Crawshaw J, Gkartzios M. (2018)
The Way Art Works: Insights for Community Development.
In: Kenny, S.; McGrath, B.; Phillips, R. (eds.)
The Routledge Handbook of Community Development: Perspectives from Around the Globe.
New York: Routledge, pp.177-192.

Date deposited:

25/10/2017

Embargo release date:

23 April 2019

The Routledge Handbook of Community Development:

Perspectives from Around the Globe

Editors: Sue Kenny, Brian McGrath, Rhonda Phillips

Chapter 13: The Way Art Works: Insights for Community Development

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Introduction

How can we articulate what art does in rural community development? Drawing on a one-year experimental study combining ethnography and artistic fieldwork on the Holy Island of Lindisfarne in the north east of England (referred to hereafter as Holy Island), we explore the ways art works in the context of neo-endogenous forms of community development. We propose that the art experience is catalytic to processes of community engagement, personal and collective reflection, revealing relationships (or even disconnects) between the community as well as between the community and the natural environment. Such reflexive processes are characteristic within ideal frames of rural development that place the community at the heart of the development decision making. We argue therefore that art as a process within a community development strategy reveals the complexity of rural community or in other words 'reads' the community where development initiatives are being established. Community-led or 'bottom-up' perspectives are commonplace in rural development processes, well discussed within ideal models such as neo-endogenous or networked rural development (Lowe et al. 1998; Shucksmith 2000). Similarly, the role of arts is increasingly now promoted as a vehicle

to rural development (Balfour and Alter 2015; Markusen 2006; Bell and Jayne 2010). However, this usually refers to understanding arts in positive or economic terms (Gibson 2010a, 2010b; Arts Council England 2005). This literature does not account for art as a practice on its own terms (an example from arts practice: Crawshaw and Bowman, 2007). Surprisingly perhaps, while these debates draw on theoretical discussions within economic and social geography, planning and rural studies, there is very little intersection with the field of art studies. This chapter aims to fill this gap, evidenced by our interdisciplinary collaboration across art and rural studies backgrounds.

We draw inspiration on the relational perspectives of art practice from art studies. As proposed by Hennion and Grenier (2000: 351) instead of *looking at* works of art, we rather shape our study to trace *the way artworks work*. To contribute a nuanced articulation of the effects mobilised by art in rural development processes, through exploratory ethnographic research, we trace associations at the micro level: we are concerned with *what* art does *in practice*. To discuss the relational nature of communities, we draw on rural studies and in particular the framework for 'reading communities' suggested by Ruth Liepins (2000a, 2000b). In tracing associations, we notice how art impacts on community meanings, practices, and spaces and structures amidst complex relational networks. As such we make a specific contribution to the understanding of art in community development: through tracing the micro relationships of art in rural development, we propose art as a 'relational reading' of the community.

Community, rural and the arts

Rural community: an approach

The exploration of community has been a popular research theme in social sciences, reflecting challenges in describing both communities of interest and geography, as well as issues of

representativeness ('who is' the community?) and heterogeneity within communities (Buller and Wright 1990; Day 1998; Panelli and Welch 2005). Ruth Liepins' (2000a) approach has been influential in rural studies (Woods, 2011), because of the heterogeneity she offers in analysing it as 'a social collective of great diversity' (p. 27), a social phenomenon that entails four elements: people, meanings, practices and spaces. *People* constitute a central notion of community, reflecting tendencies of people to form groups which have both discursive meanings and social functions. Liepins places people at the centre of the community; she also, however, draws attention to other external actors and social groups having power to exert influence on understandings of community. Researchers for example have explored 'actors' or 'agents' and marginalised 'others', who interact within 'groups', 'classes' or 'networks' in a given community. According to Liepins 'people's participation in, or challenge to' community can be studied along the lines of meanings, practices, and spaces and structures which provide objects and processes 'from which we can create readings of 'community'' (2000a: 31).

Meanings refer to explorations 'into the ways people discursively create sets of shared (and/or contested) meanings about their connections and identities (2000a:31). A key point here is that these meanings might be diverse and not universally held by all members of a community. In rural studies these meanings are usually discussed within contested representations of lay, policy and political ruralities constructed across different community stakeholders (from local residents, to lobby groups and policy makers). *Practices* and activities refer to the material manifestations in which members of a community participate. This includes formal and informal ways that people interact with each other. Examples of practices provided by Liepins include social exchanges, such as the exchange of goods and services at a local store, the operation of local government boards, the creation of a social group, etc. *Spaces* and *structures* refer to the sites where community can be exercised and enacted. These can be both physical

sites (i.e. schools, libraries, the town hall, meeting places of community), but also metaphoric spaces (such as newspapers and the internet).

Essentially, Liepins (2000a) model is understood to provide a useful vocabulary for exploring the dynamics of rural restructuring and change. As a point of mutual departure to support our interdisciplinary dialogue we adopt Liepins' model for reading the community of Holy Island. Rather than understanding community as static, we utilise Liepins' framework to read community *in production*.

Community in rural development

Processes of community development have moved from an idea of power rooted in a particular institution, to a 'more dispersed notion of power and authority based on pluralism' (Taylor 2000: 1022). This shift has been central to the participatory ideologies that widely inform contemporary development and planning projects in both urban (Nadin 2007; Albrechts 2004; Tewdwr-Jones et al. 2006) and rural areas (Jones and Little 2000; Scott 2004; Shucksmith 2009; Shortall and Shucksmith 2001; OECD 2006), characterised by the formation of new institutional arenas operating via multi-level governance systems and involving partnerships with relevant public and private groups. In rural policy such participatory and collaborative approaches are exemplified by the European Commission's 'LEADER approach' and is also discussed in academic literature through the (ideal) models of endogenous and neo-endogenous (or networked) rural development.

LEADER (an acronym translating from French as 'links between actions of rural development') is a local development approach, allowing local actors to develop an area by using its endogenous development potential and resources (EC 2006). The model of

endogenous rural development was promoted as a response to urban-led and urban-biased policy models that were applied to rural contexts with minimal community input (a top down model discussed also as exogenous rural development, see Lowe et al., 1998). The key point of endogenous rural development is to implement a local area approach inclusive of: a territorial and integrated focus; the use of local resources; and local contextualization through active public participation (see also Moseley 1997; Ray 2000). While endogenous models have been widely embraced across Europe (Ray, 2000), a number of studies have also recognized limitations, due to issues of elitism and social exclusion observed (e.g. Shucksmith 2000; Shortall and Shucksmith 2001; Shortall 2004). Ray (2001) highlighted the need for hybrid models (both endogenous and exogenous), that places importance on the ability of local communities to create networks of both local and extra-local actors to shape their future on their own terms, an approach termed as 'neo-endogenous rural development' (see examples: Atterton and Thompson 2010; Gkartzios and Scott 2014). LEADER has played an important role in the development activities of our case study as discussed in the following section.

In the context of participatory approaches in rural development, the emerging literature has examined the role of arts in community and (primarily) economic development. Opportunities for regional economies from artists and wider creative industries are well explored in the literature now (i.e. Herslund 2012), criticizing both a lack of understating of the creative potential of rural areas and the application of 'creative class' theories (Florida 2002; Landry 2001) in the rural context (i.e. Rantisi et al. 2006; Waitt and Gibson 2013; Argent et al. 2013). Ray (2001) refers to a 'cultural economy' to emphasise local distinctive markets (inclusive of visual arts, drama and crafts) as key resources to territorial development. Vik and Villa (2010) have demonstrated the role of culture in rebranding rural places in support of local development. Woods (forthcoming) highlights the creative potential of rural areas evidenced

by the revival of new products that are geographically and culturally specific, and farm diversification strategies, which although enable the rural economy are hardly seen as 'creative' (let alone artistic). As regards community transformations and the role of art, Anwar McHenry (2011) and Roberts and Townsend (2015) refer to a series of positive implications such as improved sense of place and community identity, opportunities for social inclusion. These community effects are particularly important in the rural sector, as recent studies suggest that art engagement in rural areas is higher compared to urban areas, despite the more limiting opportunities for funding artistic practice (Arts Council England 2015).

Despite these contributions, there is very little connection with the field of art studies. We argue that such interdisciplinary approaches are crucial in understanding the effects of art. Furthermore, we observe that, unlike the discussion in art studies which follows, this literature tends to talk about art in inherently positive terms (Anwar McHenry 2011; Marksusen 2006), notwithstanding few exceptions so far (i.e. Roberts and Townsend 2015).

The experience of art: relational perspectives

The level to which art can be seen as an 'instrument' to social and economic objectives is well debated in the literature of cultural policy (Belfiore 2012). In urban studies there are numerous examples of 'culture-led regeneration' where 'the impact' of public art, innovative engineering, and galleries, museums and festivals is discussed in relation to urban development and social renewal (see Mooney 2004; Miles and Paddison 2005; Garcia 2004). In these studies, physical and social artworks, buildings and other 'products' of cultural strategy are the focus of concern.

'Social' art practices focused on engaging people, more than making 'physical' work, are variously termed 'new genre' (Lacy 1995), 'participatory' or 'socially-engaged'. In the

literature of critical art studies it is argued that participatory art has the capacity to support discourse that enables us to imagine our world anew (Bishop 2012; Meskimmon 2011): to connect, through 'dialogue rather than monologue, to our response-ability to our responsibilities within a world community' (Meskimmon 2011: 08). Artists and curators themselves often discuss their work as being 'dialogic' or 'conversational' (Bowman 2013). Following Rosalyn Deutsche (1996) however, art practitioners are careful to note that art's relationships do not solve problems, but rather generate debate. In understanding art as a process of engaging multiple relationships, the curator and critic Nicolas Bourriaud uses the term 'relational art'. He suggests that artistic practice resides as 'a bundle of relations in the world' (Bourriaud 2002: 14). In acknowledging that community development projects take place amidst a political, economic and social context (Liepins 2000b), 'relational' is a useful lens through which to consider the role of art within community development.

Across sociology and anthropology what art 'is' and 'does' is considered 'relationally'. Rather than the product of an individual artist, institutional theories of the sociology of art propose art is produced by an 'art world'. From this perspective art is a 'joint product' (Becker 2008 (1982): 35) made by a network of professionals including for example curators, technicians and museum directors as well as artists. Gell's (1998) theory of the 'art index' is premised on the notion that the art object has no 'intrinsic' nature independent of its context, but is a function of the social-relational matrix in which it is embedded. From this anthropological perspective, art is produced through 'social relationships' between human and non-human agents who cause events to happen. As indices of agency, art mediates change, such as for example supporting us to 're-imagine' (Meskimmon 2011) the world. In this study we explore the 'doing-ness' of art in the community development context of Holy Island. Rather than seek to support

arguments for art as a tool in support of community development, we rather set out to explore the range of effects produced by art's relationships.

To account for the relational effects of art in Holy Island, we take inspiration from the pragmatist philosophy of John Dewey (1859-1952). For Dewey 'the work' of art is not *the product*, such as a sculpture or painting or performance – as the focus, most often, of 'culture-led regeneration'; rather 'the work' *takes place* 'when a human being cooperates with the product so that the outcome is an experience' (1934: 223). To discuss a 'work of art' is to discuss something as pre-defined or 'enfranchised' (Gell 1998: 12) *as* 'art'. To support us to explore art beyond art world pre-definitions we take guidance from Dewey. We account for works 'in the raw' (Dewey 1934: 03) as a process *in production*. As activated in the doing or making of music, visual, performance and literary work (1934:77), our research takes account of the relational alterations mobilised by the art experience. As such (drawing on Liepins 2000a) art offers opportunity to observe community *in production* too.

Ethnography and artistic experiments in community research

The research draws on ethnographic and artistic fieldwork on Holy Island, a tidal island off the Northumberland coast with a population of around 150 residents. Northumberland County lies on the far north of England, bordering Scotland. The countryside in Northumberland is characterised by disused industrial areas, extensive natural habitats of a 'stunning, but often bleak grandeur' (Murdoch et al. 2003: 112), large landed estates and particular socio-economic concerns (see Murdoch et al. 2003 on England's 'paternalistic countryside'). Holy Island is connected with the mainland with a causeway which is covered by the North Sea twice a day. Thus, daily access is restricted to the island to two 5-6 hour periods. The island nowadays enjoys a thriving tourism sector, attracting half a million visitors every year, replacing fishing

as the main economic activity. Over 55 per cent of the houses on the island are now second or holiday homes (HIP, 2009). Branded as 'a place of uniqueness'[1], it constitutes a place of environmental, religious and historic significance, famous for its priory, a 16th century castle and the Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve (see also HIP, nd). The environmental and conservation interest in the island is evidenced by the fact that the area is recognised as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar convention (Ramsar, 2015) as well as a Special Protection Area under the European Union's Wild Birds Directive (Natural England, 2014).

The research partner on Holy Island was the Holy Island Partnership (HIP). HIP was established in 2009 to involve all local stakeholders in the development of the island in line with bottom-up development shifts described earlier. The partners include: Holy Island Parish Council (5 elected members and a parish clerk); Holy Island of Lindisfarne Community Development Trust (a charitable company with 75 members); National Trust (a conservation charity that owns and manages Lindisfarne Castle); English Heritage (government agency who manages the priory), Natural England (an environmental government agency that manages the National Nature Reserve); Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (with interests on the conservation of the natural beauty of the landscape); and Northumberland County Council (a unitary authority consisting of 67 elected representatives). HIP's resources were originally funded by Natural England, and an Action Plan was put in place to guide the management of the island's resources with a strong focus on community participation. LEADER played a significant role in the operation of the HIP in that it co-funded a Development Officer for two years to deliver its Action Plan. LEADER also provided support

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[1] The Holy Island of Lindisfarne, 'Welcome visitor, https://www.lindisfarne.org.uk/general/welcome.htm

for a series of development projects on the island with a strong community remit, including projects about producing tourist guides, the conversion of a former school annex to a community education resource centre, and a series of exhibitions and community events in association with the local Community Development Trust (personal communication with Northumberland Coast and Lowlands LEADER Programme Officer).

Informed by a community consultation exercise (HIP 2011: 4) themes and projects for joint focus included the development of a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Landscape Partnership Scheme. Concerned by a level of disconnection between residents and prior island planning processes, two of HIP's ambitions of this recently submitted HLF project were to consolidate community participation in local development, and ensure that community involvement would not lapse during the long HLF assessment process. HIP saw this research as an innovative way to support community engagement in island development.

In the mode of collaborative anthropology (Holmes and Marcus 2008), the primary author set out to participate in the day-to-day relationships of the island community and develop art interventions in collaboration with people she met interested in exploring artistic practice. During 2013 she made monthly residential visits of between five to seven nights. As a participant-observer she collaborated with HIP officers (particularly with the coordinating officer) as well as the resident community. Informed by the community's interest in exploring art through workshop style interventions, she invited five artists from different visual and performing disciplines to produce artistic workshops to 'map the island from the island's perspective'. Her ethnographic field diary traced island life, the development of artistic workshops and her participation in the sessions.

Workshop attendance ranged from one to ten. Of 150 island residents, twenty-five participated in the workshops. Despite low participation at the workshops, over two hundred residents, development officers and island visitors attended *Island Perspectives*, a collective exhibition of drawings and paintings, a soundscape, photographs and documentation of the performance and dance workshops (18-22 September 2013). Feedback sheets collected stated that residents would like artistic activities to continue and now that residents could see what they could expect from taking part more residents would get involved should more opportunities arise

As a conversation between the ethnographic material and Liepins' framework our writing has developed in service of two purposes: firstly, to engage the reader in the story of the research; and secondly to explore readings of the fieldwork material through the lens of Liepins. We acknowledge that there are many approaches of 'community' in rural contexts (see reviews in Woods 2011). As an approach that acknowledges the relational nature of community, Liepins' model provided a fruitful tool for our collaborative discussion. Following the conversational nature of this chapter's development the next section includes two 'coupled' sections including an ethnographic story of the research (in italics) and explorations of the material through the lens of Liepins. The first section couples arriving on the island with considering 'people' and 'meanings'. The second section couples the development of the workshops with considering 'practice' and 'spaces'. In the ethnography 'I' refers to the primary author. These passages are synthesised fragments of field notes over the duration of the research. In the discussion 'we' refers to both authors.

Part 1: Arriving on the island

To introduce me to members of the community the HIP coordinator suggested I attend a community group meeting. This seems a good opportunity to meet people and consider how to get started. A week later I drive up the A1 North, turn off at the Beal signpost and trace the curving path to the causeway. The tide is out leaving pools of water sitting on the sand either side of the Tarmac strip. Driving across the causeway I notice a large car park to my left (as Image 1 below). *The coordinator had told me to continue straight and turn left in to the village. I find a spot to park near the school where the meeting room is.*

[Image 1 around here]

I walk to the back of the school building to a glass entrance at the back (as Image 2 below). *We are sat around two trestle tables pushed together. When the meeting starts, we say a few lines about ourselves. The group of around eight includes people who live on the island, who work there and who have been invited to join because of their special interest and knowledge of the local area. I introduce myself as a conduit to a university project exploring the role of art and music within community contexts. I explain that I have come along to this meeting to see if the group would be interested in taking part. After a few questions, one resident suggests that rather than importing skills from elsewhere, they would be interested in developing workshops as an opportunity to investigate the creative skills of the island. This suggestion started a lively discussion about the traditional skills of the island: making lobster pots, dry stonewalling, needlecraft and flower arranging. In developing the workshop programme, it was agreed that whatever happens, we shouldn't introduce the workshops as being anything to do with 'art', because people will be 'put off' by that. We should rather use 'creativity'. The attendees also emphasised that it would be important to be inclusive: for everyone to know that whatever they do or make, 'they can take part'.*

[Image 2 around here]

After the meeting, one of the group members invited me to her house. She tells me the island is tired of 'outsiders' coming to tell them what to do. There was an outcry after one of the island development documents had suggested 'pop up artworks'. She continues, 'I mean, what do you think we thought of that?! This place is wild, and we want to keep it that way'. To get to know the island she says, 'you need to come here'. On returning to the university I negotiated an extension to the accommodation budget with colleagues, to support short residential periods.

A few weeks later I consult the tide timetable to figure out when I can cross. I turn left past the Post Office and park in what I now regard as my usual spot next to the school. I am a little early for checking in the B&B. However, I had had an email exchange with the owner who explained, 'in reality', it depends on the tide. So I am not worried about being early. The owner is there to settle me in. After I unpack I go for a wander and end up at the pub for dinner. I chat to the barman. He tells me that tourists ask how they cope when the tide comes in and they can't get off. He laughs. He says: 'we tell them that they are looking at it the wrong way round. When the tide comes in, you can't get on. We are left in peace, the way we like it'.

The following morning I go in to the village area to explore. I walk past the school and turn left. I pass the Post Office and head towards the castle. I notice a craft shop. I go in and introduced myself to the sales person as working with the Holy Island Partnership. She looked quite concerned: 'I don't want this island to be spoilt by signs. I don't think people should be told what to do. People should have their own experience. Just because they've got the money, we don't want to change things'. I explained I had just started the project and this was my first

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time staying over. 'Oh, well, you should go for a walk'. She tells me of a pyramid on the headland and a little shack on the beach., 'I haven't been' she says. 'But I would like to go. Actually, why don't you go, and come back with a photograph?' I decide to do as she asks. It takes me just short of three hours to walk to the castle, and trace the edge of the island along the North Shore (as Image 3 below*) before turning back. I pop back in to the shop with the photographs. She is pleased to see the pictures of my journey.*

[Image 03 around here]

During the week as part of a LEADER exchange visit, environmental practitioners from Latvia and Greece are visiting the island. Before breaking for lunch, they join island residents and HIP representatives in the office behind the school building. They have spent some time exploring the island and neighbouring coastal areas. The visitors suggest that the 'islanders' need to decide what tourism they want. 'You need to find a logo'. A resident retorts in a tone of disgust, 'a brand?!' One of the visitors suggests 'the problem' is that everyone has a different agenda. We talk about how some residents rely on tourism whilst others would like to be left 'in peace'.

People and meanings

In the shaping of this narrative we have considered some of the 'people' of Holy Island through Liepins' framework. Liepins notes that for 'simplicity's sake' (2000b: 327) people are located in a 'central location'; however, it is important to recall that they may be located in positions beyond 'the community' in question. By presenting these passages, we introduce people as both 'centrally located' and beyond the 'immediate community'. In doing so, we also notice the influence of the natural environment, especially the tide.

'Centrally located' people can be understood as residents. Residents have varying occupations: some in relation to tourism, and also other work such as fishing and farming. Those 'beyond' the immediate resident community might include people who come to the island to run a business, such as the gift shop owner. Other people in this category of 'beyond' would include visitors and 'official representatives', such as the HIP coordinator. In acknowledging power relations, Liepins situates community amidst 'terrains of power and socio-cultural discourses' (2000a: 29). In sharing both the thoughts of the coordinator and immediate response of the gift shop owner, we are introduced to some of the tensions surrounding the power positions of island development. For example, the gift shop owner suggests that just because the HIP 'have money', it doesn't mean that they should be able to make decisions about the island. As Liepins suggests (2000b: 327), these HIP officials have powerful roles in 'constructing (and constraining)' understandings of the island.

As well as people, this material introduces nature as part of the terrain of power. Liepins' model understands community as a collective interaction and enactment of 'community' by people (2000a). Here, however, we cannot avoid the tide. The island is tidal. You can only get on and off when the water lets you. The force of water effects all operations. Nature influences how people act: residents, visitors and those travelling to work.

Liepins suggests people 'develop shared meanings about their connectedness in 'community' via local discourses and activities' (2000b: 327). In exploring meanings of community through Liepins' lens of 'connectedness' we can make the following observations. Firstly, that there are tensions surrounding tourism: many island residents are involved in tourist activities, but there is dissatisfaction with branding the island as a tourist destination. Furthermore, the

resident-community has a strong connection to nature: understanding themselves as living within 'the wild'. The tide protects them from an outer world that seeks perhaps to spoil their serenity. The residents appear to construct a collective identity around insularity inextricably interlinked with the tide.

Secondly, there is an appreciation for valuing and promoting local cultural capital and artistic activities, but tensions were observed sounding the term 'art'. Art is widely viewed in negative terms, as being elitist and exogenous. However, traditional making skills of the island are valued as part of the practices of the community. Residents don't want artworks to 'pop up'; rather they would like to explore their creativity through art. They are interested in exploring the way art works as a way to explore creativity, but not necessarily through conventions discussed as 'art'.

Part 2: Developing the workshops

In my daily engagement I note the informal operations of island life: that the village store opens and closes with the tide; that you can order 'special items' from the shopkeeper; how the post is delivered on a little trolley; and how HIP meetings themselves are scheduled with the tide timetable. Through buying my daily provisions and eating at the local pub, I become a familiar face, 'Julie-from-the-university'.

When bumping in to people during my daily routine of going to the shop, buying provisions and going for a walk, I take opportunities to ask people how we should go about developing the workshops. Residents described the workshops as an opportunity to explore the island on their own terms. In recognition that whatever the range of activity undertaken, not everyone

would want to take part. To share the activities with others, it was therefore decided that there would also be an exhibition. To emphasise that the workshops had been for residents rather than visitors, it was agreed that the exhibition would be called 'Island Perspectives'.

Artists invited to develop workshops were directed by the interests of the community. Individual community members, or small groups, were interested in photography, dance, performance/theatre, a sonic mapping and drawing and painting. A resident photographer agreed to undertake the photography workshops. A couple of residents suggested someone to undertake the drawing and painting workshops. Using my own connections and university affiliations I researched sonic, dance and performance artists to make visits to the island to meet with residents and explore possible approaches. As developed in collaboration with residents, the brief for artists was to develop artistic workshops to 'map the island from the island's perspective'. During July and August 2013 twenty photography, dance, performance, sonic mapping and drawing and painting sessions took place in various locations. The schedule was informed by the tidal timetable and promoted to residents by email, posting to homes by hand and notices in the Post Office, Heritage Centre and the local pub. The artists employed a range of methods of improvisation.

The photography workshops started the programme. In the first sessions participants were introduced to using a camera and the basics of photography. In later sessions we moved out to photograph the landscape and also undertook some portrait photography, taking pictures of each other. A teenage girl attended these sessions. As we hovered by the waterside she commented, 'you see things differently when you look through the camera lens.'

The dance and movement workshops were next. If the weather was good, we had agreed to hold the sessions on the North Shore. Only one participant came for the first workshop: the community group member who had been specifically interested in dance. We got in the car to drive to the beach. She laughed. She says she doesn't think we can drive there, 'the tide will have shut the road'. She is right. We turned back and went to a pebble beach instead. The dance artist asked us to stand on the shore and look to the headland. She then handed us large bamboo poles. We were asked to hold these at each end and develop movements in rhythm with the water. We were then asked to hold them out straight and trace the headland with the stick. We worked together like this for three hours.

In the second session the teenage girl from the photography session took part. This time we got to the North Shore. The tide was right out. Instead of large poles we were given slim bamboo. Between two of us, then all three. We closed our eyes and stretched out our arms. We each put a single finger on the end of a bamboo stick. We were connected to each other by the stick. We were then asked to move keeping connected with our eyes closed. We then connected directly to each other with our fingertips and palms. We moved amidst the landscape together.

The next day the teenage girl came back for a performance workshop. We were asked by the performance artist to wear earplugs and not speak. Without planning where we were going, we started walking. In silence the three of us walked around the island and to the beach. In the second session we discussed our experience of the walk. Sitting around the table at the schoolhouse we discussed how we could really sense ourselves together. We described how we were more conscious of our breathing, of our movements and where we were in the landscape. We decided to do the walk again this time without earplugs. We re-traced our steps from the first walk. The beach looked differently now. We were met by water. We stood facing it together,

uncertain what to do. Our path had been closed by the tide. Slowly we turned to walk back

towards where we had come from. When we returned to the school, we discussed how intense

the moment by the shore was. How we were stuck there; waiting for one of us to make a tiny

movement in support of a decision to move. The teenager said that she had lived on the island

all her life, but she had never seen it 'like that'.

Further workshop sessions were facilitated by a sonic artist and painter. On each occasion I

note how through my experience of the workshops, my senses are enlivened to my environment.

Not just a visual awareness, but how I feel more and hear more. As a participant of the

workshops I felt myself in dialogue with the landscape. I became more aware of my relationship

with my natural surroundings. In drawing on my own experience, I had conversations with

participants about their experience. The teenager described how she had developed a new

sense of her relationship with the land.

People and spaces

Understanding *the work* of art as taking place 'when a human being cooperates with the product

so that the outcome is an experience' (Dewey 1934: 223), the ethnographic narrative takes

close account of the experience of the workshop interventions as operating between 'outer'

physical materials and 'inner' human selves (Dewey 1934: 77). In considering these

ethnographic descriptions via Liepins, we also begin to 'read' the nature-human relationships

through the artistic workshops.

Through descriptions of artistic workshops, the fieldwork both traces and reveals continuity.

Firstly, we note that the artistic interventions are born out of a relational collaboration with the

island; and secondly, we notice the way the workshop practices support deepening levels of

apprehension in regard to the fluid nature of our human-nature relations. Both how the primary author notes herself 'in dialogue' with the landscape and how the teenage participant states that she had lived on the island all her life, but had never seen it 'like that'. Both become connected with the environment through taking part in the artistic process.

Liepins suggests that people will enact 'community' relations via a range of processes or practices that connect people with key activities, institutions and spaces (2000b: 328). In reading the ethnographic accounts via Liepins, as she suggests, we can trace island practice in relation to local institutions such as the general store and the post office. Directed to read connections between people we trace their dialogue, or what Bruner (1986: 06) calls 'expression' – the experience of life as told; as for example, the earlier exchanges with the man at the pub and the woman in the gift shop.

Drawing on her field diary, the primary researcher reflected, in Turner's (1986) terms, on the 'social drama' of village life. In reading her interactions, through the lens of Liepins we reflect on the power of nature, and especially the tide, as enmeshed in the island's dramatics. When tracing the experience of the artistic workshops we trace associations between 'inner' human and 'outer' physical material. Artistic practice is not simply concerned with 'expression' but revealing the immediacy of life as experienced: as a network of human-nature relations. In reading the ethnographic accounts of taking part in the workshops we are introduced to a finer relational reading of island associations.

The images and documentation of the workshops have been assembled and presented in the St Cuthbert's Centre. Liepins suggests that the people, meanings and practices which construct a given 'community' 'will take on material and political shape in the form of key sites and

organisational spaces' (2000b: 328). Through reading the ethnography with Liepins, key sites and organisational spaces have been revealed: such as the pub, the village store and the post office, and now the church. From Liepins' perspective, these sites and organisational spaces are key places for interaction in community life. If we now take account of the artistic workshops, we are introduced to beaches as additional sites and organisational spaces. In addition to introducing the natural sites themselves as spaces of community production, we can also be taken to a deeper reading of the experience of 'community' as one of continuous human-nature relations. Indeed as already discussed people and nature are intertwined (drawing on Latour, 2004). Community is not only exercised in natural settings, but is in fact part of the natural environment. Nature appears central in meanings and structures of the community, perhaps much more than the peripheral influence suggested in Liepins' model.

Conclusion

In the context of seeking to engage community voices and improve collaboration in the development of Holy Island, the local partnership of a series of organisations with development interests (HIP) welcomed and supported the co-production of twenty artistic workshops, including photography, dance and movement, theatre and performance, sonic mapping, and drawing and painting. We argue in this chapter that art can be understood as an introduction to the complexity of community. In the context of a development process, we propose that the artistic interventions provided a way of 'reading' the community: understanding community as well as human-nature relationships, creating opportunities for personal and collective reflection and revealing new, and sometimes even contested, meanings, practices and spaces for community. Such intangible effects are particularly undermined in the academic literature regarding the role of arts in community development.

Centred on the making of community by people amidst terrains of power and discourse, Liepins' framework focuses on the inter-connected notions of 'meanings', 'practices' and 'spaces and structures'. Via this framework we offer a 'reading' of the community of Holy Island as being enacted through observed day-to-day activities and as taking place at the workshops. As opposed to the central position to people given by Liepins in conceptualising community, our research demonstrates how connected people are to the natural environment: it is the tide that is equally at the centre of this community, not just people. The tide influences all people's meanings, practices and spaces of community. Rather than a construct of community identity, the tide exerts power; it physically controls people's daily programmes and activities. But it is not only the tide. The ethnography demonstrates all associations between the heterogeneous community of residents, policy makers and tourists in close association to beaches and nature. Community is not only enacted by people, but by people *with* and *in* the natural environment. As a network of multiple exchanges art practice mediates associations amidst people as part of the terrain.

We also argue that the art workshops are particularly valuable as they provide as series of relational practices for community development. Although the discourse of 'art' appears to alienate the residents, through doing acts of art making (but perhaps not always conceptualised as art), participants form collective and personal 'spaces' for reflection, for example through understanding how the tide influences the thoughts and movements of people; or through expressing the need for the community to use endogenous cultural capital and resources, but welcoming extra-local artists to take part as well. As a relational practice, art therefore offers an opportunity for collective reflexivity of ongoing struggles, available local resources, identities and actions, allowing communities to empower themselves and explore their own

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skills. Such characteristics are embedded within frames of neo-endogenous rural development (Shucksmith 2009). As such, we argue that art can be central in participatory models of rural development, not so much about reaching a consensus regarding the goals or the desired outcomes of rural development programmes, but because of the opportunities it offers to read community in *production*, by reading the micro-dynamics of communities. As a relational practice therefore, rather than reading overt relationships by looking at a community, we suggest art mediates participants to read micro-relationships within communities. Participants become part of a network of relationships amidst other people, nature and their political context.

Finally, we observe the limitations of art. Our fieldwork data demonstrates the role of artistic practice in voicing disconnects. Indeed, we came across a series of community disagreements regarding: the development of the island (and 'conflicted agendas' as expressed by one of the residents); the role, type and branding of tourism; the use of the word 'art' to promote the community workshops; and a disconnect between the community of residents and the official representatives. Can art, however, remove such community tensions? We observe that research tends to have an inherently positive expectation on the role of arts in community and economic development. Although not the focus of this chapter, we don't support the argument that art solves problematic community relationships *per se*. Drawing on Duxbury and Campbell who argue (2011: 118) that 'arts and cultural activities are not the answer to all the issues of rural communities', we don't see art as a panacea to community tension. Our fieldwork demonstrates that art has the capacity to reveal community relations (see also Deutsche, 1997), than eliminating them. We view art as a relational process that, like the tide in Holy Island, continuously transforms and exposes our associations.

Acknowledgments

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