environment, actively exploring mechanisms for addressing a multi-level digital divide for regional communities, delivering an original project drawing on partnerships with government, non-government and the private sector to create an innovative output, identified by peers as a form of best practice for web documentary, and bringing communication for development ideals to Australian public screen institutions and creating a large archive of this material.

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Big Stories, Small Towns (version 1)

Big Stories: Port Augusta (<http://v1.bigstories.com.au/>)

Big Stories, Small Towns (version 2)

Big Stories: Murray Bridge

(<http://bigstories.com.au/#/town/murray-bridge>)

Big Stories: Raukkan (<http://bigstories.com.au/#/town/raukkan>)

Big Stories: Banlung (<http://bigstories.com.au/#/town/banlung>)

Additional Sites:

Big Stories: Strathewen

(<http://bigstories.com.au/#/town/strathewen>)

Blog: blog.bigstories.com.au

Facebook: [facebook.com/bigstories](https://www.facebook.com/bigstories)

ABBREVIATIONS

ORGANISATIONS AND EVENTS

ABC: Australian Broadcasting Corporation

ACMI: Australian Centre for the Moving Image

AFA: Aboriginies Friends Association

AFC: Australian Film Commission

AFF: Adelaide Film Festival

AIDC: Australian International Documentary Conference

BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation

CASA: Country Arts South Australia

FOMBL: Friends of the Murray Bridge Library

FTI: Film and Television Institute, Western Australia

IDFA: International Festival of Documentary Amsterdam

MRC: Media Resource Centre, South Australia

NDP: National Documentary Program of Screen Australia

NFB: National Film Board of Canada

NGO: Non-Government Organisation

NIP: National Interest Program of Film Australia

NITV: National Indigenous TV network

NTFP: Non Timber Forest Products

Nunku: Nunkuwarrin Yunti

RCC: Raukkan Community Council

SAFC: South Australian Film Corporation

SBS: Special Broadcast Service

SDA: Screen Development Agencies

Wami Kata: Wami Kata Old Folks Home

UNESCO: United Nations Education Science Culture Organisation

OTHER ABBREVIATIONS

CMS: Content Management System

DVD: Digital Video Disc

LCP: Local Content Producers

HTML5: Hyper Text Mark-up Language version 5

PAR: Participatory Action Research

PV: Participatory Video

VAK: Visual Arts Knowing

v.1: Version 1

v.2: Version 2

Note on abbreviation of the case study *Big Stories, Small Towns*: The *Big Stories, Small Towns* project will be referred to by its full name of *Big Stories, Small Towns* at the outset of each chapter and subsequently as *Big Stories* or the project.

CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

Exegesis Title: Big Stories, Small Towns; a participatory and web-based documentary.

Candidate's Name: Martin George Potter

I certify that this exegesis and web-based documentary does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. G. Potter', with a period at the end.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe a massive debt of gratitude to many people who have helped me during this study. This is an incomplete list of some of them. Thanks to my supervisor Mike Walsh for his guidance, patience and feedback. Thanks to the Australian Post-Graduate Award that made life a bit easier for three years and to Flinders University staff. My heartfelt thanks to everyone who read and commented on a variety of drafts – Drs. Jonathon Louth, Sonja Vivienne, Angelique Bletsas and my mother Dr. Gillian Potter, and to my whole family, thanks for your continuing encouragement. Thank you to the many participants and storytellers involved in the Big Stories project since 2008. To the community partners and champions in local organisations, town councils, festivals, galleries, arts and screen bodies - thank you so much. Your support has sustained and validated the shared creative work of *Big Stories* as well as bringing these stories to a wider audience. To the many filmmakers, programmers, designers, local content producers and other creative people involved over the years – thank you. A full list of credits for the project is at bigstories.com.au/#/page/credits. Thanks to the core collaborators – firstly Jeni Lee and Sieh Mchawala, filmmakers in resident in three towns; Koam Chanrasmey, filmmaker in residence in Cambodia; Ramon Sanchez Orense who gave so many weeks to post-production; and Free Range Future under the guidance of Nick Crowther who built the website. And to Anna Grieve, partner in crime, I don't think I can ever say thank you enough.

And to Mina – thank you. Thanks for reading, and listening, and waiting.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

*Every community has a living memory, an awareness of a collective identity woven
of a thousand stories.*

Joe Lambert, Centre for Digital Storytelling¹

1.1 AN OVERVIEW

In 2007, I was immersed in the possibilities of community and digital media. It sometimes seemed that a new media-verse had come into being in which everyone could play a part as they chose. From this digitopian vision emerged a project that I hoped could engage with some of Australia's most digitally disconnected at that time - residents of remote and regional towns across the country. This study represents reflections on the experience and ideas that emerged over the course of that hopeful project, *Big Stories, Small Towns* (hereafter *Big Stories* or the project). It is underpinned by two assumptions that I held when I commenced this study, and still hold:

- 1) humans cast their identity in some narrative form in all cultures and thus storytelling is a key part of describing both individual and collective experience,
- 2) participatory media have the potential to create a more nuanced, ethical, diverse and democratic media culture.

¹ Lambert, J. (2005), Center for Digital Storytelling website (comment now offline), Accessed; October , 2008, www.storycenter.org

The creative component of the study (the project) is mostly based in the development, delivery and diffusion of the second iteration of the *Big Stories* participatory and web documentary project that commenced in 2009. This iteration spans the research and development process, production residencies in the towns of Murray Bridge, Raukkan in Australia and Banlung in Cambodia and the post-production period including development of the website and supporting Content Management System (CMS). The main artefact of the project is a web documentary centred on the media outputs of filmmakers in residence living in a small town. The project's public face is found in a website – www.bigstories.com.au - incorporating linear documentaries, photo essays and text created by these filmmakers in residence, as well as community-generated content such as digital stories, oral histories, photo series and archival material sourced from national, state and local archives. Stories from the first iteration have been incorporated into the current project.

1.2 THE RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the most effective techniques for practitioners developing and delivering facilitated participatory media projects for the web within an institutional setting?

As a practitioner an initial question I confronted in this type of work was: how can professional media makers, working through institutional mechanisms, best facilitate the production of stories with non-professionals with a view to supporting their participation with media? Stoney, in Sturken (1984), notes that in contrast to most

models of media production, inclusion and process rather than product is viewed as the key output of facilitated participatory media practice.²

My aims as a practitioner involved in this type of work were to:

- (i) investigate past practices in the field,
- (ii) reflect on the motivations and influences that are invoked to justify the work,
- (iii) set out my own model of practice and its rationale, with the intention of addressing the research question.

The research question has been designed, not to provide a ‘one size fits all’ solution, but to interrogate current practice and theory and to reflect on whether there are effective ways to manage issues of participation in a setting with which I am most familiar as a practitioner. Thus, this exegesis pays particular attention to participatory media projects taking place within public screen culture institutions such as public broadcasters or national film bodies. I identify a principled approach to production as important in this practice. The principles of the project frame the relationship that practitioners seek to construct with participants over the entire span of the interaction, from planning and research through to use of the content. To that end, the principles and their development and use are key, in order to reflect on effective techniques or approaches in the development, delivery and use of this form of media. These

² George Stoney in *Sturken, M., 1984, “An Interview With George Stoney”,* originally in *Afterimage, Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester, NY (1984)*. Accessed May, 2009:

<http://www.experimental-tv-center.org/interview-george-stoney>.

Similar sentiments from practitioners in various practices of participatory media can be found in; Snowden (1984), Williamson (1989), Lambert (2002, 2005), Meadows (2003) and Lurch (2006) and Cizek (2007).

principles are outlined in a funding proposal to Screen Australia (Appendix 1: *Big Stories Production Proposal*) and will be explored in Chapter 4.

1.2.1 Key Theorists

Exploring other media makers' praxis in relation to participatory documentary illuminates the paradigm from which *Big Stories* takes its cues. I acknowledge the influence of other areas that intersect with documentary practice - specifically visual anthropology and communication for development, particularly the work of Jean Rouch. An overview of this practice will be presented in Chapter 2. Specific practices of participatory documentary that have influenced my work will also be explored in more depth in this chapter with a focus on the participatory media work of the National Film Board of Canada (NFB), notably the *Fogo Process*.

In developing the project, key influences include Freire's (1970) understanding of dialogical practice and the necessary values of love, hope, humility, faith in others' capability, trust and critical thinking from which this practice might arise, as outlined in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Also, the concept of Positive Deviance, after Unger's (1987) *Negative Capability*, which allows for human agency within the formative contexts of institutional and ideological structures, has been influential. Key foundational thinkers who have shaped my understanding of participation in media are Illich (1979) and his vision of the shift from a technocratic elite towards "convivial tools" developed and maintained by a community of users;³ Mouffe (2000) and her concept of agonistic pluralism, challenging Habermas' (1962, 1991) ideal of a consensual public sphere; and the importance of mass media in the collective

³ Illich, I. (1979) *Tools for Conviviality*, 2nd edn. London: Fontana. P. 6

imagining of community described by Anderson (1983) in *Imagined Communities*. Additional texts including Marcuse (1972) on institutional reconstruction and counter-institutions, Enzensberger (1970) on emancipation, Cooke and Kothari (eds. 2001) on participation, Ruby (1991) on visual anthropology and the 'third voice' and Hargittai (2002) on a multi-level digital divide have provided arguments and concepts that aided in developing a response to the research question and will be addressed in Chapter 2.

Projects, models and literature reviewed and used within the project have been the most helpful candidates in shaping my screen practice. However, at the end of this process, there is no complete model for all circumstances. If no ideal model is possible, or even necessary, there are still some common values of participatory media that I would like to see more often in projects and initiatives that lay claim to participatory components. The intent of my work is to enable other media practitioners to undertake participatory processes, as well as for institutions seeking to engage or expand their participatory media programs to be able to build capacity to deliver diverse, sustainable participatory media projects.

1.3 THE CREATIVE COMPONENT OF THE STUDY (THE PROJECT)

The creative component of the study, represented by both artefact and process of the project, reflects indirectly on the research question. *Big Stories* has been developed as a work alongside the exegesis and not as a model to verify research.

The complexity of facilitated participatory media resists reduction to a single problem

and its solution. While a range of artefacts has been produced in the project (e.g. video documentaries, websites, exhibitions etc.) their novelty, shared interest and usefulness may not be easily demonstrated. Alongside these artefacts is the process – the ‘know-how’ – that Scrivener (2000) articulates as “exemplified in the artefacts” of creative projects.⁴ The project is thus an object of experience and process. Describing issues, concerns and interests stimulating the work is an illustration of a self-conscious and reflective creative practice.

Thus the exegesis seeks to consider the experience of a practitioner working in a complex medium and engaged in a multiplicity of reflections; these reflections are both internal (self-reflection on the project), and external. The reflections occur as a component of praxis, a process of simultaneous action/ reflection and reflection occurring on the consequences of action.⁵ From this experience the project provides examples, images, understandings that others may adopt for, or adapt to, their own purposes. Underpinning *Big Stories* has been a determined openness to the details of production process, outcomes and a commitment to adaptation based on a dialogical practice defined by particular values. The exegesis will illustrate my role in creating this collaborative work and will illuminate contexts and concerns from which the work emerged.

⁴ Scrivener, S. (2000) “Reflection in and on action and practice in creative-production doctoral projects in art and design.” *Working Papers in Art and Design*. Accessed online, 1 November 2011, from: http://sitem.herts.ac.uk/artdes_research/papers/wpades/vol1/scrivener2.html

⁵ My understanding of praxis as a creative and pedagogical act is inspired by: Freire, P. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), New York: Continuum.

1.4 THE EXEGESIS: STRUCTURE

The exegesis tells the stories behind the story of *Big Stories* and explores the practices of others working in collaborative documentary practice. It is divided into two main sections.

Chapter 2 constitutes this first section of the exegesis and deals with the methodological and interpretative paradigm, literature and history relevant to my practice of collaborative documentary practices. I reflect on theoretical positions to frame and justify my practice. I briefly review a number of facilitated participatory media projects, exploring the project aims, the processes by which the product is made, the role of media professionals within the project and the problems that have to be solved in their interaction with the participants. Intermediary roles or facilitator roles that influence the process of production, such as social animators and Local Content Producers, are investigated, as are the roles of the participants. Given the range of practices classed as participatory media, I focus very specifically on projects that resonate with my own perspective as a media practitioner working collaboratively with diverse partners, practitioners and participants to create media in an institutional setting for multi-platform distribution.

The second section, comprising of Chapters 3 to 6, focuses on the creative component of the work, the *Big Stories* project. Through case study, I reflect on the formative contexts and relationships that have directly shaped the process, artefacts and outcomes of the project.

Chapter 3 explores the foundations of *Big Stories*. This chapter reflects on previous experiences of delivering participatory media projects, influences and context at the time of the development of the first *Big Stories* project in 2008 - 2009. The intent is to establish the diverse dynamics that exist between practitioners and participants interacting with community and institutions.

Chapter 4 explores the development of the second *Big Stories* project. The chapter uses the development of a production proposal to the National Documentary Program at Screen Australia to explore the emergence of overarching principles and ideas of the project, and reflects on theory and previous practice that informed the work. This chapter highlights my role as producer and creative director of the project.

Chapter 5 explores the delivery of the project across two South Australian towns, Murray Bridge and Raukkan, and the immediate outcomes for practitioners and participants. Chapter 6 focuses on the delivery and immediate outcomes of *Big Stories* in Cambodia in the town of Banlung, in Ratanakiri province. This chapter reflects on key issues raised in the practice and literature of the fields of visual anthropology and communication for development. Chapters 5 and 6 highlight my role as facilitator and filmmaker.

The final chapter, Chapter 7, presents the summary of research findings as highlighted from the preceding chapters.

1.5 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

At the start of 2009 when I commenced post-graduate studies, the first *Big Stories* website had just been completed (archived at: <http://v1.bigstories.com.au/>) and launched at the 2009 Adelaide Film Festival and Australian International Documentary Conference. This first version of the project was produced through the Media Resource Centre in South Australia with the financial support of Film Australia's National Interest Program and additional financial support from the South Australian Film Corporation, Country Arts South Australia and Port Augusta City Council. The institutional partnerships are important as they establish a framework from which the project emerged; they create a link between my motivations and institutional motivations. A central concern of the project has been reconciling the often-conflicting priorities of institutional partners, facilitators and subsequently the participants and communities.

1.5.1 Personal Role and Motivation

My motivation in developing *Big Stories* was to create a project that would address a multi-level digital divide that exists between regional and urban Australia and is compounded by income disparity.⁶ This was to be achieved through creating an ongoing project to support regionally based training, network building, individual and organisational development. The project would offer high quality and innovative

⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2007) *Patterns of Internet Access in Australia, 2006*. Accessed 14 May, 2007:

<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/E251AE2BCA9FDC1DCA2573A10019ED9F?opendocument>

Curtin, J. (2001) *A Digital Divide in Rural and Regional Australia?* In *Current Issues Brief, No. 1 2001-2002, Information and Research Services Publications*, 7 August 2001. Accessed 14 May, 2007:

http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/Publications_Archive/CIB/cib0102/02CIB01

processes for the creation and distribution of regional screen stories.

Big Stories was a collaborative documentary work that moved across a range of disciplines and levels of participation. The roles of producer, filmmaker in residence and online producer were the core professional roles of the project and constituted the core team. The producers described the broad framework and resourced the project. Filmmakers were contracted to be in residence in a town and worked according to a set of values, which defined the approach to documentary making and training. A web production company provided built the bigstories.com.au web platform working to the framework described by the producers.

Over time, my role has also evolved. In the first *Big Stories* I was producer and facilitator. In this role I initiated, developed, resourced and managed the project. I conceived of the project, researched story possibilities, oversaw community and stakeholder management and also managed the production and the professional team of filmmakers and web developers. I oversaw and delivered community programs from workshops to exhibitions and collaborated closely with the filmmakers in residence and web designers in production and post-production.

In the second iteration of the project, I was creative director, a filmmaker in residence and co-producer. As creative director I was responsible for the overarching principles that guided the project, ethics and process of production and the stories produced. I also oversaw the look and feel of the web platform and the core requirements for the CMS. As co-producer I worked with fellow producer Anna Grieve to resource, manage and sustain the project. As one of a number of filmmakers in residence, I

directed and facilitated stories in different towns in collaboration with other filmmakers and community members.

My work in making this project in current focus spanned research, funding and partnerships, community workshops, training, collaboration, filming, post-production and offline and online distribution. These are diverse activities underpinned by particular overarching ideals. In acknowledging the complexity of the field and practice, I have sought to describe my experience as a professional media maker of delivering a suite of participatory media processes and products, offering one perspective on this process.

1.6 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY:

Regional opportunities for participation in Australia

Big Stories emerged as a response to gaps in Australian regional and remote communities' participation in screen culture. These concerns remain, despite a number of positive developments beyond our project. With the current rollout of regional infrastructure such as the National Broadband Network and emergence of institutional models of participatory platforms like the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's (ABC) *ABC Open*, there is an attempt to address ongoing inequity. Increasing regional digital skills through ensuring quality of access, autonomy of use (through location, encouraging experimentation and freedom of use) and support networks as well as providing this diversity of support over time, will begin to bridge this divide.

Independent practitioners are also engaging in this space, and their work, often structured along non-profit or social business models, offers the flexibility and nimbleness that Chambers (2007) believes is central in manifesting a responsive participatory process. However, this independent engagement often results in no sustainable relationships or networks, shorter term commitments, lower levels of accountability and a shift to fee-for-service project-based activity that may, as Illich (1982) described, result in the enclosure of the space as “a productive resource”⁷ and a forced dependency on external facilitators in order to ensure sustainable practice. McChesney (2004) describes a critical juncture⁸ as new media technologies emerge, and simultaneous possibilities for reconstruction are offered. In this case the juncture is a convergence of pre-existing contexts (such as institutional or ideological contexts), the emergence of new media and technology and individual and communal self-expression. At this critical juncture we may see existing contexts and practices that flow from those contexts diminish the possibility for reconstruction. However, Marcuse (1979), in his utopian vision of social and cultural reconstruction envisioned the possibility of a transformative juncture:

*A juncture of technique and the arts in the total reconstruction of the environment... the union of art, technique and the new sensibility in a process of cultural transformation and social reconstruction can provide the preconditions for a free society.*⁹

⁷Illich, I. (1982) “Silence is a Commons” speech presented at *Asahi Symposium Science and Man - The Computer-managed Society*, Tokyo, Japan. Accessed online, 24 March, 2010:

<http://www.preservenet.com/theory/Illich/Silence.html>

⁸ McChesney, R. (2004) *The Problem of the Media: US Communication Politics in the 21st Century*, Monthly Review Press, New York. P.24

⁹ Marcuse, H. (1979) from lecture notes found in his personal collection, marked “Irvine March 5, 1979” in *Art and Liberation: Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse: Volume 4*, edited by Kellner D. (2007), Routledge, London. P. 147

The aim of the project is, at this critical juncture, to directly engage with the possibility for reconstruction in both institutional and community settings with a hope to create a fairer society by actively contributing to a nuanced, ethical, diverse and democratic media culture.

1.7 DOCUMENTARY PROCESS

Big Stories draws on a number of traditions in documentary film, art and photography as a way of recording everyday life through story, and as a reflexive interplay between subjects and documentary makers. The project shows local stories in a range of settings from TV to art galleries and in a global forum via the bigstories.com.au website.

Key to this is an understanding of the project both as process and product(s). The idea of process was at the core of funding proposals for the project. According to Anna Grieve, Executive Producer at Film Australia at the time (and current co-producer) this was the first time that “a process, not a story”¹⁰ had been commissioned by the agency. As a process-driven multi-platform documentary, *Big Stories* incorporated participatory and collaborative production strategies in producing stories and images. The process centred on documentary filmmakers who lived in a small town for a period of time and undertook facilitated filmmaking and community media interventions, which aimed to:

- engage community members in telling their stories;
- introduce specific community members to techniques and practice for creating their own high quality media content;

¹⁰ Email from Anna Grieve to the Author, May 2008.

- deliver workshops using participatory media models such as digital storytelling;¹¹
- screen back content produced in the town in various settings to get feedback from the community, and
- engage and inspire the community with their own stories.

This was not simply a ‘shoot and run’ production methodology but a deeper, longer-term engagement over the life span of an evolving project. The orientation of this kind of documentary making is towards flexibility and responsiveness. Although aspects of the process of community engagement are described prior to production, the stories that emerged are not. Thus, varied techniques were employed in different settings over time. This multiplicity of engagement symbolises the diversity of representations, requirements and participation of the people involved.

The role of documentary maker was both to create stories and to generate participatory approaches in which community members had varying levels of control over content. There was a shift towards a process of proliferation in the media produced and a decentring of the authorial voice of the filmmaker within the project. At the same time the role of filmmaker was re-imagined as facilitator, curator, collaborator, participant and author across process, content and community. As Rose (2011) points out, the documentary maker becomes a context provider, but only sometimes content provider.¹²

¹¹ The term digital storytelling as used in this study relates to the specific conception by the Centre for Digital Storytelling (CDS) model developed by Dana Atchley, Joe Lambert and Nina Mullen in California in the early 1990s.

¹² Rose, M. (2011), Collab Docs Blog, self published,

Participatory and online creation and distribution that incorporates video, text, audio and images is a complex system, engaging in a multiplicity of actions and reflections. Krauss (1999) declares these systems cannot be reduced to “a single instance that would provide a formal unity for the whole.”¹³ The artefacts of production were conceived as participatory in their creation and are thus “relational.”¹⁴ They cannot be studied as something fixed, but need to be addressed through the complex series of relations that form them and are formed by them. It is a subjective and inflected process of arbitrating and communicating meaning, both in making and viewing. Relationships are formed and insight is gathered in the making of stories, viewings and discussions.

One of the properties of *Big Stories* was this relational quality, in particular the capacity for multi-vocality and the importance of social relations to the project. From the outset, the project sought to describe a multi-layered community and explore complex relations between people, social backgrounds, technology and place. The project emerged from an understanding of the intrinsic value of telling and documenting stories about the lives of people in community with the active involvement of the local community at every stage of production. While the range of media produced over the course of *Big Stories* may reveal some meaning and intent of

<http://collabdocs.wordpress.com/2011/11/30/four-categories-of-collaborative-documentary/>

¹³ Krauss, R. (1999) *A Voyage on The North Sea: Art in the Age of a Post-Medium Condition*, London: Thames and Hudson. P.31

¹⁴ Bourriaud, N. (2002), *Relational Aesthetics*, (trans. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods), Dijon: Les Presses du Réel. P. 14

the storytellers, I am more interested in looking at the project as a system and not to the stories as representational texts to be read.

This is a practice-led, exploratory methodology that attempts to reconcile practice and operation throughout the project when knowledge and theory are not proscribed.

Therefore, methods used draw on a multiplicity of dialogues, contexts and practices to manifest creative production. Sullivan (2005) terms this approach “visual arts knowing”¹⁵ and uses it to differentiate inter-disciplinary creative research processes from those of both logical positivism and qualitative research. Implicit in my understanding is that in presenting my work, not only can it not be replicated, there is no need for replication. The project can offer guidance to future projects, but with the understanding that each event, although historically informed, will be unique. My contribution to knowledge lies in the presentation of, and critical reflections on, this work.

I present this as a form of research, arguing as Sullivan does, that “human understanding arises from a process of inquiry that involves creative action and critical reflection,”¹⁶ recalling Freire’s (1970) understanding of praxis in which “discovery cannot be purely intellectual but must involve action; nor can it be limited to mere activism, but must include serious reflection.”¹⁷ These are reflections on a practice that moves attention from the rhetoric of texts to practices of community organisation and the technological and embodied material relations, which aspire to

¹⁵Sullivan, G. (2005) *Art Practice as Research: Inquiry in the Visual Arts*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. P.114

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ Freire, P. (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum, p.21

produce a collectively enacted sense of place. Thus, I have focussed on explanation and analysis of context, process, form, and my experience of particular relationships that emerged from the production process and are intertwined within the project.