

EVOKING BELONGING:
Enlivening Ubuntu as Social Sculpture for
Cultural Transformation Towards
Ecological Citizenship in
Sustainable City-Making

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ABSTRACT

Evoking Belonging was developed as a 100% practice-based doctoral research enquiry in the field of contemporary Social Sculpture and Connective Practice. Through the research practice, I have formulated the *Evoking Belonging* approach comprising the *Ubuntu Practices*. These are informed by my *Evoke* theory of inclusive and equitable participatory enquiry. The practice emphasises the significance of *experiential knowledge* (lived experience), *enlivenment* and *performance*.

Experiential knowledge is understood as an intangible heritage, a means of knowing, which enlivens our cultural practices. *Performance* in the *Evoking Belonging Ubuntu Practices* occurs as participants and researcher come together as co-researchers to new forms of knowing. This results in a sense of *enlivenment*, achieved through enquiry into memories, cultural practices, mythology, symbol and philosophy. *Enlivenment* is experienced as an inner awakening to new ways of seeing.

In this enquiry, I work with narratives of migration to illuminate possibilities of a transformative relationship between belonging, experiential knowing and the imagination. I work with the Southern African Bantu philosophy of *Ubuntu*, meaning: 'humanity' as an epistemological lens for enquiry in this imaginative social sculpture practice enquiry. I interpret *Ubuntu*, into the phrase: '*Without you, I do not exist*', and develop creative strategies for enlivening the invisible, phenomenological materials of belonging.

This enquiry practice emphasises the narratives of lived experience and embodied knowledge of African-Caribbean migrant communities in the UK. The three research questions are: 1) How can I work with *Ubuntu* to enliven a sense of belonging as a cultural practice? 2) How can I work with embodied migration experiences of African-Caribbean diaspora communities in to evoke a sense of belonging and civic enlivenment? 3) How can this social sculpture connective aesthetics practice, enable equitable approaches to inclusive community engagement and participatory enquiry?

I developed the *Evoking Belonging* approach, featuring three *Ubuntu* practices informed by the *Evoke* theory. The *Ubuntu* practices include: 1) *Ubuntu Conversations*: a one-to-one process 2) *Ubuntu Reflections*: a day-long immersive process linking the individual to a specific community of belonging and 3) The *Ubuntu Town Hall Meeting*: a process bringing together a variety of stakeholders with the participants to explore the *Evoking Belonging Ubuntu Research Axis*.

The *Ubuntu Research Axis*, intersects a) Identity & self-hood b) Diaspora communities & Sustainable Cities c) Migration & displacement d) Belonging & ecological citizenship.

The methods in this research practice include social sculpture root methodologies and formulations of auto-ethnography and narrative enquiry. I created the poetic, imaginative and evocative modes of enquiry by integrating dialogic, contemplative and reflective methods.

The research practice demonstrates how the *Evoking Belonging* approach connects the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social and political through story, re-storying and re-living experience. It illuminates cultural perspectives and opens pathways towards understanding ethical priorities for stakeholders invested in sustainable city making.

The *Evoking Belonging* research enquiry creates a new dimension of trans-disciplinary research in the field of social sculpture and connective practice by re-imagining pathways, which link *Ubuntu*, migration, culture and civic enlivenment.

This social sculpture research contributes to new knowledge through the transformative approaches outlined in the *Evoke* theory, its principles and the *Ubuntu Practices*. By opening inner spheres of being and *evocative* knowing, the *Evoking Belonging* approach cultivates civic enlivenment and creates pathways to envisioning belonging as a co-created cultural practice.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To God, to my ancestors, I give thanks; for, in their footsteps, the impulse to manifest this journey dwells.

To my ever loving, visionary, and supportive family, much gratitude, for you be the wind beneath my wings...

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An honour salute to my beloved uncle, participant, Mascall Regisford, who transitioned on 12 July 2018, Rest in Paradise. I will always love you.

**Ubuntu: Without you, I do not exist.
(African Bantu Philosophy)**

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PROLOGUE

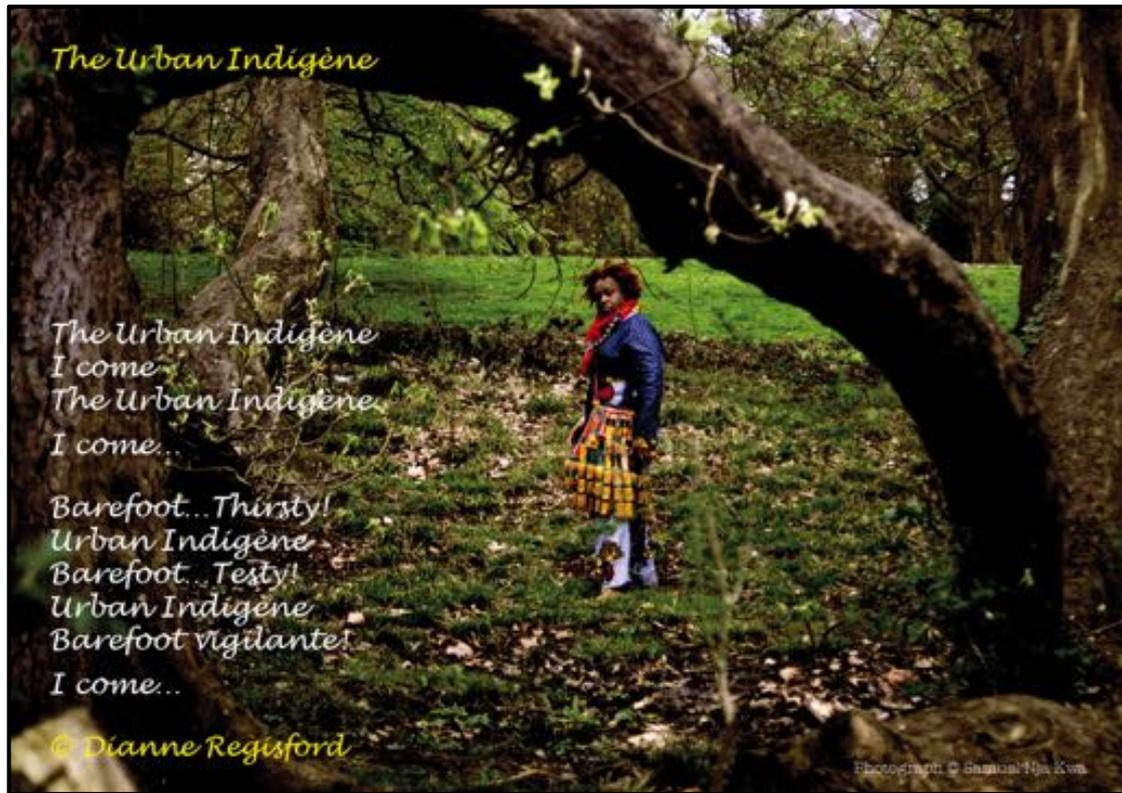


Photo: Samuel Nja Kwa

Poetics of The Urban Indigene

The Urban Indigene
I come...
Barefoot, thusty*
Urban Indigene
Barefoot, testy
Urban Indigene
Barefoot, vigilante
The Urban Indigene
I come...

[*thusty... A Jamaican patois intonation for thirsty]
Excerpt from poem: The Urban Indigene (Regisford D, 2019)

The Urban Indigene... I come...

I come to this research journey as a social sculpture practitioner, a migrant, ARTiviste (artiste/activist), cultural advocacy and development strategist invested in the evolution of participatory practice for equitable, inclusive city making.

The Urban Indigene... I come...

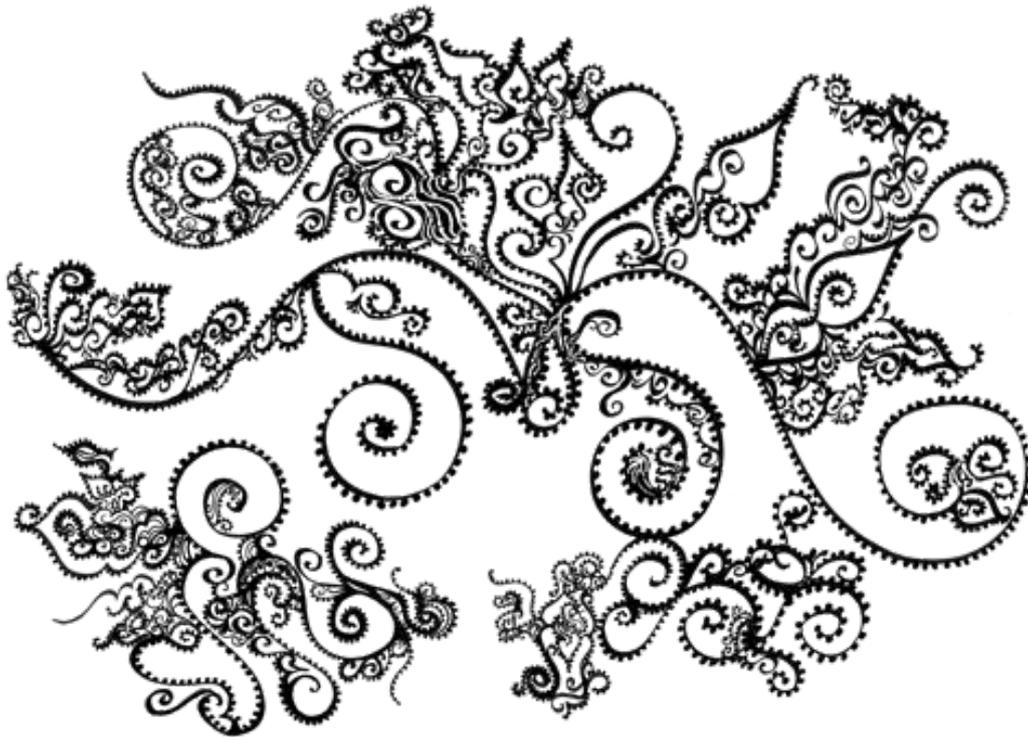
I come to the field of social sculpture and connective practice to explore possibilities enabled by the African Bantu philosophy of *Ubuntu* in this phenomenological, multi-sensory, multi-modal exploration into African-Caribbean Diaspora experiences of migration and belonging.

The Urban Indigene... I come...

I come on mission to develop social sculpture practice, which deepens identity centred social justice activism. I come to co-create cultures of belonging.

INTRODUCTION

Spaces & Places: Contextual, Conceptual, Intangible & Material



This section provides an introduction to the key concepts, theory and disciplines explored in this enquiry. It is divided into three parts. Part 1 provides an overview of the research practice and explains the format of this reflective commentary. Part 2 orientates the reader to the research impulse, agenda, aims and questions. Part 3 presents key aspects from the fields and disciplines, which contour the spaces and places shaping this enquiry.

Introduction Part 1

Spaces & Places: Contextual, Conceptual, Intangible & Material

The idea of spaces and places unfolds the journey metaphor, which shapes the format of this reflective commentary. My enquiry into migration evokes movement between the inner and outer spheres of being; also through and to, new territories of experience.

Throughout this research practice, I explore the dynamic inter-relationship of movement between the inner and outer spheres of the human experience. From this perspective, the 'spaces and places', which inhabit the human being in movement, in migration, are inter-connected. By the same token, the *spaces and places* in which the human being is in habitus, are indelibly linked to the inner landscape.

The dynamic relationship between the inner and outer spheres of existence is a core focus in the contemporary field of social sculpture and connective practice. This research enquiry contributes to the existing body of work in the field, by considering inner and outer spheres as interconnected 'spaces and places', which are contextual, conceptual, intangible & material.

I highlight the significance of these spheres through the trope of spaces and places to establish the broader enquiry framework. The spaces and places: conceptual, contextual, intangible and material overlap each of the directional elements in the *Ubuntu Research Axis*, (see Part Two).

When viewed in a multi-dimensional way, the spaces and places illuminate the multi-layered complexity of this research endeavour. By working into the unknown, I, as a social sculpture practitioner relish the opportunity to unfold into complexity as a rich, fecund offering for exploration and renewal.

Overview

Evoking Belonging is a social sculpture practice, which presents new possibilities for egalitarian, inclusive approaches to engaging social justice issues through participatory enquiry. The *Evoking Belonging* approach works with the *Ubuntu Practices* to create spaces for engagement and revealing invisible phenomena of belonging. The *Ubuntu Practices* are informed by the *Evoke* theory of inclusive and equitable participatory enquiry. This is a unique theory developed during the research practice. The *Evoke* theory emphasises the significance of *experiential knowledge* (lived experience), *enlivenment* and *performance*.

Format of the Reflective Commentary

This research practice is a transdisciplinary, auto-ethnographic, phenomenological enquiry. This document is a reflective commentary of the research journey undertaken to develop the *Evoking Belonging* practice.

Engendering the spirit of the migrant soul, this document is structured as a journey of three voyages. Each voyage chronologically documents, illustrates and illumines analytical reflections on the evolving discoveries of the research practice.

Conceptually, the structure of the journey is a metaphor, which highlights the many dimensions of inter-connected movement: cultural, physical, spiritual, psychological experienced by people who migrate.

Through the three voyages of the research journey, the participants and I shared and co-created intensely personal and moving experiences. The sharing of these stories, expressed by way of the auto-ethnographic methodology anchoring the research practice has, over time, evoked a strong sense of community amongst the participants. This was evident through the reflections shared at the end of each session. Though most of the participants are blood relatives, comments such as: *"It was really good to reflect on our journey together. Whilst we come together all the time, we never speak about our life stories in this way. It was healing."*(Natasha, *Ubuntu Conversations*)

Additionally, we, the participants and I, witnessed an emergent ever-deepening awareness of the critical justice issues weaving together our stories and multi-faceted complexities of migration experience. Through our participatory enquiry, we transmuted our stories to research narratives. In this vein, I regard our relationship of one of co-creation, where we were all immersed in the process as co-researchers. We co-created new ways of understanding our experiences through deep listening, sharing and exchanging perceptions. In this way, our research narratives kindled a deeper sense of connection to each other and often these new ways of seeing our world view. We became intensely aware of the need for healing justice, compassion and care for ourselves, our stories and for each other as community.

As the writer of this reflective commentary, I have chosen to share a select number of images and quotes to personalise and illustrate the participant's contributions. I have chosen not to include the transcripts of the exchanges due to a sense of ethical guardianship of the deeply personal content shared.

As such, I have included quotes, which illuminate the *spaces and places* harbouring the issues engaged in this enquiry and re-orient the reader away from a potentially voyeuristic inclination often inherent in the sharing of personal stories.

The Prologue & Epilogue

In the prologue, I share *The Urban Indigene*, a poetic trope I created to explore my own understanding of and, need for belonging. It exemplifies the auto-ethnographic research that I began prior to discovering the field of social sculpture. For the migrant soul, I believe, the journey to evoking sense and practice of belonging begins within. In the prologue, I share poetry and statements, which describe aspects of my origin story: identity, ancestry, activist focus and career orientation. The *Urban Indigene* trope informs and anchors the emphasis on auto-ethnographic methods used in this enquiry. The insights gleaned also contribute to the shaping of the research framework and the *Ubuntu* practices unfolding in the research journey.

In the Epilogue, I return to poetry to evoke sensibility of ancestry, origin and legacy. The poem was written as part of a body of poetic works, which I crafted as part of my auto-ethnographic practice through the research journey. These poems are published as a companion to this reflective commentary in a book entitled: *Evoking Belonging – Poetics of the Urban Indigene*. (Regisford, D., 2019)

The Introduction

The three sections of the introduction provide an overview of the key tenets of this research enquiry.

Part One foregrounds the multi-layered inner and outer spaces: conceptual, contextual, intangible and material, which frame this enquiry and briefly describe how I connect social sculpture and Ubuntu in this enquiry.

Part Two honours the activist soul driving my research impulse. Here, I situate the *Ubuntu Research Agenda* within a formulation for the research framework expressed cartographically as the *Ubuntu Research Axis*. Furthermore, I outline the research aims and questions.

Part Three broadly maps the research routes of this journey, presenting the fields and disciplines, which contour the spaces and places shaping the research framework. For each research route, I offer definitions of key terms and how each term relates to my practice. Also, I illumine my auto-

ethnographic perspective, and how each research route relates to the research questions.

In the concluding section of the introduction entitled: In summary: Spaces and Places: contextual, conceptual, intangible and material, I provide a synopsis of the core ideas grounding this enquiry.

The Three Voyages

In Voyage One, I detail the methods and modes of enquiry and the scoping phase of the research. Voyage Two outlines the development of the research practice where I developed the *Ubuntu Practices*. In Voyage Three, I summarise the *Evoke Theory* and principles informing the *Evoking Belonging Approach*. I also outline the discoveries made through the research practice and the evolving understandings of the research questions.

Conclusion

The concluding part of this reflective commentary is titled: UbuntuSpheres: Dwelling Places for Evocative Ways of Knowing & Ecological Citizenship. Ecological Citizenship is a concept explored in social sculpture. (Sacks, S 2011).

Sectioned into five parts, the conclusion describes my contribution to new knowledge and takes us to the *UbuntuSphere*, (Regisford, D, 2018) a unique concept formulated in this research. The practices developed in this enquiry form inner and outer *UbuntuSpheres*, which reawaken and vivify visceral expressions of humanity, connecting people to all living beings. From this space of *Evoking Belonging*, possibilities for new research vistas, which build on the research conducted in this enquiry open wide. Particularly, I envision practice based explorations towards understanding the transformative relationship between evocative ways of knowing and the concept of ecological citizenship as a transformative, inclusive pathway to sustainable city making.

Key perspectives: Belonging – a social justice issue

I posit that belonging is a social justice issue. Specifically, in the context of migration, culture and historic displacement pertaining to the post-Windrush generations of African-Caribbean diaspora communities in the UK.

I see belonging is a social justice issue because those whose sense of belonging is compromised or eroded due to their migration status, are generally not able to participate fully in the societies in which they newly inhabit.

In general, social justice encapsulates *'the idea of a fair and just relationship between an individual and society. It measures the distribution of wealth, opportunities for personal choice, and social privileges. The principles of social justice include equity, access, participation, and rights.'*

[<https://www.continentalpress.com/blog/teaching-social-justice/> [Accessed 3 December 2020].

Conceivably, migrants, no matter their origin or migrant status, are people who have been displaced (voluntarily or not) and disconnected (to varying degrees) from their contextual, conceptual, intangible and material spaces. These include but are not limited to: spiritual lands, cultural practices, value systems and beliefs. All these 'spaces' interconnect to enable a sense of belonging for human beings.

As such, in this enquiry, I position belonging as a social justice issue and link my research agenda to global transformation agendas, which advocate for a just, equitable and humane society.

Key perspectives: Framing *Ubuntu* as Social Sculpture

Social Sculpture is a field of artistic practice and social enquiry, grounded in philosophy and ethics, which fosters civic participation and activism towards the building of a just, equitable and humane society.

In this enquiry, the African Bantu philosophy of *Ubuntu*, meaning: 'humanity', serves as an epistemological lens in this imaginative social sculpture research practice.

I interpret *Ubuntu*, into the phrase: '*without you, I do not exist*'. As presented in the research title, I evoke a notion of *Ubuntu*, as a form of Social Sculpture, which shapes a way of seeing the world. Also, as an embodied way of knowing, which opens up spaces within for deeper understanding of the human experience.

The *Ubuntu* lens sharpens focus on the inter-relatedness of inner and outer spaces that humans occupy. This relationship between inner and outer spheres of being and also, between the individual and community is an established research investigation in the field of contemporary social sculpture. The *Evoking Belonging* enquiry builds on this research and further expands the field by integrating the Southern African Bantu philosophy of *Ubuntu*. Further on in this introductory section, I share insights into *Ubuntu* and how I work with the philosophical concept.

In the section: Introduction Part Three: The Research Routes, I detail the key theoretical aspects in the field of social sculpture, which inspire my work and, explain further, how this research practice is situated in the field.

Introduction Part 2:

Crafting the *Ubuntu* Research Agenda

This enquiry explores, valorises and advocates for recognition of the intrinsic value of narratives of lived experience and embodied knowledge of African-Caribbean migrant communities in the UK. It asserts belonging as a social justice issue, which the *Evoking Belonging* practice is created to address, engage and potentially transform. Social transformation, therefore, is a core research theme weaving together the interdisciplinary spaces and places framing this enquiry.

This section outlines my motivation for the need for a research practice, which engages communities less seen, less heard and easily ignored in mainstream discourse and local governance. Specifically, I craft a research agenda, which is oriented within a context of global and national transformation agendas. These are outlined further on in this introduction section.

As this chapter unfolds, I will illustrate how the spaces and places: contextual, conceptual, intangible and material inform the *Ubuntu* research agenda and the development of the research practice.

Belonging: A social justice issue

Due to the history of colonialism, slavery and racial injustice, which African-Caribbean migrant communities have experienced over the past 400 years, I approach and define belonging as a social justice issue.

The injustices of the past continue to permeate in evolving, often invisible ways as racism and discrimination. These result in societal inequalities indelibly linked to a history of white supremacy, which today, is legislated against yet, systemically ingrained in society.

This research agenda is principally concerned with ideas and practices, which engage issues of power and sovereignty and disrupt historic supremacy through participatory governance. There are many global transformation agendas currently unfolding through the auspices of international organisations, third sector institutions and civil society.

I posit that migrant and historically displaced communities, whom are less seen, less heard and often ignored in mainstream discourse, cannot equitably take their proverbial 'place at the decision making table' without an authentic living expression of belonging. This requires attention to the re-membering of inner fragmentation of the self, caused by erosion of spiritual and cultural fibre, which occurs as people migrate.

The Research Impulse

The research impulse driving this multi-disciplinary enquiry is a vision, where migrant and historically displaced communities are equitably and actively engaged with processes and systems governing their lives.

Taking the social justice perspective, which advocates for equal economic, political and social rights and opportunities for all, I approach this enquiry from a human rights for all stance, I focus a cultural *Ubuntu* lens on three core principles of social justice: participation, equality and diversity.

As such, the activist soul that I carry is embedded as a primary expression in this research practice. My social justice position inspires me to craft a research agenda, which is explicitly connected to global social transformation agendas. This, as a means to developing a participatory practice, which valorises lived experience as a powerful pathway to fostering authentic experiences of belonging. In turn enabling transformative possibilities for civic enlivenment, alternative perceptions and inclusive practices of citizenship for all stakeholders involved in sustainable city-making.

The Research Agenda

In September 2012, as I embarked on the *Evoking Belonging* research journey in the field of social sculpture, Professor Sacks, invited my colleagues and I to write our 'agenda for transformation'. I wrote:

*Research focus: Urban African Social Sculpture,
migration, imagination, agency and social transformation.*

The Territory: Movement of da people

*"In the interests of **sustainable living**,
I reject the notion of politically imposed expressions of 'citizenship' and belonging.
I am inspired and excited by the possibilities of connecting human beings, no matter
where they are from, as **ecological citizens** of the world.
The possibility of contributing to building living patterns that are increasingly more
humane and just."*

Excerpt: Reflective Statements & Agendas

Dianne Regisford

Social Sculpture lecture, Oxford Brookes University, 23 September 2012

This excerpt highlights my main motivation for undertaking this research. It illustrates deep longing to salve and make meaning of the inner fragmentations resulting from a life of constantly seeking place whilst navigating borders intangible and material, in the quest for belonging. My 2012 agenda for transformation expresses a soul calling to examine new forms of citizenship engendered from a space of cultural affirmation, civic enlivenment and sovereignty of self. As such, the 2012 agenda serves as the foundation stone upon which, this *Ubuntu Research Agenda* is crafted.

The *Ubuntu* Research Agenda: Transformation

The *Ubuntu Research Agenda* is a research framework comprising; the *Ubuntu Research Axis*, the research routes, the research aims and questions.

To craft this framework, I draw on three of the most pertinent global social phenomena of the past decade as cited in the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

(: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld/publication>.)

Namely: 1) the unprecedented rise in migration and 2) the impact of migration on increased urbanisation and sustainable cities, within 3) the rising imperative for inclusive, participatory approaches to cultivating sustainable livelihoods for all.

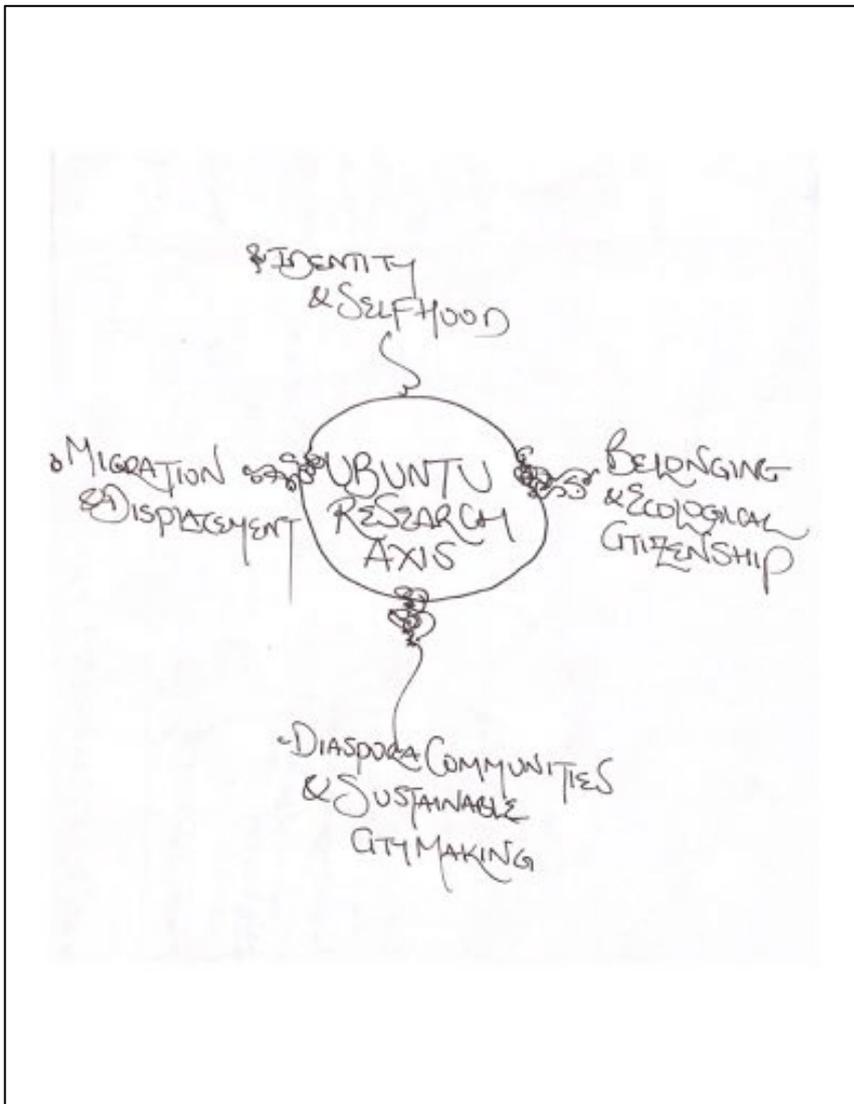
Specifically, I focus on the ethical principles of voice, social inclusion, participation and equality, which are pressing issues for migrant communities. These principles underpin a number of post-2015 global transformation agendas, and are also echoed in the field of contemporary social sculpture. To enable systemic change and deep rooted transformation towards more equitable societies, such issues requiring critical enquiry in relation to the aforementioned social phenomena.

These ethical orientations illuminate the spirit and impulse of transformation inherent in the *Ubuntu Research Agenda*.

Ubuntu Research Axis

In keeping with the journey concept, I created the *Ubuntu Research Axis* as a cartographic expression of the spaces and places: contextual, conceptual, intangible and material, contouring this enquiry.

The *Ubuntu Research Axis* presented in the image below is a cartographic illustration of the route map linking the personal to the political, global to local, community to individual and, migrant to ecological citizen.



Sketch: 1 The Ubuntu Research Axis

The *Ubuntu Research Axis* outlines the research framework by illustrating the research themes and weaving together the multidimensional, transdisciplinary aspects of the enquiry. The topics on the four points of the axis provide connective threads weaving the research aims and questions outlined in the following section.

The *Ubuntu Research Axis* is an enquiry lens, which centralises *Ubuntu* as an epistemological anchoring. The pathways unfolding as ‘spaces and places’ in between the four points of the axis, are outlined in the section entitled, Introduction: Part Three: The Research Routes.

Summary of Research Aims & Research Questions

The Research Title: *Evoking Belonging: Enlivening Ubuntu as Social Sculpture for Cultural Transformation towards Ecological Citizenship in Sustainable City-Making.*

Through the research practice, I develop strategies for enlivening *Ubuntu* as a form of Social Sculpture. There are three research aims and accompanying questions, which are explored and analysed through the reflective commentary.

Research Aim: One is to work with the philosophical concept of *Ubuntu* as a lens for enquiry in connective and imaginative social sculpture practice. The related research question asks: *‘how can I work with Ubuntu to enliven a sense of belonging as a cultural practice?’*

Research Aim: Two seeks to illuminate the transformative relationship between belonging, experiential knowing and civic enlivenment, amongst African-Caribbean diaspora communities in the UK. The related question is: *‘How can I work with embodied migration experiences of African-Caribbean diaspora communities in the UK to evoke a sense of belonging, agency and civic enlivenment?’*

Research Aim: Three explores cultural and ethical priorities for equitable community engagement and participatory enquiry amongst African-Caribbean diaspora communities. The question linked to this aim asks: *‘How can this social sculpture connective aesthetics practice, enable equitable approaches to inclusive community engagement and participatory enquiry?’*

Introduction Part 3: The Research Routes

This section broadly maps the research routes that lie between the axes of the *Ubuntu Research Axis* enquiry. Here, I present key aspects from the fields and disciplines, which contour the spaces and places shaping the *Ubuntu Research Agenda*. The routes can also be seen as interconnected pathways for exploration, which lie between the four directional points of the *Ubuntu Research Axis*.

For each research route, I offer definitions of key terms and how each term relates to the *Evoking Belonging* practice. Also, I illumine my auto-ethnographic perspective, and how each research route relates to the research questions.

The seven research routes combine to provide insights into the multi-layered and multi-dimensional spatial landscape of exploration.

Research Route I: Ubuntu

Connecting Ubuntu to participatory practice

Ubuntu is an African Bantu philosophy and cultural practice based on an Nguni word from Southern Africa. In essence, it means humanity. The following definition of *Ubuntu* serves as a working reference for this enquiry:

“A person is a person through other people strikes an affirmation of one’s humanity through recognition of an ‘other’ in his or her uniqueness and difference”... This idealism suggests to us that humanity is not embedded in my person solely as an individual; my humanity is co-substantively bestowed upon the other and me. Humanity is a quality we owe to each other. We create each other and need to sustain this otherness creation. (Eze, M., 2010.)

Eze’s interpretation of *Ubuntu* highlights what I regard as humane qualities of connection and imaginative qualities of co-creation. Through this research practice, I have identified these two qualities as essential cornerstones of inclusive, participatory practice. This enquiry explores how humane and imaginative qualities can enable inclusive and equitable approaches for engaging communities who are less heard and less seen in mainstream discourse and decision-making processes.

In Voyage One and Two of this reflective commentary, I explain how these cornerstones of participatory practice are expressed through methods and processes developed in the *Ubuntu Practices*.

In the *Evoking Belonging* practice, the *ubuntu* lens provides philosophical and ethical grounding, which asserts belief of an intrinsic connection between human beings. For this work, I interpret the essence of *ubuntu* into the phrase: *Ubuntu: ‘Without you, I do not exist’*. I see the *ubuntu* perspective as an indigenous knowledge system (IKS), or a way of knowing, which informs our cultural practices and our ways of seeing and being in the world.

Using the research questions, I study how these ways of knowing, for both researcher and participant, can deepen a sense of connection and belonging.

I offer the *ubuntu* lens as an antidote to historically inherited fears and wounds that often cause invisible fissures in the groundworks of placemaking for migrant and historically displaced peoples. Also, as way to deepening understanding of how to work with diversity in the socio-cultural dimension of migration, culture and sustainable city making.

In the *Ubuntu* practices, I work with others to explore the concept *‘ubuntu: without you, I do not exist’*. Often, we experienced evocation of deep-rooted knowing, that indeed, we are all connected. And, from this vantage point, if only for a moment, we were able to suspend our ingrained beliefs and

attitudes about societal inequities, class, racial injustice and, delve deeper into power dynamics of privilege and discrimination. In this moment of suspension and heightened awareness of our embodied knowing of *ubuntu*, we are able to, through the practices, review our attitudes, values and beliefs in a way that creates new possibilities for belonging.

As a researcher, I explore identity and social justice issues of belonging from an auto-ethnographic perspective with others, yet, beginning with my own. In Voyage One (Scoping Phase) of the enquiry, I retraced my memories of belonging. Among the most striking memories, were the times when I lived in South Africa (1996 – 2012) and experienced the philosophical and cultural expressions of a deep sense of *ubuntu* - humanity.

This experiential knowing inspires my focus on *ubuntu* in this research practice and links Research Route 1 to Research Aim, which is to: illuminate cultural and ethical priorities for equitable community engagement processes and participatory enquiry amongst African-Caribbean diaspora communities, through a transformative social sculpture practice.

The corresponding Research Question Three asks how can this social sculpture connective aesthetics practice enable equitable approaches to inclusive community engagement and participatory enquiry?

Research Route II: Social Sculpture

Connecting art, participation and transformation

The emergent field of contemporary Social Sculpture and Connective Practice explores the intersection between the imagination and transformation towards a humane and ecologically viable future.

Within the field, there is a focus on developing 'connective practices' through innovative methodologies of engagement. Connective practices are understood as approaches, which enable the development of 'new organs of perception' (<http://www.social-sculpture.org/our-methodologies>) to bridge the gap between information, consciousness and action. Connective practices, therefore, are developed as methodologies, which connect inner and outer sphere of human activity.

Social Sculpture & Connective Practice

The evocative part of the term, *social sculpture*, ignites an imaginative sensibility as a powerful resource which, when used in a deliberate process, can harness transformative potential.

The more descriptive part of the term, *connective practice*, provides an enabling framework for experiential research, in which I develop my proposed epistemology and pedagogic practice inspired by the cultural ideology of *ubuntu*.

Social sculpture practitioners are inherently concerned with core issues of sustainability and practices are developed to accelerate the evolution of societies, which are humane, equitable and just – the 'ecological future'.

The ecological future is a world flourishing in viable and regenerative ways, connecting humanity and all forms of life in nature. Those living in such a world are considered to be ecological citizens who, regardless of ethnic and geographical origin, are conscious of their attitudes, values and beliefs, and are actively participating in the crafting and sustainability of such a world.

The *Evoking Belonging* practice posits the notion of ecological citizenship as a regenerative pathway towards social inclusion and cohesion in sustainable cities.

Artistic practice

Social Sculpture is a field of artistic practice and social enquiry, grounded in philosophy and ethics, which fosters civic participation and activism towards the building of a just, equitable and humane society.

Social sculpture founder, artist and activist Joseph Beuys in conversation with Shelley Sacks (Social Sculpture Research Unit, 1997), defines social sculpture as; ‘an expanded concept of art’ in which; *‘Every human being is an artist, a freedom being, called to participate in transforming and reshaping the conditions, thinking and structures that shape and inform our lives’*.

This quote anchors some of the fundamental concepts underpinning the *Evoking Belonging* research enquiry. I interpret Beuys’ quote as a clarion call to develop participatory practice, which engages issues of power imbalances, social inequity and injustice from a space of enlivened civic agency.

My focus on transformative practices advocates for the meaningful participation of every human being *‘transforming and reshaping the thinking and structures that shape and inform our lives’* as a moral imperative for our times.

The *ubuntu* lens of epistemology, a way of seeing, weaves the two qualities of connection and co-creation as essential cornerstones of inclusive, participatory practice. In the *Evoking Belonging* practice, I approach the notion of co-creation as an expanded concept of artistic practice. The *Ubuntu Practices* invite participation through imaginative processes, which enable deep level engagement as a form of inclusive co-creation. In other words, a connective practice.

Contemporary Social Sculpture: The field of transformation

Since the early 90s, Prof. Emerita Shelley Sacks, a former Beuys student, has further developed social sculpture into a *contemporary* field of practice, pedagogy and research.

In this research enquiry, I work with inter-disciplinary methodologies, with primary focus on Prof. Sacks’ emphasis on connective aesthetic practice, which accents participation, enlivenment, dialogue processes and an inner excavation of the beliefs, attitudes and values we hold.

Prof. Sacks asserts that; *“The ‘aesthetic’ understood as the opposite of ‘anaesthetic’ or numbness has to do with enlivened being and connective practice”*.
([http://www.social-sculpture.org/category/our-focus/.](http://www.social-sculpture.org/category/our-focus/))

Root methodologies in social sculpture enable aesthetic (artistic) enlivenment shaped through images created in the intangible substance of the imagination. Considered invisible materials of our inner landscape, such images shape the beliefs, attitudes and values we espouse, in turn, activating a dynamic co-creative relationship with our outer field of experience.

In this reflective commentary, I illustrate how the co-researchers and I craft *ubuntu* pathways to belonging, shaped through images, memory, indigenous knowledge and intangible heritage, which dwells in the cultural substance of our stories and migration narratives.

Working into the unknown

This research practice is grounded in a Social Sculpture root methodology described as: 'working into the unknown'.(Sacks, S, 2012) This methodological approach of working with imaginative capacities builds on the pedagogies of Rudolph Steiner, Wolfgang van Goethe, Joseph Beuys and Professor Emerita Shelley Sacks.

I work 'into the unknown' using contemplative, narrative and intuitive processes to access the inner landscape of a person. The inner landscapes can be considered as spaces of the subconscious, as such, not always evident to the conscious mind. As such, the concept of working into the unknown is a reflexive process, which takes different forms according to the practice style of the practitioner.

In the *Evoking Belonging* practice, I began with an intuitive impulse and, through imaginative processes, explored my own inner landscape. I developed a research approach entitled, *Imaginative Voyaging*, where, I evoke storytelling to explore my own embodied experience of migration.

By working with my own narratives, I was able to access invisible materials of the unknown inner space. Through this process, I gained clarity about the research aims and questions. As is typical in social sculpture practice, the research questions are refined through small acts, processes and reflections as the enquiry evolves. It is, in essence, a reflective, auto-ethnographic practice. It is through this approach and other methods, described later in this reflective commentary, that the research questions emerged.

'Working into the unknown' centres my chosen emphasis on auto-ethnography as a methodological cornerstone of this research practice. The *Evoking Belonging* practice foregrounds and valorises experiential knowledge (lived experience) not only as a viable source of data gathering for enquiry but, pivotally, as a critical human rights basis from which to transform injustice in society.

This can be achieved, as this enquiry reveals, through a re-viewing of our perceptions, beliefs and attitudes, which anchor our value systems. In turn, potentially transmuting our understanding of our own perceptions of humanity and how we can actively participate in the co-creation of social justice and racial equity in our world.

Furthermore, I situate this practice-based research in the field of social sculpture by further deepening my enquiry to explore the socio-cultural dynamics of 'us and them' (described in Introduction: Part Two). I focus on the ethical aspects of the relationship between practitioner and participant in participatory practice by investigating this social sculpture foundational statement from Sacks: '*There is only one field of transformation, no-one is outside*'. ([http://www.social-sculpture.org/projects-processes/.](http://www.social-sculpture.org/projects-processes/))

In Voyage One, Two and Three, I illustrate the exploration of the relationship between, the imagination and transformation, individual and the collective and, the inner (auto-ethnographic) and outer fields of awareness.

I delve into Sacks' assertion by threading through the core research theme of transformation and weaving the enquiry into equitable forms of participatory practice. Once more strengthening the case for co-creation as understood in the philosophy of *ubuntu* and, for connective aesthetic practices.

The Ethical Code of Practice for Social Sculpture & Connective Practice (Sacks. S, 2015) governs this enquiry. The first clause states: 'autonomy, dignity and the rights of all human beings are respected', thus raising the *ubuntu* flambeau of 'humanity'.

The epistemological lineage, root methodologies and research focus in the field enable deep level, multi-modal exploration of complex scenarios expressed in the *Ubuntu Research Axis*.

On an auto-ethnographic note, throughout my career in the international development sector, I have explored various forms of creative participatory processes, which engage social issues.

Through work with international organisations such as the United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF), national organisations and agencies of government, I experienced the frustration of working with ‘interventions’, which effect a temporary change. In my personal social justice activism and practice, I’m interested in fundamental change and social practice, which fosters engagement and nurtures agency as part of an enduring transformation process.

From my perspective, the contemporary field of social sculpture and connective practice opens up a plethora of possibilities, for transformative engagement processes through this trans-disciplinary enquiry.

Evoking Belonging explores aspects of social sculpture, which emphasise experiential knowing, cultural activism in the form of expanded art and eco-social practices as transformative, co-creative action.

The Freedom Being and Ecological Citizenship

Issues pertaining to migration and freedom of movement have been a hotbed of social justice discourse and civic actions over the past decade. Against this backdrop, a key objective in sustainable city making is to develop policy and practice, which enables a sense of belonging amongst migrant communities. Belonging is inextricably connected to achieving social inclusion and social cohesion - a prerequisite for creating safe and resilient communities.

The field of contemporary social sculpture is described by Professor Sacks as *‘the philosophy and practice of freedom’*.

Within the context of migration and sustainable cities, in this enquiry, I interpret ‘the freedom being’ as a possible state of citizenship that dissolves the limitations of territorial boundaries, legal frameworks of citizenship and nationhood. *Evoking Belonging* is a social sculpture, which orients the imagination as a free space for freedom beings.

The *Ubuntu Practices* within this research enquiry illuminate how the ‘freedom being’ can, through an approach such as *Evoking Belonging*, cultivate an inner mobilization. A process, which leads towards a consciousness of connectedness and a deeper sense of belonging – an expression of ecological citizenship.

Furthermore, the research process provides bridges, which connect the dynamic sculpting process of the inner landscape of our individual selves to the societies within which we dwell. This relationship between the individual and society is a primary social sculpture epistemology, and a cornerstone of this research enquiry.

Research Route III: Participatory Development Practice Towards voice, participation and representation

Since the 1990s, the notion of participation in the development sector has evolved in many philosophical, ideological and domain based directions. Earlier, I cited participation as a core principle of social justice. Scholars such as Prof. Emeritus Nabeel Hamdi and Prof. Amartya Sen work with similar themes of freedom, social justice and participation in scholarship through two distinctively different fields. Hamdi, through architecture, human rights and urban development and Sen through economics, human rights and development.

My perspective of participatory practice sits within a framework of a human rights based approach, with ethical emphasis on voice, participation, inclusion, equality and non-discrimination. Due to increasing social, economic and environmental inequities, the gap between those able to meaningfully participate and those who cannot is widening. I advocate the need for citizen participation in governance processes as a democratic right.

From an auto-ethnographic perspective, Sacks' statement, "*There is only one field of transformation, no-one is outside*", evokes many questions, as I look at my personal journey in advocacy and activism.

As mentioned in the opening lines of this section, I am uncomfortable about interventionist approaches so prevalent in the development sphere. Those, where we, the practitioners and agencies tooled with laudable intent, strategies and project plans, swoop into a community, engage, activate and leave once the project is complete and the budget priorities have shifted.

As such, the research practice explores the ethical considerations and responsibilities of both practitioner and participant in the co-creation of egalitarian spaces for participatory development practice.

The *Evoking Belonging* approach focuses on the relationship between the individual as self and in community with others using the inner atelier of the imagination. This inner space, where, human beings in poesis are '*fully in things*', and '*present to the beauty of things... but also to the questions, and the mess: to the challenges for shaping a different kind of world.*' (Sacks, S. and Zumdick, W., 2013)

Through the *Ubuntu Practices*, we come closer to our inner landscape, to examine our relationship to the systems, conditions and practices that shape our reality. The creative strategies employed to enable 'coming closer' are outlined in the following section and throughout the chapters entitled: Voyage One and Two. I connect the *Ubuntu Research Agenda*, the *Evoke* theory and the learnings through the research practice to collaboratively come closer to the stories that shape our beliefs, attitudes and values.

This process, in itself, transforms the way we (the participants/co-researchers) understand the relationship between communities and practitioners. The *Ubuntu Practices* are immersive and through my (the practitioner) participation, we collectively experience, what is an intentional dissolution of the 'us and them' gap between practitioner and participant.

As such, this enquiry posits the ethical primacy of practitioner and participants working together as, co-researchers to, as outlined in Research Aim Three, which seeks to illuminate cultural and ethical priorities for equitable community engagement processes and participatory enquiry amongst African-Caribbean diaspora communities.

Research Route IV: Sustainable Cities

Migration, Urbanisation & Belonging

The world is experiencing unprecedented levels of urbanisation and migration. UN statistics published in 2018 show over 55% of the global population is urban and, by 2050, a predicted rise to 68% (an additional 2.5 billion people), *'with almost 90% of this increase taking place in Asia and Africa'*. (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019)).

The response in socio-economic governance and development spheres, is an increasing urgency to tackle issues of social cohesion, diversity and inclusion towards building resilience. I see migration as an unprecedented opportunity to develop participatory practices, which illuminate diverse worldviews and indigenous, inner knowing. This shapes my motivation for the urban focus in this enquiry. From this perspective, my enquiry explores collaborative ways to evoke belonging as a pathway to civic enlivenment and inclusive, sustainable city making.

I broadly align the *Ubuntu Research Agenda* to two global transformation agendas. Both agendas provide a backdrop in the contextual spaces theming this introductory section.

The first is the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is a United Nations (UN) led initiative comprising, *'a comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centred set of universal and transformative Goals and targets.'* (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>)

The 2030 Agenda is described by the UN as a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity, stating that: *'eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development.'*

The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, comprising Heads of State and Government and High Representatives, is the central UN platform for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Agenda 2030 was adopted at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit on 25 September 2015. On 1 January, 2016, at the launch of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the presiding UN Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon, highlighted the need for inclusive policy and practices, which *'leave no-one behind'*. (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2016/>) Moon presented Agenda 2030 as: *'the bold and transformative steps...urgently needed to shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path.'* (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>)

Of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the 2030 Agenda, this enquiry is aligned to SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities, SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable and SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development.

These three SDGs specifically align with the core research themes of inclusivity, participation and social justice as outlined in the *Ubuntu Research Agenda* and research routes in this section.

The second global agenda informing the *Ubuntu Research Agenda* is Agenda 21 for Culture adopted in 2004, as the first international agreement to systematically address the importance of the relationship between culture, citizenship, and sustainability.

Since its inception, many local governments, civil society organizations, national ministries and agencies, and international organizations, have aligned their policies and programs to the Agenda 21 for Culture. (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>)

In March 2015, at the first Culture Summit of the international organization United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) in Bilbao, municipal and local government representatives from across the world, adopted a policy document entitled: 'Culture 21: Actions', under the premise that: '*development can only be "sustainable" if culture is given a central role.*' (Agenda 21., (2015).

The introduction of the Culture 21 Actions document illuminates key aspects of the impulse and guiding principles of the *Ubuntu Research Agenda*. Specifically highlighting the significance of culture, inclusion and equality by stating: 'Each and every culture distinctly enriches our world, and their interactions help us progress toward a more cooperative humanity of reciprocity and mutual respect and trust. Sustainable development is lived out at local level and requires spaces and processes for citizen participation and decision-making.'

These two global agendas provide contextual zeitgeist to the pertinence of the core themes of inclusion, participation and representation in the *Ubuntu Research Agenda*.

Through this enquiry, I too, join the clarion call to: '*leave no-one behind*' as I develop the research practice. I employ the creative strategies designed within the concepts and principles of the *Evoke* theory to explore the research questions and examine new questions arising through the research practice.

Research route IV aligns with Research Aim Three, which seeks to illuminate cultural and ethical priorities for equitable community engagement processes and participatory enquiry amongst African-Caribbean diaspora communities.

Research Route V: African-Caribbean Diaspora Communities Identity, Belonging and Citizenship

In this enquiry, I focus on the inter-generational migration experiences germane to African-Caribbean Diaspora communities in the UK.

In the 60s, my parents voyaged to the UK from St. Vincent (father) and Jamaica (mother) from the Caribbean as subjects of the British Empire. Over a decade earlier, HMS Windrush docked with 492 passengers from Jamaica in 1948. As stated in the journal article 'Rethinking Windrush' published by Consented: *'Their arrival marked a symbolic shift in the complexion of multi-racial Britain.. The Windrush voyagers were not regarded migrants in a political sense. They came as with full citizenship rights until Jamaica gained independence (1962) then immigration controls were established.'*

As a child of a later wave of the Windrush generation, I come to this research proudly identifying as a migrant from the African-Caribbean Diaspora.

It is with emancipatory spirit of Diaspora heterogeneity that I explore alternative ideas of citizenship, which thrive on the urban experience of cultural diversity.

I reference cultural theorist Stuart Hall's (1989) definition of Diaspora. Hall distinguishes between the literal meaning of Diaspora to emphasise a metaphorical understanding, where a Diaspora; *"...is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of 'identity' which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity'.*

According to Stephane Defoix (2015) writing in *Diasporas Reimagined*, this perspective is an evolution from early concepts where the Diaspora was, *'characterised by either migration or exile, nostalgia, perpetuation of original tradition, customs and languages and a dream of return to the homeland'.* Significantly, Defoix points to Hall and sociologist, Paul Gilroy as a move towards identity politics, where the 'diaspora' becomes a *'postmodern, emancipatory, deterritorialised and cultural'* concept.

In this way, Research Route V opens a portal for exploration and valourisation of experiential knowledge as outlined in Research Aim Two, which seeks to illuminate the transformative relationship between belonging, experiential knowing and civic enlivenment, amongst African-Caribbean diaspora communities in the UK.

Research Route VI: Culture and Sustainable Development

Culture, Belonging and Transformation

In this enquiry, I posit that the Southern African philosophy of *Ubuntu* can provide transformative possibilities for developing pathways to co-creating belonging as a cultural practice.

My interest in culture stems from a life of movement and habitat in vastly different countries where I experienced many different cultures spanning Africa, Europe, the Caribbean and the Middle East. These experiences constitute an experiential knowledge that I have cultivated into the embodiment of *The Urban Indigene*, a conscious social practice rooted in culture.

In the 1995 World Commission on Culture and Development report, 'Our Creative Diversity', it was argued that the concept of culture is inextricably bound to development (WCCD, 1995).. In 2015, 'culture' was officially recognized within the UN-led post-2015 sustainable development agenda as a critical fourth dimension of sustainable development policy and practice alongside economic, environmental and social.(Agenda 21, 2015). During my working in cultural advocacy in the cultural industries in South Africa (1996-2012), the transformation agenda and cultural policy implemented by the government of the day, emphasised culture as a 'tool for development'. This, as the country and its people transitioned from apartheid towards liberty.

In the essay, '**Cultural industries and the development of South Africa**, published by the organization, Culture in Development., the writer's (unnamed) analysis cite that: 'Cultural industries can contribute to the social development of South African in narrowing economic dualism and reducing inequality. Cultural Industries also have the potential to contribute to Nation Building within South African society and can be used as a tool for deepening the understanding between fragmented social groups, thus aiding the ongoing democratic transition.

These were the dominant ideas at the ideological intersection between culture and development, in South Africa and other nations of the global South. New questions emerged as to what role could culture play in sustainable development? Policy actors cited need for research and practice, exploring the intersection of culture, development and sustainability and shift the historically dominant instrumentalist approaches, which use culture as a 'tool for development'.

Earlier, I proposed that 'belonging' could be considered as a co-created cultural practice. To elaborate further, I engage the above questions with a threefold view of culture: 1) Culture as performance, 2) The Cultural Imaginary and, 3) *Ubuntu* as a cultural lens for enquiry.

Research Aim Three of the *Ubuntu Research Agenda* focuses on cultural priorities for equitable community engagement processes and participatory enquiry amongst African-Caribbean diaspora communities.

By orienting this research practice as a form of cultural mapping, I advocate for the re-imagining of the role of culture as performance and work with cultural mapping as a critical, qualitative participatory performance research methodology in the *Evoking Belonging* practice.

I attempt to create a transformative process, which enables the excavation of the inner landscape of experience and enable revitalising opportunities for civic enlivenment and inclusion in participatory local governance practice.

In Voyage Three of this reflective commentary, I summarise insights and make a case presenting the *Ubuntu Practices* as 'instruments of consciousness'. In this way, expanding perspectives beyond instrumentalist notions of culture as a 'tool for development'.

Research Route VII: Auto-ethnography Embodied and Experiential Knowing

This research enquiry asserts the primacy of embodied and experiential knowing.

For, I believe, as second wave feminist Hanish (1970) writing in '*Notes from the second year*' claims: '*the personal is political*'. More recently, we hear that '*the personal is political and the political is personal*'. (Weems CM, 2018)

In this vein, situating the self, as seen in The Prologue of this document, *The Urban Indigene*, locates me, as a social sculpture practitioner and co-researcher, unveiling upfront, my values, attitudes and beliefs. I also share insights into my vulnerabilities, uncertainties, yearning and pivotally, my inner knowing.

For too long, I have witnessed the gradual erosion of the migrant soul as s/he becomes less visible, less heard and easily ignored by those who govern the places we, as migrants inhabit. By engaging issues of othering, prejudice and citizenship from what I posit is a transformative locale, the imagination, I formulated *The Urban Indigene* as an auto-ethnographic enquiry process, which is key to the *Evoking Belonging* approach.

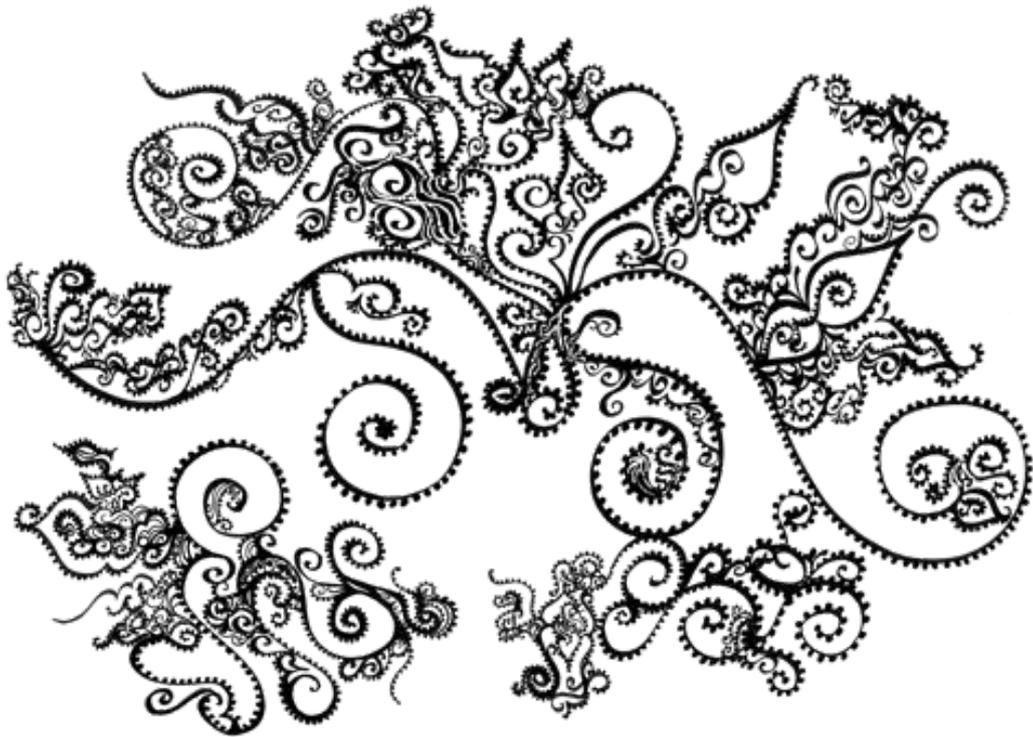
The research impulse is to unfold the cultural imaginary of the African-Caribbean migration experience, by (re)-animating memory of *ubuntu* as a way of knowing and being in the world. Through further exploration, I envisage that the *Ubuntu* way of knowing can potentially expand to a way of being, seeing and doing – a cultural practice.

As such, as described in the title of this enquiry and in Research Aim One the re-animation of *ubuntu* is understood as a process of enlivenment. In the research practice, I work with the invisible phenomenological materials of belonging using the philosophy of *Ubuntu* as an orienting lens for enquiry.

The corresponding Research Question One asks: How can I work with *Ubuntu* to enliven a sense of belonging as a cultural social sculpture practice?

I come as *The Urban Indigene*, a social sculpture researcher working with embodied knowledge and *Ubuntu*, as an epistemology. From this space of experiential knowing, I probe how, we as development practitioners, policy actors and civil society advocates and Diaspora communities can deeply encounter our questions, convictions, inner contradictions and uncertainties, which inevitably emerge as we engage in the complexities of belonging.

The Evoking Belonging Approach For Transformative Participatory Practice



Part One: The Evoking Belonging Approach

Evoking Belonging is a research approach for inclusive and equitable enquiry. It comprises the *Ubuntu Practices*, which are informed by the Evoke theory of transformative participatory enquiry practice.

The Evoke Theory

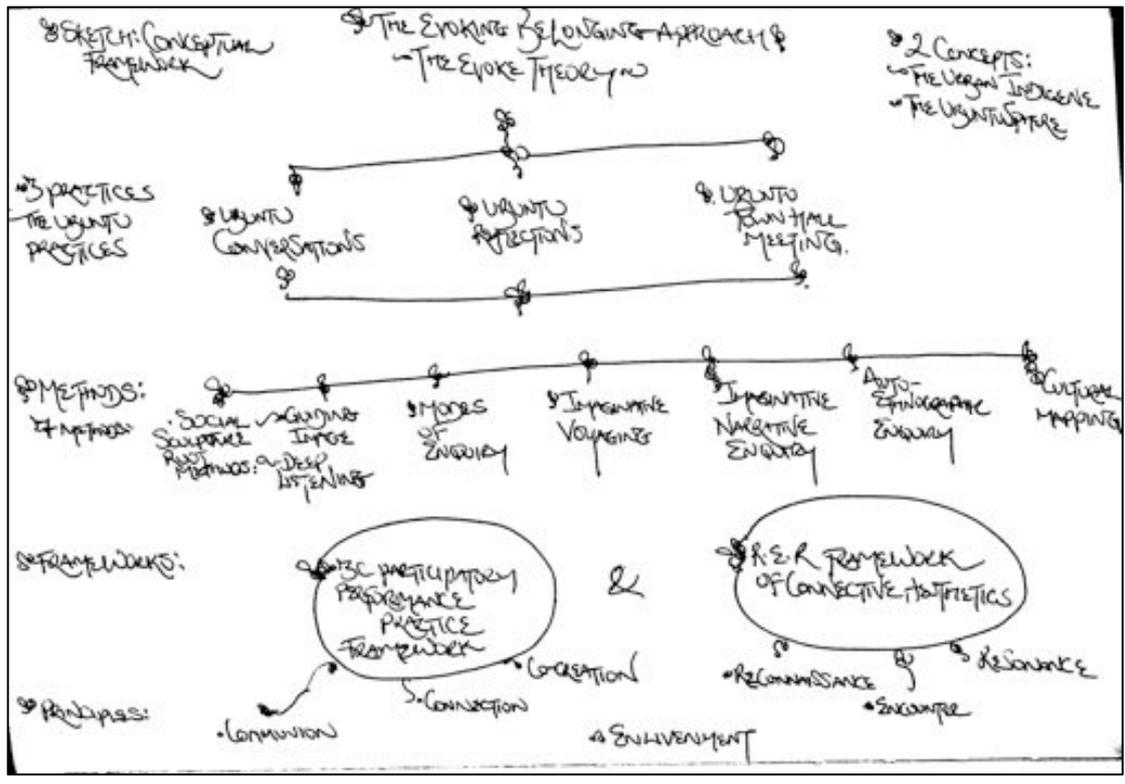
I developed The *Evoke* theory during the course of this research as a central aspect of the *Evoking Belonging* approach. The theory emphasises the significance of *experiential knowledge*, *enlivenment* and *performance* in participatory enquiry practice.

In this exploration, experiential knowledge is understood as a means of knowing, which informs our cultural practices; our ways of seeing, being and doing in the world. Experiential knowledge is also proclaimed as an intangible heritage, carried by all people regardless of ethnic origin or place of dwelling.

By working with memory, cultural practices, mythology, symbol and philosophy, experiential knowledge is also perceived as an intangible space, which can be explored imaginatively. Through the *Ubuntu Practices*, this research enquiry illustrates how participants can come to new forms of knowing, new cultures of being and doing in the world.

The *Evoking Belonging* approach defines enlivenment as an experience of activated consciousness created through a composition of connective aesthetic methods, which together comprise the *Ubuntu Practices*.

Performance, in this regard, refers to active participation and deep level engagement with the three modes of enquiry outlined further on in this section.



Journal Sketch:
 Evoke Theory: Conceptual Framework

The Ubuntu Practices

Working with the African philosophy of *Ubuntu*, as an epistemology, I focus on the relationship between migration and belonging. Through the *Ubuntu Practices*, I envisage a social ecology, which emerges through an *Ubuntu* lens of connection and co-creation.

Additionally, *Ubuntu* provides a cultural lens to this exploration, framing the auto-ethnographic African-Caribbean Diaspora orientation and focus of migration and belonging.

I created an extension to the phrase *Ubuntu* to include: '*without you, I do not exist*', to extend the given definition of humanity. Also, to develop connective aesthetic strategies, which enable egalitarian approaches to participatory development practice. These approaches are presented as a transformative quality of the practice. In this way, a key strategy of this approach is to view and work with both the practitioners and participants as co-researchers.

The *Ubuntu* practices are three connective processes devised as a synergistic approach to imaginative, dialogic and reflective exploration of the issues detailed in the *Ubuntu* research agenda.

The *Ubuntu* practices include: 1) *Ubuntu Conversations*: a one-to-one process between the co-researchers, 2) *Ubuntu Reflections*: a process linking the individual to a specific community of belonging and 3) *The Ubuntu Town Hall Meeting*: a process bringing together a variety of stakeholders to engage issues outlined in the *Ubuntu* research Agenda.

The research practice outlined in *Voyage Two* illustrates how the *Ubuntu* practices unfold through transdisciplinary methodology, which emphasises the imagination as a transformative locale for cultural enquiry of belonging.

The Evoking Belonging Approach: Principles

The three *Ubuntu Practices* described briefly above, feature common methods, which are composed using seven core principles of the *Evoking Belonging* approach.

The seven principles are derived from two frameworks created during the research practice. Namely: 1) *The Evoking Belonging 3C Participatory Performance Practice* and 2) *The Evoking Belonging R.E.R Framework of Connective Aesthetics*.

The principles emerging from the *3C framework* are: *communion, connection* and *co-creation*. The principles emerging from the *R.E.R Framework* are: *reconnaissance* (honour), *encounter* (intimacy) and *resonance* (evocation).

The seventh principle is *enlivenment*. This describes an embodied state of 'activated consciousness', which is achieved through the connective strategies of the *Evoking Belonging* approach.

The seven combine to create the principles guiding the *Evoking Belonging* perspective of *Ubuntu* as a social ecology. One, which asserts a universal interconnectedness, respectful and embracing of difference and diversity, expressed in the phrase, *Ubuntu: 'without you, I do not exist'*.

The Evoking Belonging Approach: Core Concepts

The Urban Indigene

The *Evoking Belonging* approach works to overcome the prevailing divisionary polarities between practitioner and participant, (in UN terms: duty bearer and beneficiary) in participatory development practice through two *Evoking Belonging* concepts. The two concepts and related methodologies combine to create a framework for egalitarian space making. These are: 1) *The Urban Indigene* and, 2) *The UbuntuSphere*.

The Urban Indigene is a core concept of the *Evoking Belonging* research practice. Formulated as an intangible, inner space, embodiment as *The Urban Indigene* works to create an imaginative space for transformative auto-ethnographic enquiry.

The UbuntuSphere is both an intangible and tangible place, which can be created anywhere. *The UbuntuSphere* enables fluid and mobile expression of the *Ubuntu Practices* as described in *Voyage Two*.

Through the *Ubuntu Practices* and connective aesthetic processes, *The UbuntuSphere* can exist within a person and also amongst individuals in community. Additionally, within households, organisations, institutions, parliaments and activist movements at all levels, in any country and amongst all ethnic groups.

Core Concepts: The UbuntuSphere

I present *The UbuntuSphere* as a dwelling place, where all engaged in sustainable city making can come closer to their embodied knowledge. In this way, through a transformative process of communion and co-creation between each other and the inner and outer spaces of their lives, people, co-researchers, human beings can make 'enlivened' connections.

From my practice, it seems evident that these enlivened connections evoke, an 'activated consciousness'. *Activated consciousness*, thrives on diversity and builds transformative capacity for active cultivation of belonging as a quotidian cultural practice.

This is achieved, as illustrated in the *Ubuntu Conversations* practice, by illuminating the inter-connected complexities of the relationship between our embodied experiences and big world systems, which propel divisive power dynamics of othering and discrimination.

As such, the *Evoking Belonging* approach is presented as an *Ubuntu* pathway to enabling new forms of participatory development practice in sustainable city making. This, in turn, can contribute to a new sense of citizenship: ecological citizenship and wider, alternative forms of belonging.

The Ubuntu Practices: Strategies

Following is an outline of key strategies used with each principle. Here, I illustrate the methods, which enable the principles in the specific practices.

Slow, Still and Silent

In the spaces I create, I work intentionally to decelerate time, speak and act slowly and work with interludes of silence to enable the all of principles. This creative strategy is also an effective way to create 'suitably strange' circumstances, which conjure a sense of temporality and the possibility of moving away from the everyday realities we create.

Honour

The principle of *reconnaissance* is underpinned by a notion of honour. Honouring the person with whom I am exploring is understood in this practice as an expression of *Ubuntu: Without you, I do not exist*.

Honour is expressed through gentle, direct eye contact, compassionate touch, and salutations by name, deep listening and intimacy. This awakens a sense of care, and respect. In practice, this strategy reveals an opening for empathy and increased reflexivity, where one is able to see the self in the other and vice versa.

Contemplative space

The slow, still and silent strategy is used as means to establish contemplative space. Within the contemplative space, we experience reverence for the process unfolding both within and in tangible form. Reverence infers value; that the people, the substance being created, the narratives we carry, the topics we are engaging are all valuable and so deserve a sense of respect, care and honour.

Rituals & Ceremony

This strategy is a deeply evocative way of creating sacred space. By using non-religious practices such as voice incantations and chanting of '*Ubuntu: without you, I do not exist*', my intent is to stimulate the evocative mode of enquiry. Ceremony is a form of repeated actions, which when repeated, can create a sense of ritual.

Aligned to the idea presented in '*Rituals of the Imagination*' by Thomas Moore (1983) '*the word ritual is from Latin 'ritus'... meaning to flow. A rite is a river*'. I create rituals, which connect us to the rivers of life and, as a means of opening pathways to enlivenment.

Food

In the *One Bowl: Ubuntu Encounters* practice, I use food as a means of creating space for alchemical processes of transformation. In this practice, food is eaten in a circle, using our hands, in silence. The silence augments an awareness of the other, of what is taking place internally and, can be an effective approach to multi-sensory dialogues and forms of communication, which do not use language.

Deep Listening

In the arena of contemplative space, the possibilities for tuning into the longings, fears and hopes of another are greatly increased through the strategy of deep listening. This strategy is enabled in combination with other strategies such as '*slow, still, silent*', to create space for a sense of connection and belonging, even if only for the time we are together.

Voice

As a practitioner, I came to this enquiry interested in exploring how to help amplify the voices of those less heard and less visible. During the research practice, I experimented with my own actual voice as chanting, incantations and also by embodiment of a griot. The griot is described in the '*Encyclopaedia of Africa*' as: '*Professional poet-musician and storyteller in West Africa; known for a style of performance, typically accompanied by a string or percussion instrument*'. (eds. Gates, H.L and Appiah K.A, 2010)

The reflections from others reveal that the use of my voice is received as a powerful and an important element in the process. I now use my voice, as a catalyst to open up the space on an invisible energetic dimension and, as an invitation to others to participate in call and response songs or chants. The tonality, form of expression and performance offering of my voice is an intentional, meditative process that I as the practitioner create in preparation for and during the practice.

Images and artefacts

The Evoking Belonging guiding image and other artefacts were used in *Ubuntu Conversations* and *Ubuntu Reflections* as ways in which an evocative mode of enquiry can unfold. This strategy is used in a variety of ways. The *Imaginative Voyaging* process works with images conjured in the imagination. Through meditation and visioning processes, we, together unfold the images imaginatively. Generally, there is space created for sharing and reflecting on the image. I ask my co-researchers to focus the enquiry on particular questions, and together we explore, exchange and co-create meaning.

These research strategies of deep listening and the use of guiding images are root methodologies developed in the Social Sculpture Research Unit. The other strategies are devised from my practice in the field over two decades. The strategies work with the three modes of enquiry as a composition of approaches, which inform the *Evoke* theory.

Using these strategies, I am able to, in communion and co-creation with others, explore, reflect and re-view the research questions. I also reflect on the ways in, which these strategies are used viz. my research intentions and as auto-ethnographic enquiry to create transformative participatory practice.

Research Frameworks

The *Evoking Belonging* 3C framework for participatory performance practice

Ubuntu posits notions of connection and co-creation. This led me, through the insights gleaned, to create the *3C framework for participatory performance practice*. The three C's stand for: Communion, Connection and Co-creation.

Communion: a shared inner and outer space where an emotional connection occurs through sensory encounters. Meeting the other, is an honouring, reconnaissance and opening of the heart (empathy).

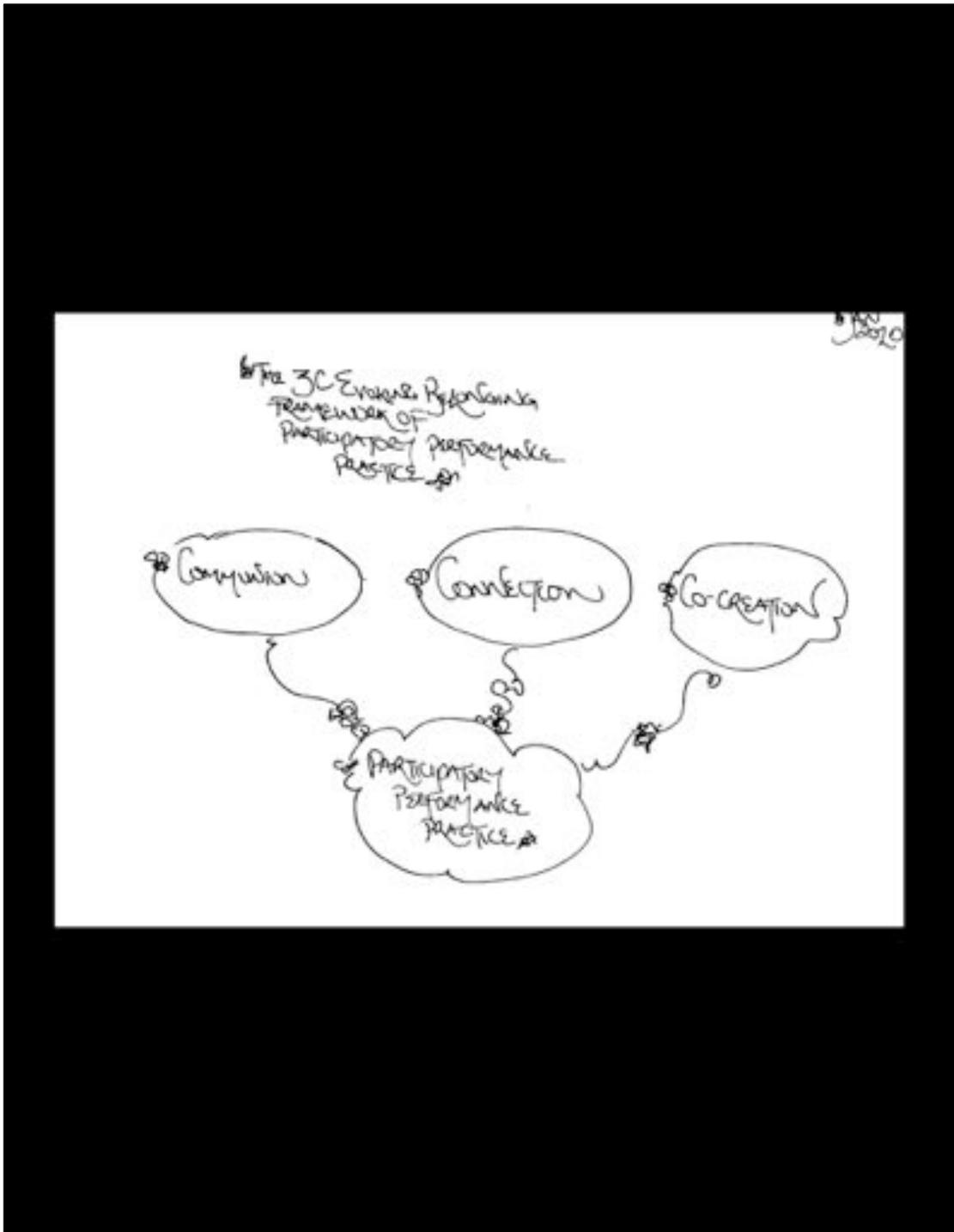
Communion enables *connection*: a sense of inter-relatedness experienced between people. When connection occurs, we find aspects of ourselves within the other. We see resonant similarities, differences and responsibility of being human. This transcends the material contextual situation of the other.

Emerging from the intangible space of '*connected communion*' unfurls possibilities for participatory performance practice, which engenders co-creative acts of mutual benefit and evolution.

As such, *Co-creation* establishes a regenerative offering, a precious opportunity to establish a morally aligned, equitable space in which to build new perspectives and co-created experiences.

Mutuality and reciprocity form the cornerstones for those who, in '*connected communion*', are invited to *co-create* and as such, publicly declare an intention to actively participate. Participation is generated in form, content and a collective immersive experience, which is at once rendered individually and also as part of a connected living being. In this enquiry, this process is referred to as participatory performance practice.

The principles underpinning the 3C model are reflected in the seven guiding principles of the *Evoking Belonging* practice detailed earlier in this chapter.



Notebook sketch:
3C Framework
The Evolving Belonging 3C Participatory Performance Practice Framework
An original concept developed by Dianne Regisford,
Social Sculpture Research Unit,

R.E.R Framework of Connective Aesthetics

Following the insights and analysis emerging from the *One Bowl Research Residency*, I crafted the R.E.R framework of connective aesthetics for this enquiry.

The acronym stands for: Reconnaissance (honour), Encounter (intimacy), and Resonance (evocation). These frame ethical and values based considerations, as I craft this connective practice. The connective aesthetic proposition in this R.E.R framework is derived from the African cultural sensibilities that I have experienced and practice through *Ubuntu* in my daily activities.

This framework brings an added dimension of cultural sensibility and new ways of knowing into the research practice.

Inspired by the impulse to enliven the activist in others by coming closer to ourselves, I connect the two *Evoking Belonging* frameworks: *3C Framework of Participatory Performance Practice* (communion, connection, co-creation) and the *R.E.R Framework of Connective Aesthetics* (Reconnaissance, Encounter, Resonance) with the research aim: 'To examine the *experience* and *phenomena* of a sense of belonging' to auto-ethnographic, narrative enquiry theories and approaches to shape the methodology

Part 2: The Evoking Belonging Approach Methodology

This section details the various methods comprising the *Evoking Belonging* approach. For each, I include a working definition and insights into what each method enables in the practice.

The process of designing the methodology evolved through the research practice itself. As a 100% practice research enquiry, I designed the methods using a process, which most often began with intuitive inspiration expressed through a reflective practice of poetry, deep listening, journaling and reflection.

In Voyage One and Two of this Reflective Commentary, I chronicle the methods and how the emerging methodology developed through the research practice. In this way, I highlight the pertinence of the social sculpture practice of 'working into the unknown' as referenced in the introduction.

By working into the unknown, using the various methods outlined below, I have witnessed how the *Evoking Belonging* approach opens possibilities for all participants to enter spaces of the imagination as a process of enquiry. And, in this way, bring to light newly forming awareness, which is co-created through an *Ubuntu* orientation of sensing, communion and connection. What has emerged is a tangible expression of the potency of working with others using the *Evoking Belonging 3C Framework for Participatory Performance Practice* as referenced in part one of this chapter.

Root Methodology in Social Sculpture

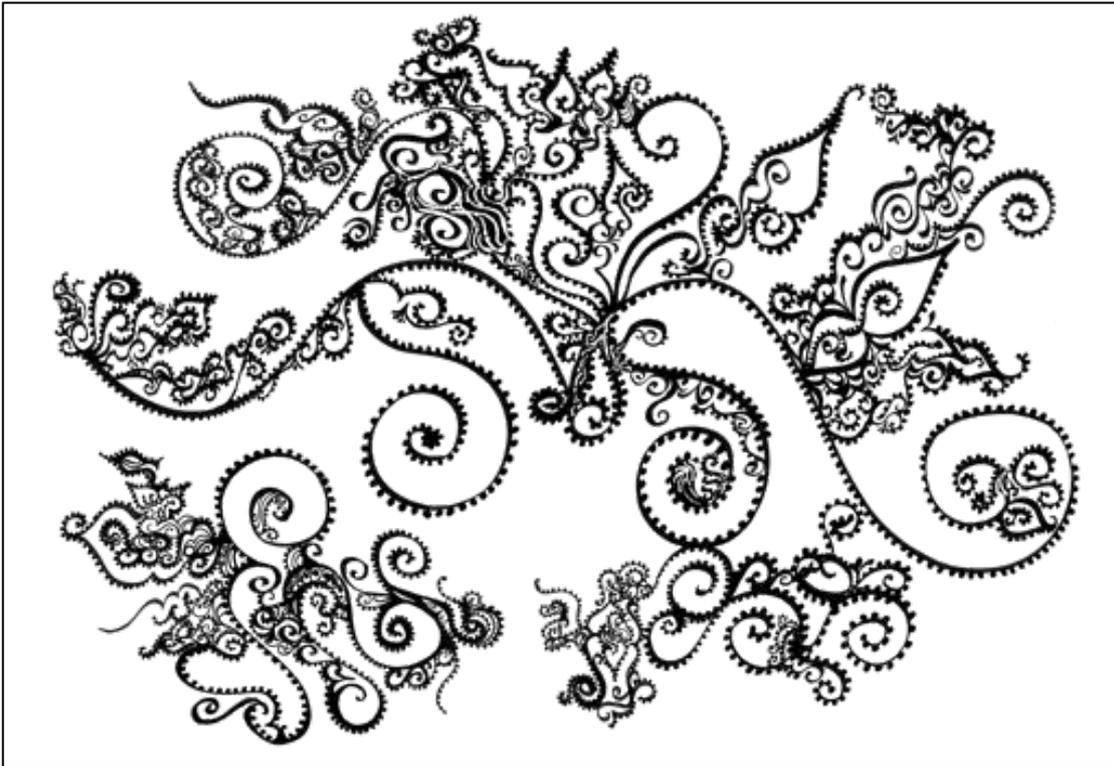
On embarking on this research enquiry, I attended one semester of the Master's course in social sculpture. During this time, I learnt about the 'Root Methodologies' of contemporary social sculpture and connective practice. I participated in group dialogues and explorations. Our enquiry unfolded through small acts, gestures and reflections on the themes such as empathy, care and ecological citizenship.

Root methodologies in social sculpture enable aesthetic (artistic) enlivenment shaped through images created in the intangible substance of the imagination. Considered invisible materials of our inner landscape, such images shape the beliefs, attitudes and values we espouse, in turn, activating a dynamic co-creative relationship with our outer field of experience.

The *Evoking Belonging* approach incorporates two principal social sculpture root methods as part of its methodology, namely, the guiding image and deep listening.

Method One: The Guiding Image

The Guiding Image is a social sculpture practice developed by Prof. Emerita Shelley Sacks to build capacity for working with the imagination to render visible, the invisible materials (attitudes, beliefs, values) hidden from one's consciousness. In this research practice, I work with the *Evoking Belonging* symbol, which I created as a guiding image specifically designed for this enquiry.



The Evoking Belonging Guiding Image
Ink work by Dianne Regisford
2014

Passages in the chapter entitled, *Voyage One*, describes the auto-ethnographic practice I employed to create the *Evoking Belonging* symbol as an iconographic expression of belonging. The image, whilst abstract, can also be construed as an expression of a society that is enlivened, connected by *Ubuntu* threads of humanity. This image was shared with participants as a guiding image and explored through different modes of enquiry (see method three) of the *Evoking Belonging* practice.

Furthermore, I worked with the *Evoking Belonging* guiding image as a symbolic, evocative motif to inspire storytelling and enquiry in relation to the research questions. Together, we looked into traditional forms and explored new possibilities of understanding belonging.

As I retrospectively gather journal entries, review poetry written over Voyage II and revisit acts that were created, I see in the guiding image, a primacy of movement, a universal inter-connectedness and multiple layers of narratives which story the concept of home and belonging.

Symbols and Motifs of Belonging

The cultural imaginary of the African-Caribbean Diaspora is replete with images, symbols and motifs. Many of the images are generations old, imbued with ancient indigenous knowledge transferred through generations. Deeply evocative, many symbols are linked to various pantheons of African and Caribbean mythology, spiritual and indigenous cultural practices.

Traditionally, such motifs have been transferred inter-generationally through various forms including oral and text narratives, dance, sculpture, masks, artisanal fabrics and ceremonial cloths. In these ways, the threads of cultural expression, woven through storytelling, speaking in metaphor (poetry), symbols and motifs, create a vibrant relationship to the cultural imaginary.

Such images can ignite a series of emotions and deep-seated ideologies, which shape beliefs, attitudes and values. Until today, motifs and symbols are used as identity markers and methods of transferring traditions in various ways as a form of inter-generational indigenous knowledge systems.

Ultimately, the guiding image was used during the practice with other methods like *Imaginative Voyaging* to explore and evoke perspectives of belonging..

Method Two: Deep Listening

I work with the social sculpture root method of deep listening as a process to enable the core principles of this enquiry. Deep listening is shared throughout the research practice as a means to fostering empathy and coming closer to issues, questions and ways of being in the world. In this way, revealing perspectives that are often veiled by the preoccupations of quotidian life.

In the *Evoking Belonging Ubuntu Practices*, deep listening is a method presented as a form of non-judgemental receptivity to another's expressions of yearning, exploration, vision and more. Usually taking place between two people, the process can be seen as a gesture or small act. Sitting facing each other, one person is invited to close their eyes whilst they recount a memory, story, an image or a feeling evoked through memory work. The person listening is invited to 'receive' the utterances of the other whilst gazing on the countenance of the other with 'generous eyes'. Sacks suggests the notion of 'generous eyes' as an inherent quality of deep listening, which engenders a reciprocal form of giving from one to the other.

After the person sharing has come to a natural pause, s/he is invited to open their eyes. Then, the person who was listening is asked to share what s/he heard from the other. Once completed, the roles are then reversed and the person who was previously listening now shares in the same way.

In the research practice, the participants and I experienced deep listening as a powerful, yet non-threatening approach to finding one's self in the other and often deep connection. This form of exchange is an example of a connective practice, which enables an enlivenment of the inner sphere and the potential for new forms of knowing to rise to the level of the conscious.

The *Evoking Belonging* approach implements both root methodologies as creative strategies to explore the research aims and questions through the *Ubuntu Practices*.

Using the aforementioned *Evoking Belonging Principles*. I incorporate these two root methodologies with others drawn from the transdisciplinary landscapes I traverse in this enquiry.

Method Three: Modes of Enquiry

I began the research enquiry using three principal auto-ethnographic modes of investigation: poetic, imaginative and evocative.

Taking inspiration from the Atlas of the Poetic Continent, a key text inspiring this research, the three modes of enquiry are all modes of poesis. Writers, Sacks and Zumdick (2013) describe the state of poesis as being '*in things*'. The Poetic Continent is a realm of '*relatedness*' depicted in the Atlas as; '*... a synonym for all those attempts that reconnect our souls to the sources of life: through active seeing, listening and experiencing with all our twelve senses.*'

The Poetic Mode

The poetic mode is a creative strategy (Sacks S, 2012) created by transferring my long-standing poetry writing practice into an image based, social sculpture research approach.

In a state of *poesis*, (Sacks S, Zumdick W, 2013), I cultivate reflective depth by re-entering memories using sensation and emotion to explore imaginatively. This embodied, auto-ethnographic method enables discovery of core impulses and reflection on symbolism and significance.

This form of enquiry illuminates the personal voice through poetry, small acts and journal reflections, enabling the storying and re-storying of embodied experience, to explore complexity and awaken experiential knowledge as conscious ways of knowing differently.

As I excavated memories, I wrote many poems weaving together the auto-ethnographic threads of this enquiry. I have published a selection of poems developed during this research journey, in a book of poetry entitled: *Evoking Belonging: Poetics of The Urban Indigene*. (Regisford D, 2019)

Modes of enquiry: The Imaginative Mode

The use of images is an anchor strategy and connective practice, which enables a revisiting of the past, an observation of the present and a powerful 'instrument of consciousness' with which to vision the future.

I created the *Imaginative Voyaging* methodology to open pathways into the imagination, unfold layers of memory and relive experiences as an interconnected web linking our inner and outer spaces of reality.

Imaginative Voyaging involves contemplative sensory exploration by closing ones eyes and creating quiet space within. Then, by repetitively sensing into experiences of belonging beginning to create multi-sensory images connecting the current emotions to the memories. Multi-sensory images are understood in this enquiry as images, which emerge through the *Imaginative Voyaging* process. They are often expressed in multiple senses. The practice is designed to decelerate time and to invite gentle and keen attention to the various sensory expressions arising.

Modes of enquiry: The Evocative Mode

Conscious of the evocative power of images and symbols, I created a material guiding image as a visual motif for this enquiry to explore what belonging may look like when expressed as a material image evoked from a space of my inner knowing.

During this process, I developed the evocative mode of enquiry combining the poetic and imaginative mode with an outward artistic expression such as movement or drawing.

I began by entering a meditative state of inner stillness by using rhythmic breath patterns to enter into an imaginative mode. Using *Imaginative Voyaging* (see method four) to sense into my embodied experiences of belonging for seven minutes, I began drawing, intuitively crafting the *Evoking Belonging* guiding image.

During this time, I took time and care to immerse myself in my sensorial memories of belonging and allowed natural flow and expression without limit or conscious direction. The *Evoking Belonging* guiding image is what emerged.

Method Four: Imaginative Voyaging

Imaginative Voyaging is a method that I have designed in this enquiry to create a multi-modal (see method three) process, which opens pathways into the imagination by evoking emotions and unfolding facets of memory.

Using contemplative practices such as breathwork and meditation, I guide participants through a process of reviewing and reliving experiences by sensing into images. The use of images in this research enquiry is an anchor creative strategy enabling a revisiting of the past, a grasping of the present and a powerful vehicle with which to vision the future.

As a research practice, *Imaginative Voyaging* enables the researcher-practitioner, embarking on an exploration or deepening an enquiry to access the inner landscape. And, in so doing, they are able to reconnect to and review their motives and impulses. In the process, for those who are able to build the capacity through practice, opportunities to connect with issues, questions and emotions, which are often invisible, arise.

In my experience, engaging in this reflexive *Imaginative Voyaging* practice as a prelude to 'the work', cultivates an imaginative space, which creates reflective distance. The reflective distance permits one to be 'in' the work and at the same time, to metaphorically rise above or step away from the work for compassionate and critical analysis.

This in turn, opens up space to cultivate tangible works, which are enacted with deeper consciousness and a traceable fidelity to the impulse and vision. It is in effect, an orientation methodology, which eloquently evokes an anchoring foothold in the dwelling space of the imagination.

When working with participants, I used the *Imaginative Voyaging* method in the *Ubuntu Conversations* and the *Ubuntu Reflections* practice. I experimented by evoking a discussion about the guiding image whilst referencing the image printed on cloth and/or paper. I also examined responses when working with sensory exploration using the fingers and eyes closed to trace out the etches of the guiding image on a flat plane of wood.

In chapters entitled; *Voyage One* and *Two*, I elaborate further on the ways in which, through *Imaginative Voyaging*, both participants and I were able to come closer to phenomenological expressions of belonging.

Similarly, as I experienced in my solo *imaginative voyaging*, our capacity for reflection deepened. By working with the participants, I saw how our collective experience inspired a collective reflexivity. Through dialogue and attentive listening, we saw how one comment naturally built on another, mirrored another and sometimes opposed another. Through careful enquiry, we were often inspired to new ways of seeing.

Achieving reflective distance in this way is seen in this enquiry as an expression of co-creation. For, on several occasions, I have seen how another's commentary enables the other to see a new perspective. This is achieved, through an empathetic exploration where questions lead to exchange and, exchange enables a finding of oneself in the other and vice versa. This, I posit as the essence of co-creation in this practice. Along with connection, co-creation is one of the core tenets of the philosophy of *Ubuntu*, the *Evoke* theory and the *Evoking Belonging* approach.

Method Five: Imaginative Narrative Enquiry

Narrative Enquiry is a way of understanding experience. Distinct from stories, narratives are about lived experience and narrative enquiry lends itself to revealing multiple understandings of the same experience.

In designing the *Evoking Belonging* methodology, I reference ideas shared by leading Narrative Enquiry theorists, Clandinin and Connelly (1994) who state: *'People live stories and in the telling of their stories, reaffirm them, modify them and create new ones. Stories lived and told educate the self and others including the young and those such as researchers who are new to their communities'*.

They go on to describe narrative enquiry as: *'a collaboration between researchers and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieu'*.

Inspired by the idea of collaboration, I pulled through the *Ubuntu* principle of co-creation, which is in essence, a collaborative, participatory practice. As I set out to understand more about narrative enquiry, I connected the threads of connection and co-creation (reference the *Evoking Belonging* 3C framework of Participatory Performance Practice) to the African-Caribbean cultural practice of multi-generational storytelling. This is an oral tradition through which, values, societal constructs and other ways of being and seeing the world are transferred in a participatory and performative way.

I saw a natural link to the practice of narrative enquiry and an opportunity to craft a research method that builds on the core elements of the *Imaginative Voyaging* practice. Key to the research practice of narrative enquiry is to 'focus on the experience and follow where it leads'. (eds. Clandinin D. J, Connelly F.M, 2000)

This approach resonates with the social sculpture approach of 'working into the unknown' as previously described in the introduction. It requires alert reflexivity on the part of the researcher-participant, who, conscious of the research aims and questions, also holds the responsibility of ensuring that the purpose of the enquiry remains in view.

In the research practice, I observed that by focussing on the 'experience', a pathway of ease and flow opened up. Participants were more open to exploration of the issues as they arose naturally.

By using a dialogue approach in the *Ubuntu Conversations* practice, I began with a focus on the *guiding image*. I then invited the participant into the *imaginative voyaging* practice and, together we shared the stories that emerged in an organic exploratory way.

In the design phase of the methodology, I created a series of enquiry cycles (the three *Ubuntu Practices*) to incorporate an approach aligned to Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) notion that: '*Narrative enquiry carries with it a sense of continuity: A search, a re-search...a searching again*'.

The cycles were designed to enable optimum capacity for improvisation, flexibility and reshaping where appropriate. Guided by reading on the practice of narrative enquiry, and root methodologies in Social Sculpture, I also included reflective spaces where I could revisit my research questions amidst what was likely to be a shifting ground of enquiry.

I designed the *Ubuntu Conversations* and *Ubuntu Reflections* practice to incorporate the research aims using the narrative enquiry 3-dimensional research framework, (eds. Clandinin D.J, Connelly F.M 2000) to explore: memories of personal and social interaction, temporality (time) and place.

Using my own reflective practice, I began to come closer to the imaginative phenomena of connectedness and belonging in relation to the philosophy: 'Ubuntu: Without you I do not exist'

Key activities included: generating 'field texts' (narratives) through conversations and other data collection methods including poetry, reflective writing, performance and object making, also dialogue with myself (journaling & multi-media blog posts) '*in order to, reveal multi-dimensional meanings and present an authentic and compelling rendering of the data*'. (Leavy P, 2009)

I used a multi-directional (inward/outward, backward/forward) *imaginative* approach to generate narrative substance and examine the data.

During the research practice, my on-going reflections on *Imaginative Narrative Enquiry* as an *Evoking Belonging* connective practice revealed an expanding understanding of the concept of 'going within' and 'allowing' as presented by Shelley Sacks in a lecture about Creative Strategies in Social Sculpture. (2012) "*Allowing: going in and out to see possibilities in dialogue with oneself helps us dialogue with the world*".

Additionally, I revisited the *Ubuntu* Conversations and transcribed some of the most resonant audio clips for interpretation of the narratives in relation to the research questions. This data was then interpreted and re-viewed as narrative portraits and research texts. The research texts formed a documentation and analysis of patterns of emerging phenomena. These phenomena were distilled and are referenced as the core principles of the *Evoke* theory. For example, a suspension of 'reality' and the deceleration of time are creative strategies that are enabled through the principle of still, slow and silent.

As I shared the *Ubuntu Practices* in various settings with different groups of people, I saw how the application of this principle achieved similar effects and responses from participants. As the practitioner, I also experienced deep moments, where time was suspended and new realities began to illumine.

As such, by blending method three; *Imaginative Enquiry* and aspects of narrative enquiry, I formulated method four: *Imaginative Narrative Enquiry*.

Method Six: Auto-Ethnographic Enquiry

A core research theme of the *Evoking Belonging* research practice is inclusion, equity and participation. As outlined in the introduction, research question three probes: 'how can this social sculpture connective aesthetics practice, enable equitable approaches to inclusive community engagement and participatory enquiry?'

The accent on inclusion, equity and participation illumines important ethical considerations for a practice such as *Evoking Belonging*, where the researcher is also a participant. As expressed in the 3C Framework of Participatory Practice (see Part One of this chapter), the tenets of communion, connection and co-creation lay the foundation for myself as the researcher-participant play both roles.

In the field of social sculpture, Professor Emerita Shelley Sacks describes this dual-facing role as the 'responsible participant', an approach, which highlights the responsibility one should be aware of in shaping and enacting participatory practices. (Sacks 2012)

As such, I chose an auto-ethnography as a method to engender this responsibility by enabling me to, a) 'come closer' to my own understanding of belonging, b) explore the research questions in relation to my personal narratives of lived experience and, c) to deepen awareness of how my experiential knowing relates to my research impulse and ongoing work as a social sculpture researcher and practitioner.

From this space of knowing, my intent was to create a practice, which honours embodied knowledge, works with conscious reflection, based on sound ethical intent and employs connective aesthetic methods. In order to promote reflexivity, I used auto-ethnographic narrative enquiry as a multi-modal method of self-enquiry for the participants and I.

The *Ubuntu Practices* are designed with auto-ethnographic emphasis to enable and build capacity to: 'connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social and political through research writing and story', as noted by (Ellis C, 2004: xix).

I worked with close family and friends as participants and co-creators in this enquiry. In a participatory journey, we found ourselves in each other's narratives as we, together engaged in *imaginative voyaging* and other methods outlined in this section.

Self-study as an individual in relation to the collective

The combination of methods expressed as the *Evoking Belonging* approach enables deep enquiry into the dynamic relationship between the individual and community/society.

These core aspects of the research practice relate to a key focus of enquiry within the field of contemporary social sculpture, namely: the relationship between the imagination and transformation.

As a researcher-participant conducting this auto-ethnographic research enquiry, it was important to keep a keen eye on the inter-relationships and social dynamics. Specifically, balancing the honing expression of a deep sense of individuality whilst nurturing a holistic sense of the individual as part of the broader collective.

This social relatedness is a perspective, which became a dynamic self-constituting, mutually regulated relationship as both the participants and I delved deeper into our life histories from an *Ubuntu* orientation.

In shaping the *Evoking Belonging* practice for inclusive participatory development practice, *Voyage One* illustrates the chronological evolution and increasing primacy of auto-ethnographic methods in my practice.

I reference the book, *Method Meets Art*, where author Patricia Leavy (2009: 11, 37) describes auto-ethnography as a distinct '*method of self-study in which the researcher is viewed as a viable data source*'. She also highlights that this method accesses the '*nexus of self and culture*' using the '*self as springboard, as a witness*'.

I consider this a powerful perspective, which ignites a calling to activism, a key social sculpture strategy. Through my own auto-ethnographic journey, I could instinctively feel the transformative potential of narratively researching my own story as a form of personal activism.

Through the auto-ethnographic method, I connect this awareness to the research impulse, which is to enliven the activist in others by coming closer to ourselves through our narratives of live experience.

In this way, the *Evoking Belonging* practice opens up pathways for new ways to interpret and enable equity and inclusion for all, both researcher and 'community' in participatory enquiry processes.

Method Seven: Cultural Mapping

Cultural mapping is a participatory process used by policy makers, planners and others involved in sustainable city making to gain a deeper understanding of the local cultural assets and resources.

In the *Evoking Belonging* research practice, I focus on the intangible cultural assets such as attitudes, values, beliefs, also, philosophies of connectedness and belonging held in a community.

Additional cultural assets, which are informed by the intangible phenomena of belonging and take on tangible form include; personal and community narratives, the phenomena of belonging and shared notions of a sense of place.

Evoking Belonging is designed as an artistic form of cultural mapping, which valorises experience and amplifies voices less heard in mainstream discourse towards an outward expression of lived experience from a place of authorship and agency.

Using a combination of the various *Evoking Belonging* methods, the *Ubuntu Practices* combine to present a multi-faceted invitation for participants to re-imagine belonging. The mapping process of the phenomena of belonging through processes such as *Imaginative Voyaging* and auto-ethnography, reveal qualities, which are transformative. Transformation in this practice can be understood as a shift in perspective, an awakening to new questions and a new way of seeing oneself connecting to the larger sphere of community.

The multi-modal nature cultural mapping lends itself to various forms of research approaches including: non-verbal, oral, aesthetic and other disciplinary hybrids, which, in this practice, have dissolved potential barriers of ethnic origins, language and homogenous cultural framing.

In this enquiry, I explore aspects of material space (see the Introduction) and link this notion to the idea of 'material culture' as cited in the landmark publication, *Cultural Mapping as Cultural Inquiry*.(eds. Duxbury N, Garret-Petts, W. and MacLennan, D., 2015)

Through the design and methodology of the *Ubuntu Practices*, I demonstrate how, the phenomena of belonging can be imaginatively mapped to contribute to expression 'material culture'. This, through what the authors describe as the expansion and understanding of how 'aesthetic presentation and knowledge production' can, 'permit increased attention to personal experience and a hands-on ("qualitative") exploration of material culture'.

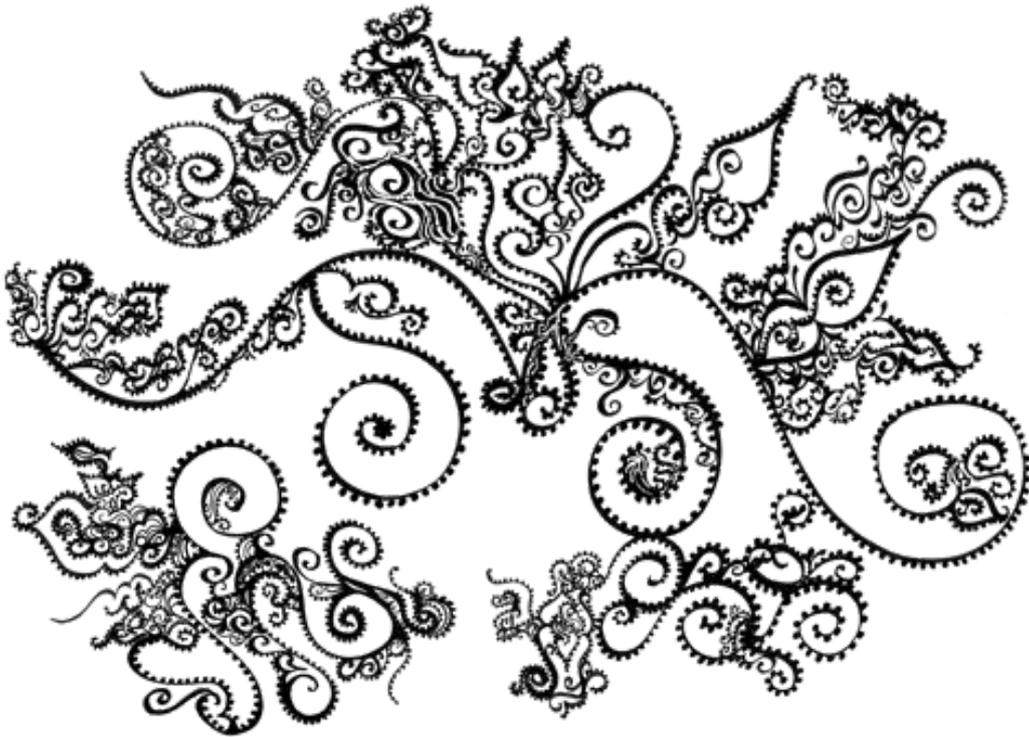
As an activist practice, which seeks to disrupt normative approaches and engage a social justice agenda, the *Evoking Belonging* practice is offered as an inclusive alternative approach, which when combined with social sculpture theories, creates powerful participation opportunities for broad ranging inclusion of varying ethnicities. Thus, when looking at issues of migration and governance, the possibilities for equitable and inclusive inter and intra-cultural enquiry multiply.

I position this practice as a contribution to cultural mapping practices created by a growing cadre of artists who identify as cultural advocacy agents. It magnifies possibilities for deeper engagement between communities less seen and we, the artist-researcher community to (re) position our practices and ourselves. In this way, we grow beyond the traditional role of creators, narrators, interpreters and translators of public policy and community narratives as are typically assigned to artists.

I regard this in itself as a form of *Evoking Belonging* for artists in the socio-cultural political arena.

VOYAGE ONE

Towards Migration Discourse as
Embodied Experience



Voyage One: Part 1

Towards migration discourse as embodied experience

Imaginative Explorations

Voyage One describes the early phases of the *Evoking Belonging* research practice in three parts: Imaginative Explorations (methodology), Scoping (Research Practice) and, Insights and Reflections.

I began in 2012 by exploring my personal, family stories and big world narratives about migration. I looked at media articles, policies and literature from international development sector, UK/EU political policies and city level strategies addressing increasing levels of migration and urbanisation.

I analysed the discourse and issues, concluding that migration is most often presented as a threat to social cohesion, national identity and to building resilient sustainable cities.

The discourse was often fear inducing, alarmist and racist, with much focus on the legal and resource provision aspects of managing migration. There was little to no public discourse that invited explorations of migration as an opportunity for building diverse, culturally enriched, economically buoyant, inclusive cities.

In the development sphere, I found dominant themes of 'giving voice to the voiceless', which I believe reinforces the 'us and them' paradigm, the power dynamics of post-colonial 'development' and assumes that migrant Diaspora communities have little to no agency. I highlight here, the problematic UN terminology identifying policy actors and development practitioners as the 'duty bearers' and, communities/migrants as the 'beneficiaries'.

In a bid to shape new narratives of belonging, I set out to explore the research questions through stories and embodied experiences of migrants like my parents and I. This, as an act of visibility, healing and self-renewal, and potentially, enabling active participation towards creating sustainable cities from a space of new knowing.

Voyage One: Part 2

Developing the research practice

From 2012 to 2014, I developed the research practice through a scoping phase. The following section outlines the evolutions of the scoping phase. Scoping Phase I includes: a) Research Practice: Imaginative Voyaging and b) Key Texts informing the research practice.

Scoping Phase II outlines the One Bowl Research Residency and evolutions in the enquiry.

Voyage One: Part 2

Scoping Phase I

Research Practice: Imaginative Voyaging

I expanded explorations using *Imaginative Voyaging* with public groups, at academic group tutorial sessions. I created *Evoking Belonging: Christmas Family Session*, to explore *Imaginative Voyaging* with familial intimacy and a shared experience of migration.

The act unfolded with eight people through a welcome, description of the exploration, *Imaginative Voyaging*, expressive drawing, guided conversations and reflections. Using storytelling, the family group and I explored themes and cultural practices including: encounter with self and others, greetings, pride, resilience, new spaces, connections to home, building community, inclusion, exclusion, cultural folklore and culture in transition.

Insights, reflections & practice evolutions

Key insights: Family session

- ***Imaginative Voyaging*** was a potent process enabling new dimensions of understanding.
- **Sensing into belonging together:** 'interesting' and 'rare'
- **Morals and values:** My father shared value-laden stories stressing the importance of knowledge transfer to the younger generation.
- **Legacy & heritage:** 'important to remember family lineage'
- **Storytelling & narratives:** One participant shared how migration has separated he and his siblings. He felt 'lucky' because many in his transnational family did not have the opportunity to hear and know the 'value of those stories'.
- **Aesthetic modes:** One participant did not try to draw, saying he is not 'artistic'. Others reflected that they enjoyed the free form of the practice, which stimulated a sense of adventure, heightened by changing modes from sensing, thinking, to speaking and drawing.

- **Healing:** I observed evocation of a deep, unanticipated sense of healing. Increased connectedness and reconnaissance was evidenced by the comments and buoyant mood during and after the sharing of experiences.
- **Relevance of themes:** The participants expressed all the subject themes without prompting from me. Thus affirming the relevance and pertinence of the research questions.
- **Identity:** Some family members, who migrated to the UK over thirty years ago, felt belonging to a UK based Diaspora community, no longer identifying as a migrant.
- **Researcher-participant/leadership role:** The participants expected me as the person 'hosting' the process, interpret the images and connect the drawing process to the dialogue. I had not presented my role as an interpreter, rather emphasised collective dialogue and invited exchange of reflection of what was *felt* in the room. I witnessed expressions of mild anxiety, curiosity and disappointment when the interpretation did not materialise. This could be an expectation, which arises from conditioning around the role of facilitator and dynamics of power and authorship in such processes.
- ***Imaginative Voyaging as an aesthetic process:*** The participants interpreted the drawing as an artistic process, but did not identify the imaginative journeying process as an artistic aesthetic practice. This did not in any way mute the efficacy of the process. I believe that the 'non-artistic' participants not seeing the imaginative process as 'artistic' enabled fuller participation.

Using these insights, I eliminated drawing and expanded the somatic dimensions of the *Imaginative Voyaging* practice to include breath-work, voice and movement.

These insights illuminated three questions and directions in my work: 1) how connective aesthetics are understood and tangibly expressed, 2) focus on performance elements of participatory practice and 3) connecting culture and belonging.

Research Practice: Coming to Ubuntu

I continued with my daily auto-ethnographic enquiry through *Imaginative Voyaging*, journalling and poetry like *Tidal Waves* (Regisford D, 2019) until a powerful multi-sensory image of belonging resonantly connected to my embodied experience of *Ubuntu*. I recalled times of deep connection to and experiences of *Ubuntu* during the 15 years that I lived in South Africa from 1996 – 2012.

I began reading scholarly discourse from writers such as Michael Eze and Achille Mbembe (see: Key Texts Informing the Practice below) who both analyse the qualities of humanity, connection and co-creation in *Ubuntu*.

Building on the analysis from both writers and through other conversations I held with cultural custodians, I re-examined my memories and sensed into the lived experience once more through the *Imaginative Voyaging* process. I gleaned new perspective and interpreted the resonance I felt and intuitive lead of my own experiences of *Ubuntu* into a research exploration. I began to explore the quality of connection as an aesthetic creative strategy through the small act entitled, Calabash. This was a fragment of the One Bowl practice and focussed primarily on the quality of connection in participatory practice.

Small Act: Calabash

Taking note of the three research directions emerging from Scoping Phase I, I developed and shared a small act, Calabash. Here, I held a calabash filled with water, chanted, *Ubuntu*, drank the water and invited participants sitting in a circle, to pass the calabash around and (if inspired) drink from the calabash.

This act drew closer, the three evolving research directions by using a cultural practice (passing the calabash in a round) and artefact (calabash), with performative elements of voice and movement.

The African tradition of passing around a calabash is a form of welcome, which creates a unifying quality amongst guests and the hosts. The round, refers to the form of a circle, which is also a symbolic expression of unity, community and/or family.

In many African homes, the calabash is used as a practical bowl usually in the kitchen to store grain, milk and other produce. In traditional storytelling and folktales, the calabash is an iconic symbol, which also holds mystical qualities of healing and fecundity.

Reflections: Small Act Calabash

I employed creative strategies of performance (voice, action), connective aesthetics and vibrational energy transfer by repetitive chanting of the words: *'Ubuntu, without you, I do not exist'* to enliven the experience of *Ubuntu* amongst the participants. I did not explain *Ubuntu* in a rational way. I offered the words as a performance and saw how the vibrational qualities of my voice, combined with the action, created links to what I identify as a universally held deep knowing. The knowing that as human beings, we can sense that we are all connected. The understanding that we are all connected in our 'humanity' was shared as a reflection by participants on many occasions.

Understanding that the potential for an interpretation of the small act simply being a different, even exotic experience, I took time to ground the practice using the *Evoking Belonging* principles of slow, still and silent to enable a contemplative disposition amongst the participants.

Upon further reflection, I understood that the elements resonated on a primordial level, and combined to create a subconscious link to *Ubuntu*. The act of drinking from the calabash, though unfamiliar to most, evoked what many expressed as a feeling of connection between the participants. This worked on multiple levels.

I posit that this understanding is a 'way of knowing'. In this moment, I was experiencing the early signals of what I ultimately termed, the 'evocative mode' of enquiry. In this case, I was using the calabash as a visual reference. For those who understand the cultural significance of the calabash, the experience was even more evocative.

The words *Ubuntu: without you, I do not exist*, act as an audio-visual reference, which works on multi-dimensional levels to evoke an emotive response. In this way, I connected initial learnings gleaned from the early forms of the research practice and took them into the One Bowl research residency outlined in the following section.

I believe that without employing the creative strategies described above, and without using the words and performative offering of *Ubuntu*, the act, could have been interpreted as an exotic experience. However, the sum of the elements and the creative strategies employed enabled an experience, which many described as deeply moving.

From hereon in, I decided to use the qualities of *Ubuntu* as a creative strategy and lens for analysis in the research enquiry.

Working with *Ubuntu*

As I shared this small act in various spaces with different people, it became evident that *Ubuntu* can effectively ignite sensorial, physical and emotional shifts within a human being of any ethnic origin. Also, I saw how invisible materials like emotional phenomena changed with the energy vibrations of the chant – my own and that of others who chose to join me in a collective chant.

I chose not to explicitly describe what *Ubuntu* means to the participants. The idea was to shift the normative expectations of linear processes where the host can be seen to be setting the agenda and in some extreme cases imposing an agenda. By chanting the words *Ubuntu: Without You, I do Not Exist*, I explore different modes of enquiry to evoke multi-sensory images that were heard, felt and oftentimes seen.

This approach broadens the possibilities of what can occur for the participants, when they are in an immersive experience, which takes them out of cerebral default processing of information. This aligns with the notion of what it is to create a connective aesthetic practice. Where the aesthetic qualities of the practice enable shifts in perception, ways of seeing and potentially ways of being as a result.

After the small act, I would invite reflections from those willing to share. The participants often mentioned how they experienced my voice as a powerful energy, which created vibrational emotion deep within. Often people burst into tears, quite unexpectedly. Many also spoke of the joy of being able to contemplate in a space where there was less time pressure as is experienced with intensity in current day society.

At this time, I recognised the transformative potential of using the emerging research methods to begin to shape ways of seeing and sensing *Ubuntu* as a lens for exploration and, a way of knowing - an epistemology. I saw that working with *Ubuntu* was emerging as a critical part of the *Evocative Mode of Enquiry* in the *Evoking Belonging* practice. I decided to continue to deepen this exploration by working with *Ubuntu* consistently and observing the emerging phenomena.

To my mind, the qualities of *Ubuntu* strengthen the *Evoking Belonging* practice in that it evokes principles of humanity, connection and co-creation. All of these qualities are inextricably woven into the soul of the practice and, as I propose later in the research journey, of all humanity – not just African-Caribbean communities. This provides, what I believe is a much-needed hope for building inclusive societies.

Key Texts Informing the Research Practice

But First: Go within

As I recall the key literature that has informed this research practice, I will share a story.

In the first few weeks of study, my Director of Studies: Professor Emerita Shelley Sacks and I sat in a supervision session, I asked for guidance on books written about social sculpture. Prof Sacks gently said: 'not yet', and advised me to first spend some time dwelling in my inner knowings, reflecting, diving into the rich resource of knowledge I carried within and to 'sense into the being that wants to be born' in this research enquiry.

Seven years later, having completed the research enquiry, I believe this was one of the most valuable conversations shared and most precious advice I received during this journey. For, I came to the field of contemporary social sculpture captivated by stories, proverbs, folktales, indigenous knowledge, over 25 years of practice in the field of international development and the research impulse was burning bright. As an ancient African proverb (source unknown) states: 'when an elderly person who is wise and experienced passes away, a library has burned down'. This proverb refers to the canon of knowing carried within a person. The knowings of the elderly and wise undoubtedly include conversations, books, beliefs, philosophy and much more.

Prof. Sacks' advice inspired me to spend some time in appreciative enquiry into the canon of my own knowing. I listened, I turned within and deepened my contemplative practices. The world of social sculpture offered a space internally and externally to simply be still and tune into the impulse propelling me to undertake this research journey.

The primacy of story, indigenous knowledge, African philosophy, contemplative practice and the wealth of knowings, invisible materials carried in our inner being became some of the core themes informing the *Evoking Belonging* practice.

As is seen in the development of this 100% practice based research enquiry, I have developed the *Evoking Belonging* practice through an intuitive approach and working into the unknown. The practice advocates for the valourisation of our inner worlds as a place of rich substance offered as story and through the *Ubuntu Practices* translated into narratives of experience, which have the capacity to transform.

Key Texts

In keeping with the symbolism and deep meaning imbued in oral narratives, proverbs and mythology, I go immediately to the classic novel, *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe (1958). In this book, Achebe, a veteran Nigerian writer regales the reader with rich descriptions of an Igbo (Nigerian) man, and his family life. In this book we see the intricate weavings of cultural practices juxtaposed by the shifting tides of time, value systems, beliefs and attitudes, which we are all called to question. The fictional offering becomes ever more pertinent to this research study as we read insightfully into the impact of colonialism and the effect on traditions, culture and belonging.

This book offers perspicacious insights into the value of proverbs, storytelling, history making and how the contextual insights can be so eloquently and powerfully woven into our personal stories. Thus, providing an incisive account of the complexity of the human condition and the multiplicity of factors impacting the individual. As such, the dynamic relationship that I explore using the *Ubuntu* lens, of social connections between the individual and the collective, the us and them paradigms of power imbalances is pertinently woven into the fictional story offered by Achebe.

Ubuntu

It was through life experiences over 15 years of living in South Africa that I became familiar with the term *Ubuntu*. Through my lived experience, I held a certain knowing about *Ubuntu*. As I conducted my literature search to deepen my understanding of the philosophy, its origins, impulse and current day expression, I once again went to the oral form before finding excellent texts also in printed form.

As a primary literary search, I sat for many nights and days with Bra Dizu Plaatjies, a South African Ethnomusicologist who is also my artistic mentor. We spoke long into the night about *Ubuntu*, how it has changed in imaginary form (memory) and in contemporary cultural practice. Bra Dizu also spoke with a deep yearning for an awakening of *Ubuntu*. I spent time speaking to taxi drivers and cultural observers and grassroots community commentators about their life experiences and perspectives of *Ubuntu*. I regard these informal conversations and explorations as a form of primary data which I referenced as I developed the practice.

I also looked at other texts by leading African cultural scholars such as Micheal Eze and Achille Mbembe. Their perspectives provided critical thinking, which opened more questions for me to consider.

Eze (2010: 190-191) writes: *“A person is a person through other people strikes an affirmation of one’s humanity through recognition of an ‘other’ in his or her uniqueness and difference”... This idealism suggests to us that humanity is not embedded in my person solely as an individual; my humanity is co-substantively bestowed upon the other and me. Humanity is a quality we owe to each other. We create each other and need to sustain this otherness creation.*

Eze’s interpretation of *Ubuntu* highlights ‘humanity’, which I regard as essential for connection and a conceptual requisite to understanding co-creation. Through this research practice, I have identified these two qualities as essential cornerstones of inclusive, participatory practice. This enquiry explores how humane and imaginative qualities can enable inclusive and equitable approaches for engaging communities who are less heard and less seen in mainstream discourse and decision-making processes.

In particular, I interested to find the second aspect of *Ubuntu*, which is more often implied than explicitly expressed, that of co-creation. In the *Evoking Belonging* approach, I cite co-creation as a fundamental tenet of participatory practice. This was inspired by both the insights gleaned in the literature but also the evolutions in practice also illuminated the need for co-creation.

In a journal article entitled; ‘Democracy as Community of Life’, Mbembe (2020) speaks of South Africa’s nascent democracy constitution as a: *‘normative project (which was) enshrined in a utopian Constitution that attempts to establish a new relationship between law and society on the one hand and law and life on the other, while equating democracy and the political itself with the ethical and the just. This Constitution’s underlying principle is ubuntu or human mutuality. It promises a transcendence of the old politics of racial difference and an affirmation of a shared humanity’.*

The underlying principle of the *Evoke* theory and the *Evoking Belonging* practice is *Ubuntu*. Equally, as Mbembe’s quote illustrates, the research impulse I carry is: *‘a transcendence of the old politics of racial difference and an affirmation of a shared humanity.’*

I aspire to create a social sculpture practice, which enables social transformation. I craft the *Evoking Belonging* practice on the *Ubuntu* principles of connection and co-creation to enable possibilities for participatory governance and in this way, ‘dismantle old forms of politics’ designed to divide and rule as opposed to build community.

Mbembe continues to say: *‘this drive to “re-humanize” society and culture and to institutionalize a new political community that defines itself as an ethical community is nevertheless unfolding against various odds’.* My focus on *Ubuntu* echoes

Mbembe's thoughts about the re-humanisation of society, culture and polity on the basis of ethics. As reflected in the third research aim of this enquiry, I seek to: 'explore cultural and ethical priorities for equitable community engagement and participatory enquiry'. In the research practice, I interpret Mbembe's idea of institutionalising a new political community through the epistemology of *Ubuntu*. Thereby asserting connection and co-creation as a way of seeing.

The *Ubuntu: Town Hall* practice intentionally brings institutional representatives that have a stake in the community to the processes designed in the *Evoking Belonging* approach. This open space for exploration creates co-created opportunities for new questions arising for all participants. In this way, anchoring ethical perspectives and potentially institutionalising a social sculpture of a '*new political community*' that engages to co-create inclusive approaches to '*re-humanising*' society.

Social Sculpture

Another seminal text informing the *Evoking Belonging* practice is the *Atlas of the Poetic Continent* (Sacks S and Zumdick W, 2013). This gem of a book provided me with the literary backbone of this research enquiry. I have provided quotes and references that have informed the practice throughout this commentary. The insights gleaned have been supported by course materials and reading texts such as Rudolph Steiner's seminal works from the 1920s about the 12 Senses. Most instrumental is the text: *Giving and Ecological Citizenship*, (Sacks S, 2011). In this work, Sacks provides much substance for notions of reciprocity and community as she distils ideas of giving and citizenship. This text was sent to me before I had made up my mind to embark on the course. I was particularly interested in Sacks' perspectives on giving and gifting attention.

"This kind of giving - *this gifting of attention* – is a significant aspect of relational awareness and of the connective 'plastik' process or social sculpture. It depends on an enlivened activity of the psyche and spirit in which I come into relationship with whatever is seen, recognised or noticed. Understood like this, giving is an act that occurs through inner movement towards the other, aroused by the vivid inner activity of conscious imaginative work". (Sacks S,2011)

As described in the section entitled, the *Evoking Belonging* approach, I detail the research frameworks, methods and principles, many of which build on the ideas presented by Sacks in what for me is seminal text in the context of this research practice.

Arts Based Methods

The methodology of this practice is based on seven methods, some of which are inspired in Patricia Leavy's, *Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practice*. (2009). Additionally, *Narrative Enquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research* (Clandinin .D and Connelly F, 2000) and the primary book in the field of Cultural Mapping; *Cultural Mapping as Cultural Inquiry* (eds. Duxbury, N., Garret-Petts, W. and MacLennan, D., 2015) boosted my knowledge of arts based research methods. The insights gleaned complemented and affirmed my intuitive knowings about the topic matter.

Conferences and other information sources

Developing this research practice has included attending and participating in many conferences both in the UK and further afield. The opportunity to share my work to a critical audience always inspires deep thought and reflection.

I also spent much time reading policy documents linked to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Additionally, transformation agendas published by the United Nations, the United Nations Sustainable Development Network, the Green Charter and Agenda 21 for Culture.

Politics: Development, culture and transformation

I came to the field of social sculpture as a seasoned development practitioner working in communication and advocacy. As such, much of my reading prior and during the research practice focuses on the politics of development in Africa and the Diaspora, also culture, citizenship and transformation.

I was privileged to work with Prof. Emeritus Nabeel Hamdi as a second supervisor on this project. Two of his books, *The Spacemaker's Guide to Big Change* (Hamdi N, 2014) and *the Placemaker's Guide to Building Community* (Hamdi N, 2010) provide resonant ideas of grassroots, people-led social change. These inputs were also enhanced with many supervision sessions, where Prof Hamdi and I had the opportunity to cross the transdisciplinary terrain through explorations and many, many questions as new research vistas opened.

Other reading included; cultural geography, global citizenship and activism French philosopher/sociologist, Henry Lefebvre (2012). The next iteration of my practice linked Lefebvre's critical thinking about everyday practices and social production of space to his analysis of the '*right to the city*', and also, critical analyses of '*the commons*' (Bollier, D. and Helfrich, S., 2015)

The Contemplative Arts

The spiritual aspect of my work is underpinned by a personal devotional practice, which is not religious but universal in its expression. My natural leanings towards the esoteric realms of life were enhanced by discovery of Thomas Moore's *The Re-Enchantment of Everyday Life* (1996). Also by the same author, *Rituals of the Imagination* (1983) provided a poetic and poignant understanding of the word ritual. Ritual is a distinguishing characteristic of my practice, which is often observed, sensed and reflected back to me from participants.

Voyage One: Part 2

Scoping: Phase II: One Bowl Research Residency

Research Practice

In Scoping Phase II (2013 to 2014), I created a new practice, *One Bowl: Ubuntu Encounters* using insights from literature, evolving small acts and the *Evoking Belonging* 3C Participatory Performance Practice framework. The practice was presented in a research residency and, at 14 other events with a variety of participants.

I envisioned a social sculpture participatory practice, which represents a meeting place, where those who gather can establish social connections based on common experiences of migration.

The participants in this enquiry were specifically selected according to the social connections they shared with me as family and/or close friends who played a pivotal role in my life.

Using the methods of the *Evoking Belonging* approach, I intended to observe if and how the *Ubuntu Practices* could enable a sense of renewal by reviving the invisible substance of indigenous knowledge systems. By working with *Ubuntu*, a philosophy that carries deep meaning, I was interested in exploring how, the practices could serve as a catalyst, which enlivens, stirs the soul, revives hope and shifts perspective. In this way, creating space for all participants to potentially see themselves in new ways.

The following notes illuminate choices I made as I came to new understandings through the practice. I present Voyage One and Two of this reflective commentary as a chronological documentation of the milestones reached in and through the emerging research practice. The practitioner perspective here highlights the nuances of working with invisible materials and, the artistic dexterity needed to foster the evolution of the practice. ,

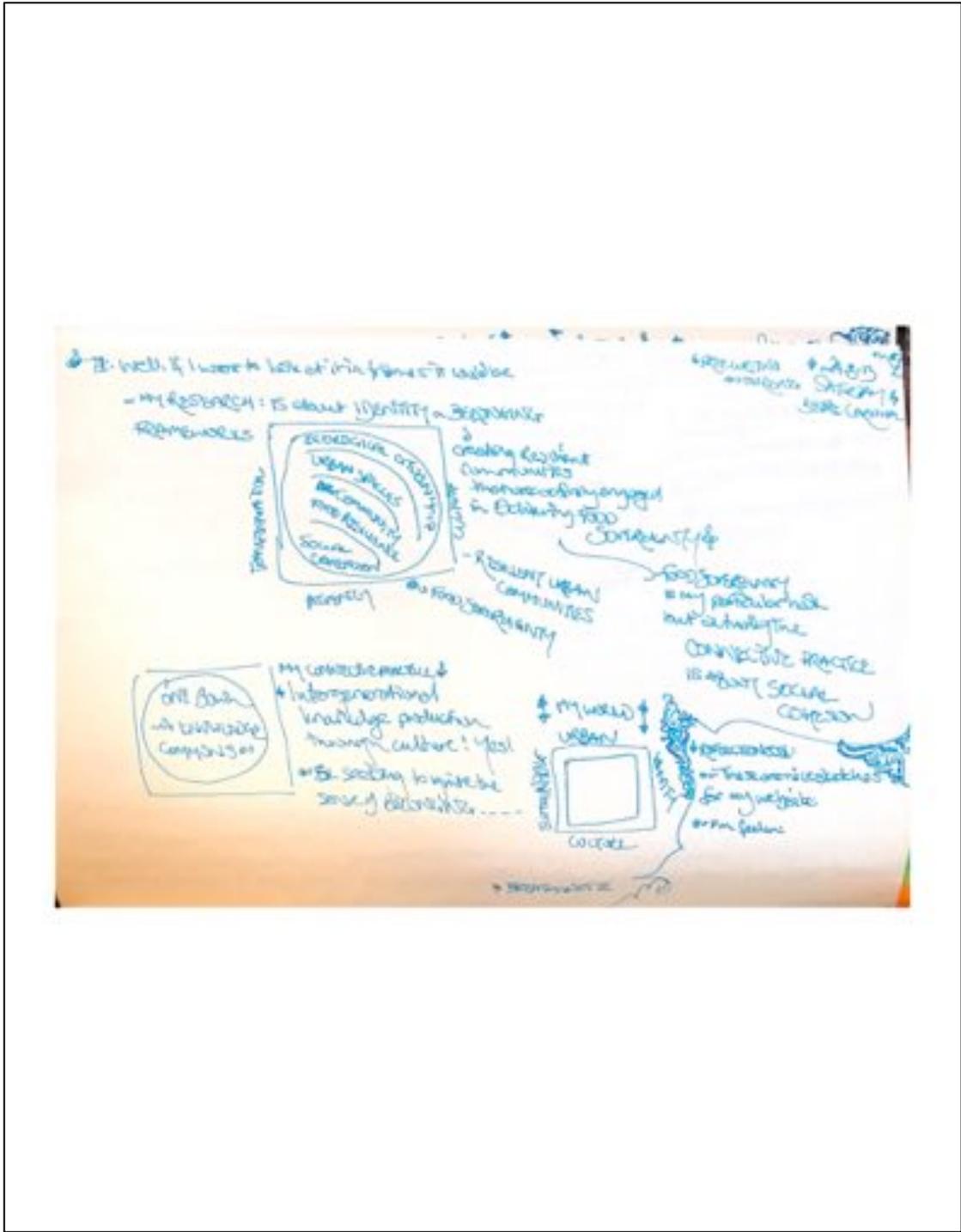
Additionally, I document the participant responses, conversations and observations but intentionally, in less detail. For in these works, I seek to provide intimate insight into the multiple levels a practitioner in the field of social sculpture works on at any given moment. Once this thesis is published, I envisage reversioning the content to publish training manuals and educational books for interested practitioners to train and develop similar practices within their respective fields.

Auto-ethnographic enquiry

Continuing with the *Imaginative Voyaging* practice, I now looked into embodied experiences of social practices, which create a commons – places of connection. I voyaged to my family settings in Senegal and various countries in West Africa – to the everyday act of eating together in one bowl. I saw that each time, eating this way, was an experience invisibly woven by threads of tradition, *Ubuntu* and unyielding commitment to belonging and a culture of community.

Ubuntu: Ethics and values

A core aspect of *Ubuntu*, speaks to the moral qualities of a person/humanity. I chose to work with *Ubuntu* to explore values: the moral and ethical fibres of the individual, communities and systems governing our dwelling places. These insights emerged as guiding principles for the *Evoking Belonging* approach.



Note Book Sketch
2013



One Bowl: Ubuntu Encounters Flier

Research Practice: The One Bowl Research Residency

In 2014, I hosted the *One Bowl Research Residency* in partnership with Fusion Arts Oxford. Over five days, various members of the public came along with targeted invitees as follows:

- Monday: Inner circle – academic colleagues
- Tuesday: Arts practitioners (public)
- Wednesday: Close friends/family members
- Thursday: Civil society
- Friday: Inner circle

The key objectives of the exploration included:

- Expressions of egalitarian space and participatory performance practice
- Alternative dialogue approaches/ multi-sensory narratives
- Understand phenomena of belonging
- To observe the practice works varying contexts, amongst different publics.
- Deepen insight into creating connections between inner and outer spaces inter-personally and with the materials

- To observe group dynamics viz. assumed power and leadership in relation to co-creation regarding my vacillating roles as researcher-practitioner-participant

The Research Themes

By this stage, the research themes frequently emerging include: encounter (with self and others), resonance, memory, evocation, reconnaissance and honour, culture in transition, adaptation and resilience, reflection and reflexive practices, indigenous ways of knowing through ideologies such as *Ubuntu* and transformative participatory performance practice.

Enactment

Each participant experiences a welcome ritual, and is invited to, in silence, share a meal from one large eating vessel seated on the floor. Afterwards, hand-sized, round clay discs (some inscribed with words, others blank) are passed around the circle. Participants are invited to receive and share the clay discs as an offering and provocation to act.

The gesture was designed as a creative strategy to provoke a response. In observing the gesture, some participants would wait for others to respond first, and then follow suit. The responses varied from gentle holding of the clay to some participants holding the clay and literally destroying its form. All responses were permissible, as the intention from my part was to observe how people respond to the 'prima materia' (the clay).

For example, the words scribed on the clay discs often evoked some inner movement of emotion, the cold sensation of the clay was to some a welcome dimension of connection. Generally, it was at this point that people became more vocal, and felt able to speak openly about their feelings. Through the words exchanged, I interpreted these responses as an expression of empathy, of deepening engagement with the work and a letting go of rational processing of emotion.

By coming to this heightened sense of awareness, the participants were now engaging sensorially, to many, this enabled a sense of freedom. I note enactment as a pivotal strategy to inspire an inner movement using connective aesthetic methods in the research practice.

Participant Responses to the act

At the end of the act, I invite participants to share reflections on their experiences. The following paragraphs illumine some of the responses from participants.

Thursday: Civil Society day

During the Research Residency there were some days that were open to the public. On the Thursday, a woman (name unknown) of Asian origin from a local community group joined the One Bowl act. She was passing and heard there was an event at the community centre. She did not have any information and had not received the invite. Arriving a few minutes into the start of the act, I could see a lively curiosity in her eyes. As she swayed in rhythm with the chants of *Ubuntu* that I offered, I was inspired to hear her start to sing along with me. Soon after, others joined in and the chants of *Ubuntu: Without You, I do not exist*, amplified in volume through the many voices of the participants seated on the ground.

At the end of the act, as I offered dates and nuts after the meal, the same woman who so gladly joined in the singing, went to her bag and took out some dates to offer to the circle. On offering her reflections, she picked up a clay disc and spoke of how the One Bowl experience took her home. She mentioned how the simple things in life are the most important. Sharing some religious texts, the woman mentioned that we come from earth and will return from the earth. She went on to say that the sequence of singing, eating, and then working with the clay reminded her of the primordial simplicity of nature and what connects us as human beings.

Working with Silence

One of the key *Evoking Belonging* strategies explored and developed through the multiple enactments of One Bowl is; *slow, still and silent*'. As outlined in the opening sections of this reflective commentary, this creative strategy is an effective way to create 'suitably strange' circumstances. This serves to jolt practitioners and the participant out of well worn habitual responses into a space where normality is temporarily suspended and, anything can happen.

On encountering the 'suitably strange' space of silence, Neil, an academic, was a participant in a smaller One Bowl act of three people. During the reflection and sharing, he mentioned how awareness of his eating habits were heightened during the silent eating process. He mentioned how uncomfortable it felt to feel so focussed on his eating habits. "I realised how fast I eat, I saw that you two were much slower. I also became aware of how much I was eating and immediately thought of greed. How, we eat without much attention most of the time".

The silence and deceleration of time, brought Neil closer to his own experience of consumption and he immediately began to think about his own relationship to food and its connection to bigger world issues.

Emotional Responses

During the Oxford Art Fair event, I held an afternoon session of the One Bowl enactment. I recall two women came with much curiosity to discover what the experience was all about. At the beginning, I welcomed them onto the mat to sit with me whilst I honoured their being. I did so by slowly washing their hands and, as I dried each hand, with deep compassion and gentility, one of the women literally burst into tears at first touch. She sobbed uncontrollably as I looked into her eyes and said: *'Ubuntu: Without you, I do not exist'*.

Through the tears, she whispered the saying back to me. I held her hands, wrapped in towels as she allowed her tears to flow. As the practitioner, I had decided that I speak as little as possible during the act to enable communication through gesture.

At the end of the act, on this occasion, I offered the hand-washing ritual once more. The same two women came to me. As I dried the hands of the woman who was earlier in tears, she thanked me and said; *"No-one has held me with such care and attention, or touched me, or dried my hands like that since I was a child. You've shown me how much I need it. Thank you"*.

These are a few examples of how participants responded. The aforementioned examples illustrate common themes that emerged as I shared the practice in a diverse range of places, contexts and amongst various demographic and ethnographic groups of people.

In the One Bowl, I work with the intention to create a 'provocation to act' and use the following creative design strategies to create this possibility without forcing or explicitly declaring this intention.

Research Practice: Connective Aesthetic Design Strategies

One Bowl is crafted using the 3C participatory performance practice framework, using concepts of communion/common-union, co-creation and connection.

Other strategies employed include:

- Three passage, durational, immersive experience
- Prima Materia elements: decorative, functional. Also symbolic African-Caribbean cultural artefacts representing my migrant journey to evoke aesthetic resonance and reflection about belonging
- Communion: to shift participants out of the 'everyday' through; direct eye contact, song, ceremonial hand-washing rituals, eating together in silence
- Contemplative space: silence, deceleration of time, rituals, in each passage, I explored communion in various ways. For example, direct eye contact, song, ceremonial hand-washing rituals, eating together in silence amongst enabled a sense of honouring, intimacy and connection.

Auto-ethnographic enquiry: Research practice & reflections

My inner work became primordial. In preparing to offer the One Bowl connective practice with utmost integrity and fidelity to form, it was important for me to, every day, revisit my purpose, intent and possibilities for evolution through, *Imaginative Voyaging*, meditation, breath-work, daily yoga practice and free writing journaling. I did this each morning before and every evening after the event.

- **Ritual:** I developed a sequence of acts, honed through previous one-off events and choreographed meditation, reflection, cooking, rolling clay as a critical preparatory research process. This opens aesthetic connections between the consciousness and devotion with which embody my role as performance enabler.
- **Personal touch:** a critical auto-ethnographic enquiry as a conscious ritual, ensuring my hands touched and made all *prima materia* (food, clay) to deeply connect with the materials and my imagination.
- **Clay talks:** While I prepared the clay discs, I intuitively arrived at new points of clarity and connection to the work. In in dialogue with the clay and always kept a journal next to me during the preparation.
- ***prima materia:*** understood as source materials of alchemical, therefore transformative nature.

These approaches formed auto-ethnographic multi-sensory narratives pertinent to my enquiry about the dynamics between the researcher-practitioner and the participant.

Research Residency: Practice Insights

- **Enlivenment:** five consecutive performance days created unprecedented *enlivenment* within me, sharpening my awareness of *enlivenment* within others. *Enlivenment* emerged as a significant transformative aspect of my social sculpture connective practice. I believe the most effective way to adequately fulfil the role of researcher-participant is to utilise the time prior and afterwards each enactment to analyse and synthesise the 'data' emerging.
- **Receiving & processing feedback:** I create energies enabling 'deep listening' and appreciation without feeling the need to defend the work. Typically, I first invite participants to share their experiences and then create space for dialogue.

- **Researcher-participant role:** A delicate balancing act between: 1) enabling optimum participatory performance 2) opening myself to flow of the connection, communion and co-creation occurring 3) maintaining awareness and contributing as a participant.
- **Cultural context & demographics:** I experienced how participants from 'communitarian' cultural backgrounds felt freer to create without fear of overshadowing the assumed line between researcher and participant. Thus illuminating the cultural nuances of the *Ubuntu* lens of enquiry.
- **Leadership:** Observation: many people are generally conditioned to look up to a leader, thus necessitating further exploration of 'servant leadership' and egalitarian spaces. Through scoping, I am able to identify when and how I could, without speaking, create more open spaces to enable participation of those who may feel more restrained.
- **Participatory performance practice:** Freedom - groups differed in their ability to feel 'free' and participate by, for example, singing with me, again looking to be guided or led. Freedom is a critical feature of co-creation in participatory practice, which I will continue to explore.

The One Bowl Journey

Between 2012 and 2015, I performed fifteen One Bowl research events as follows:

- i. **Social Sculpture Research Unit (SSRU) PhD Forum**; 8 participants, May 2013
- ii. **PhD Research Conference**, Oxford Brookes University (OBU), 10 participants, July 2013
- iii. **Voices and Images from the Banlieue**, Artist residency, Paris, France, 32 participants, Summer 2013, Hosted by Banlieue Network, Oxford Brookes University. My work was also featured in an exhibition in Paris and Oxford, and also in a chapter in the book: *Voices and Images from the Banlieue*.
- iv. **Oxford Art Circus**, Fusion Arts Centre, Oxford, 25 participants, September 2013
- v. **Global Citizenship as Embodied & Connective Practice Seminar**, OBU, 11 participants, March 2014
- vi. **One Bowl Research Residency**, Fusion Arts Centre, Oxford, May 2014 (One event each day, five events in total)
- vii. **Conference: Contemporary Caribbean Visual Culture**, Birmingham University, June 2014
- viii. **Fusion Arts Centre**: 2 commissioned public performances, one at the Clock Tower, Blackbird Leys for Elders group, August 2014
- ix. **Art of Nature**, Practice based artist gathering, Black Environmental Network, Birmingham, October 2014
- x. **TDE Faculty PhD Conference**, OBU, 15 participants, May 2015
- xi. **Conference: Cultural Mapping: Debating Spaces & Places**, Valetta, Malta, 17 participants, October 2015

The various One Bowl research events served to define methodology, practice frameworks, emerging principles and theory in my research practice.

Images from the One Bowl: Ubuntu Encounters Research Residency



One Bowl: Ubuntu Encounters
Preparation: My note book clay encounters
Venue: Fusion Arts, Oxford
May 2014



One Bowl: Ubuntu Encounters
Welcome Clay offerings
Venue: Fusion Arts, Oxford
May 2014



One Bowl: Ubuntu Encounters
Table Display of artefacts used
Venue: Fusion Arts, Oxford
May 2014



One Bowl: Ubuntu Encounters
The Welcome Table at entrance
Venue: Fusion Arts, Oxford
May 2014



One Bowl: Ubuntu Encounters
Layout of mats and cloths
Venue: Fusion Arts, Oxford
May 2014



One Bowl: Ubuntu Encounters
The Dialogue Circle space
Venue: Fusion Arts, Oxford
May 2014



One Bowl: Ubuntu Encounters
Participants: Day 2
Venue: Fusion Arts, Oxford
May 2014



One Bowl: Ubuntu Encounters
Participants: Community Activists –Day 5
Venue: Fusion Arts, Oxford
May 2014



One Bowl: Ubuntu Encounters
Participants response: Greed
Venue: Fusion Arts, Oxford
May 2014



One Bowl: Ubuntu Encounters
Participants response: blank disc open for participants
To write, mould, shape what they felt
Venue: Fusion Arts, Oxford
May 2014



One Bowl: Ubuntu Encounters
Participants response: blank disc open for participants
To write, mould, shape what they felt
Venue: Fusion Arts, Oxford
May 2014



One Bowl: Ubuntu Encounters
Participants response: Need
Venue: Fusion Arts, Oxford
May 2014



One Bowl: Ubuntu Encounters
Participants response: Multi-sensory narratives
Venue: Fusion Arts, Oxford
May 2014

Research Residency Reflections: Freedom and responsibility

Prior to this scoping phase, I held an idealist notion that by creating a free-flow space, all participants who had voluntarily decided to participate would freely engage. However, I saw that societal norms and cultural practices, which condition us to require a nominated leader sometimes, compromised people's ability to participate.

I align my approach to 'leadership' to the social sculpture notion of the researcher-participant being a 'responsible participant' (Sacks S, 2012) in the connective aesthetic practices we offer. In this way, I take responsibility for creating the space and within the practices, I use creative strategies such as 'still, slow and silent' to allow space and most critically, time for others sense that they too are free to move and speak freely. I interpret this learning as an important ethical consideration for both practitioner and co-research.

Image Gallery:

The following images show various One Bowl events to illustrate the development of the elements, presentation and the format of the practice.



One Bowl: Social Sculpture Research Unit
An early expression of the practice with colleagues
School of the Arts, Oxford Brookes University
2013



One Bowl: Global Citizenship as embodied and connective practice seminar
Oxford Brookes University
2014



One Bowl: Global Citizenship as embodied and connective practice seminar
Multi-sensory narratives from the participants
Oxford Brookes University
2014



One Bowl: Oxford Art Circus
Fusion Arts Centre
2014



One Bowl: Artist Residency and seminar
Voices and Images from the Banlieue
Paris, 2013

Voyage One: Part 2

Scoping: Phase III: Research Practice Insights

Chronological overview

In 2015, following the One Bowl Research Residency, I created a transdisciplinary research methodology culled from insights gained through on-going research exploration and development of social sculpture theories.

The *Evoking Belonging* research methodology is underpinned by a connective aesthetic approach, which incorporates reflexive, participatory and imaginative methods of telling, reflecting on and (re) authoring stories as narratives. In shaping practice for inclusive participatory development practice, Voyage One illustrates the chronological evolution and increasing primacy of auto-ethnographic methods in my practice.

With my growing research emphasis on embodied experience and experiential knowing, I included arts-based, collaborative, qualitative research methods and auto-ethnographic methods such as Narrative Enquiry, and Cultural Mapping. As outlined in the methodology section, I created new formulations of the established methods to include imaginative and sensorial dimensions to enable the three modes of enquiry as detailed in the *Evoke Theory*.

Inspired by the transformative potential of this approach, I connect the relational aspects of *Ubuntu* as an epistemology, with narrative enquiry practice, where participant and researcher tell and exchange auto-ethnographic narratives together. In this way, creating a story commons in terms of form, act and experience.

This connects to the participatory performance aspect of the enquiry and opens up possibilities for enabling an egalitarian practice form in which in 'no-one is outside' or 'left behind'. This occurs, by establishing a common-union (*communion*) for exploration and revelation of our attitudes, beliefs and values, which promotes transparency and accountability.

Re-Storying Migration

My principal interest in story is for excavation and exploration as well as revelation and renewal. As migrants journeying across borders, our stories inevitably form narrative aspects of our sense of belonging. Insights from the research practice to date led me at this point, to define 'belonging' as an inter-related and co-constituted relationship of *resonance*, *encounter* and *connection*. As such, I formulated these insights into the Evoking Belonging R.E.R research framework. The 3C Model of Participatory Performance Practice and

the R.E.R framework served as analytical and crafting tool designing the *Ubuntu Practices*. These are outlined in the Voyage Two.

Transparency and accountability is an important ethical issue in development practice. This multi-disciplinary methodology, offers pathways beyond interventions and othering approaches to participatory practice in sustainable city making.

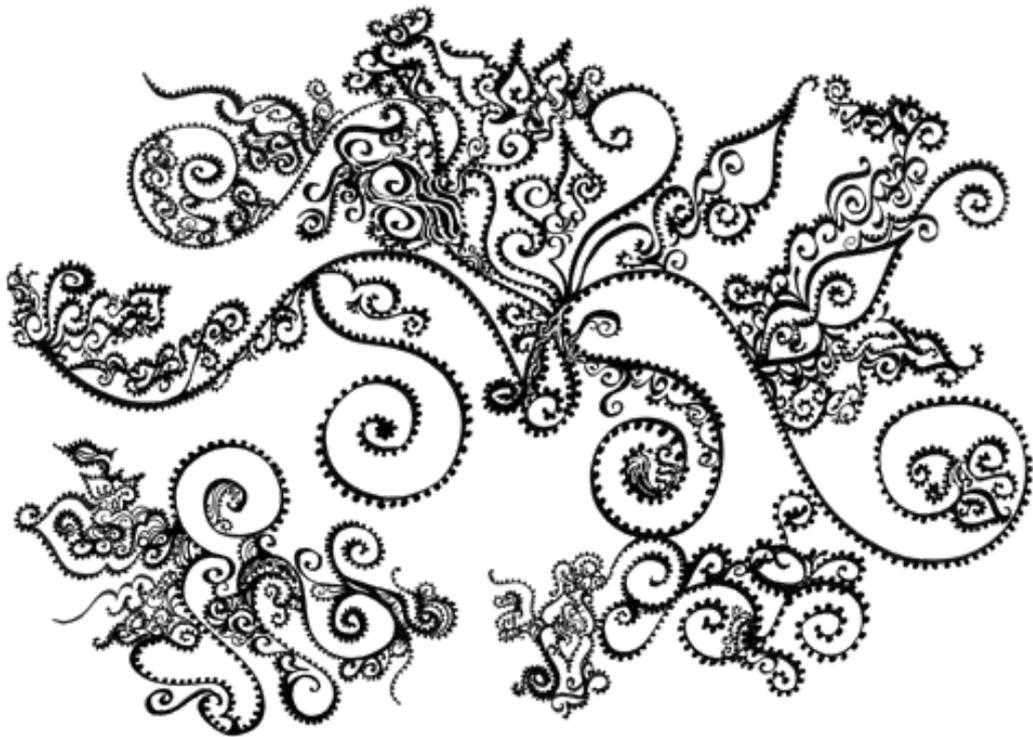
New ways of knowing

I focus on story to enable participation and enlivenment of indigenous ways of knowing (IKS). I present *Ubuntu* as a form of IKS to enable collaborative exploration of the relationship between different ways of seeing, being and doing in the world. This can be described, in short as 'culture'. I expand this notion further by placing *Ubuntu* as an epistemology – a way of seeing.

My research practice builds on dominant forms of propositional (conceptual) knowing, combines presentational (symbolised) knowing to emphasise experiential (felt) knowing. These distinctions are presented in the book, *Knowing Differently*. (eds. Liamputtong P, Rumbold J, 2008:2). Through the research practice, I sensed that there was an opportunity to explore evocation as a way of knowing. Using the three modes of enquiry outlined in the *Evoking Belonging* theory, I developed the concept of *evocative knowing* as a key facet of my contribution to new knowledge.

VOYAGE TWO

The Ubuntu Practices



Voyage Two: Part 1

The Ubuntu Practices

Developing the Evoking Belonging Approach

This chapter outlines the development phase of the research enquiry, unfolding between 2015-2017.

Building on the practice evolutions detailed in Voyage One, I created *The Ubuntu Practices*, the principle research practice emerging from this enquiry.

There are three processes comprising *The Ubuntu Practices: Ubuntu Conversations, Ubuntu Reflections* and, *The Ubuntu Town Hall Meeting*.

In Voyage Two, I detail the development of this social sculpture connective practice, now referenced as *The Evoking Belonging Approach*.

At the end of Voyage Two, I reflect on the final, an exhibition, which took place on 24, September 2019.

Framing the Ubuntu Research Practice

Through scoping and research practice, I explored ways to overcome the 'us & them' divisions of prevailing interventionist approaches in participatory development practice.

This PhD phase of research practice focuses on developing 'performance enabler' approaches to examine ways of fostering equitable participation and nurturing cultural inclusivity.

At this stage, I briefly explored cultural memes, described as '*an idea, behavior, or style that spreads from person to person within a culture*' (Dawkins 1976). I was interested in understanding how the concept of a meme may engender social inclusivity and renewal. Intuitively, I sensed the regenerative potential of working with the imagination and explored possibilities of working with *Ubuntu* as a cultural meme as well as a lens for enquiry. However, I chose to leave this direction after a while, as I felt that the scope was too wide vis-à-vis the research questions.

Imaginative Experience

The *Ubuntu* practices were developed using the research aims and questions as outlined in the Introduction of this document.

I explored three aspects of imaginative experience as a cultural mapping process including: 1) The role of cultural memes in embodied knowledge (narratives/lived experience) and our sense of belonging, 2) The evocation of inner movement (enlivenment) in the imaginative mode and, 3) The value of performance in the co-creation act.

In order to promote reflexivity, I used auto-ethnography, *Imaginative Narrative Enquiry* and other methods as a multi-modal methodology.

In the development of *The Ubuntu Practices*, I worked with close family and friends, who have shared significant chapters of my life, as participants and co-creators in this enquiry to '*connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social and political through research writing and story*'. (Ellis C, 2004: xix)

Designing the Ubuntu Research Practice

There are three processes comprising *The Ubuntu Practices*: 1) *Ubuntu Conversations*, 2) *Ubuntu Reflections* and, 3) *The Ubuntu Town Hall Meeting*.

Ubuntu Conversations are intimate, dialogic, imaginative explorations, usually enacted with one person in their home.

In *Ubuntu Reflections*, I bring the group together, in a space, outside of their 'habitat' to explore collectively. *The Ubuntu Town Hall Meeting* brings the participants and those in the outer sphere together.

This approach was inspired by the notion of re-storying: '*Narrative enquiry carries with it a sense of continuity: A search, a re-search...a searching again*'. (Eds: Clandinin D, Connelly F, 1994)

Guided by reading on the practice of narrative enquiry, and root methodologies in Social Sculpture, I also included reflective spaces, both within and between enactments of the practice. In this way, I revisited my research questions amidst a shifting ground of enquiry and knowing, in both the inner and outer fields of existence.

Design: Invitation

I used the *Evoking Belonging* principal guiding image as a core design element of an invitation pack for participant. The pack included: a personalised letter of invitation, participant notes, an Evoking Belonging postcard featuring a poetic photographic evocation of The Urban Indigene (Regisford D, 2019), and a hand-made *Ubuntu* book, which I created for the participants to note their reflections. In each book, I wrote a personalised message to the recipient. I incorporated as many hand made elements as possible to engender a sense of offering, honour and reconnaissance between the participant and I.

Motifs & Symbols in the *Ubuntu Practices*

The *Evoking Belonging* guiding image became an important visual reference during the *Ubuntu Practices*. I explored the relationship between cultural motifs, symbols and belonging. In addition to the invitation packs, I screen printed a series of flags, printed apparel and a handmade, screen printed photographic backdrop for the special photoshoot created to immortalise the moment in time when we embarked on this journey.



Notebook sketches :Explorations with the *Evoking Belonging* emblem
School of the Arts, Oxford Brookes University

2014



Making the *Ubuntu* books
Explorations with the *Evoking Belonging* emblem
School of the Arts, Oxford Brookes University
2014

Memorialising: Photoshoot

The photoshoot was inspired by the classic works of Malian photographer Seydou Keita who captured the zeitgeist of identity-centered post-colonial activist movements, in the early years of the post-colonial era. Keita's works evoke a strong sense of nostalgia and reverie within me. This inspired me to explore notions of identity through portrait photography as part of the *Ubuntu Conversations* and *Reflections* sessions. I ended every *Ubuntu Conversations* session with a stylised photo shoot and a sharing of Keita's works.



Seydou Keita Photography

Voyage Two: Part 2 The Research Practice

2:1 Ubuntu Conversations

Participants & locations

I completed ten *Ubuntu Conversations* sessions with 13 people in total. The details follow:

	Participants	Relationship	Location
1	Methlyn & Allan Regisford 11 June, 2016	Mother & father	Our family Home, Abingdon-on-Thames
2	Juliette Regisford 2 July, 2016	Sister	Juliette's home, London
3	Mascal & Laura Regisford 2 July, 2016	Uncle (paternal) & Aunt	Family home, London
4	Dawn Davidson 8 July, 2016	School friend	Dawn's home, Oxford
5	Janice & aunty Ludie 4 August, 2016	Close friend (teenage years) & her mother	Aunty Ludie's home, London
6	Teferi Ketawe Zewede 6 August, 2016	Close college friend	Our family Home, Abingdon-on-Thames
7	Nic Regisford 23 September, 2016	Brother	Our family Home, Abingdon-on-Thames
8	Mojisola Coker 22 March, 2017	Close friend (teenage years)	Moji's home, London
9	Natasha Regisford 23 March, 2017	Cousin	Our family Home, Abingdon-on-Thames
10	Michele McDowell 25 March, 2017	Close friend (teenage years)	Michele's home, London



Uncle Mascal Regisford
Ubuntu Conversations shoot
At home, London
2 July, 2016





Mum & Dad: Fitzallan & Methlyn Regisford
Ubuntu Conversations shoot
At home, Abingdon-on-Thames, 11 June, 2016



Sister: Juliette Regisford
Ubuntu Conversations shoot

At home, London
11 June, 2016



School friend: Dawn Davidson
Ubuntu Conversations shoot

At home, Oxfordshire, 8 July, 2016



Teenage friends: Auntie Ludie and Janice Sampson
Ubuntu Conversations shoot
At home, London
4 August, 201

Excerpts: The Ubuntu Conversations sessions

"I was the only boy in the family; they did not want me to die around them. I was not an economic migrant but I had to leave to survive. I developed a different type of view of life. Every day you wake up, you meet completely different people. You are with foreigners; you have to learn culture, but usually don't have time. So, the only thing is talk from your heart".

Teferi Ketawe Zewede

6, August 2016

*"I'm not even sure I expected it to go so far and so deep...
but it has been really inspiring.*

*Going back, has brought me forward, I think and ...I think it's amazing. Thank you very
much...*

*I am actually very surprised! Because...I think because it has gone a lot deeper than what we
normally discuss, it has just reminded me, as I said earlier, about the old me...and where I
need to be. And what really ignites, my passion and my soul!"*

Mojisola, London

22, March 2017

Ubuntu Conversations: Juliette Regisford (Sister)

Saturday, 2 July, 2016

The following transcript details an exchange between my younger sister, Juliette Regisford and I during the *Ubuntu Conversations* session, which took place at her home.

This illuminates how we explored a sensitive topic together, each feeling free and open to express our true feelings, in a way that rarely happens in our day-to-day lives whether alone together or at family gatherings. At the bottom of the transcript, I share insights gleaned and the significance for the *Evoking Belonging* research practice.

23:23 DR: [Dianne Regisford]

"What I have found really beautiful about talking with my siblings, with mum and dad, people who are close to me, is that it is helping me find pieces of myself – like a jigsaw pieces – putting myself together. I'm interested in your thoughts about that and how memory plays a role. You said earlier on that you don't think about memory much – growing up in Zambia because it was traumatic... what role does memory play for you in this idea of understanding yourself?"

JR [Juliette Regisford]

"Memory is hugely important, I do a lot of self reflection, trying to understand who I am. What I do from a career perspective is a lot of psychometric stuff. I did a lot of drama, which means you need to explore who you are because, you're standing there naked in front of an audience, so you need to be aware of who you are and what other's see.

I do a lot of coaching now – there is a technique I use called: *I see me, you see me* – you write down what I think about you... it's fascinating because people will see other things in you that you don't necessarily see".

DR Shall we do that?

JR: Write down how you see yourself, what you see in me.

DR: You were saying the purpose of this exercise is to ...

JR: ... "to give feedback to each other – you don't often talk to each other, until somebody dead and gaan (colloquialism). And, I know I'm guilty of it. I talk about how I feel to lots of other people, but not within the family unit".

[We both perform the reflection practice.]

DR: "Let's finish this self-reflection session. A couple of things are emerging for me. Where you were going in terms of how we relate as a family and how we don't often have these [talking] sessions. Part of what inspires me in this work is that it is an emotional excavation. I've always had this driving impulse to walk that path that dad has walked. So, when dad came up with the memory, he spoke about how he felt when he was leaving [for the UK], how his school teachers were there to send him off... I was there, living it and feeling it and I could feel my heart viscerally expand. You know? And my work, those memories and experiences are inspiring my work because it's so important that we do that. It doesn't seem to be a natural thing for us to sit down and remember things".

JR: "Yeah, ... [Talking] isn't a natural thing for us. It doesn't mean to say it doesn't happen and the thoughts are not there. It doesn't mean that talking doesn't happen and that we don't release it for ourselves. One of the things that frustrates me a little bit is, that's your journey. You want everybody to be open. Well... I don't. It doesn't make me feel comfortable. I don't want to do it. And, I'm at a point in my life where I don't do things that I don't want to do at all. I'm actually quite private.

DR: "So, what are you saying, you've noticed that we're different in that respect?"

JR: "We're very different, you want the world to join in with your journey".

DR: "I see it as our journey".

JR: "Exactly, I guess I'm suggesting to you is that you've got to think: 'where are other people?' – some people want to be on that journey in an overt way, and some people want to be on the journey but just leave them on the back seat".

42:00 DR: "Thank you for that reflection"

[The conversation goes on in more details for another ten minutes.]

Insights from the transcript

The elements and principles, which shape the *Ubuntu Conversations* practice combine to engender a 'safe space', where the participants are able to engage in conversations that are usually too volatile or difficult to speak about. This excerpt also shows how due to our close relationship, we were able to enter moments of fragility with honesty and empathy more intimately than perhaps if we were colleagues. This swift opening of deep feelings and fragility was a re-occurring scenario in the research practice. The significance of this quality of awakening empathy is linked to the concept of *enlivenment*, as it illumines how the practice is a way of creating space within for exploration in relation to others.

Reflections on the *Ubuntu Conversations* practice

The following reflections illustrate how the *Ubuntu Conversations* sessions sharpened my focus on the core principles of the *Evoking Belonging* approach. Through the various repetitions of the practice, I was able to make decisions about the location, the set up, the pace and rhythm of my part of the practice. The time in analysis and reflection afterwards enabled deeper insights into the research questions and an increasingly clearer understanding of how, each element enabled particular responses.

When crafting the *Ubuntu Reflections* practice, I noted reoccurring themes of knowing, enlivenment and cultural narratives amongst others. Below, I share further insights.

- **Knowing Differently:** Re-living the experience of each *Ubuntu Conversation* sessions during transcribing, I saw an emerging commonality occurring. I was able to see the participant, already known to me, in a new way.
- **Enlivenment:** Through evocation of memories and shared encounters we experience 'enlivenment'. The '*enlivened substance*' continued to grow, as a living being both within the participants and I, for days and weeks to follow.
- **Deep Listening:** I developed capacity for deep listening. With each session, I could sense an expansion within myself during enactment, a space where I could truly listen and develop empathy without wanting to respond immediately.
- **Communion:** I consciously prepared an inner space within myself to receive the other. Before asking the questions or responding in conversation, I intentionally create a brief pause for *communion*, the

ability to receive the other. In doing so, I created an imaginative space for *connection* and then, visceral space for *co-creation*.

- **Resonance** enables *connection* of one to the other created a unique quality of conversation often recognised by the participants. This led to *encounters*, which were deeply moving because in the *reconnaissance* of the other, through *Imaginative Voyaging*, we were able to honour each other by expressing sentiments, and long held views of the other that we had rarely had the opportunity to express in our day to day rhythms of life.
- **Reflective Distance** was necessary for me after *Ubuntu Conversations* encounter. Whilst a strong sense of belonging as family, a renewed feeling of reconnection and an evocation of healing was felt. I experienced the need for time to process and allow the enlivened substance within me to find a new anchoring.
- **Intuitive Conversations:** The *Imaginative Voyaging* process is an evocative way to stimulate conversations without a list of questions. Working intuitively with my impulses, the research themes emerge naturally.
- **Cultural narratives:** Following the '*identity and selfhood*' focus (*Ubuntu Research Axis*). I emphasised *Ubuntu*, to which the younger generation, mostly of Caribbean descent, responded positively with resonance as something they feel and innately know.

Research Practice: Next steps

The living being: The collective

As the *Ubuntu Conversations* unfold, I sensed it was important to continue to hew the imaginary, invisible materials not just in a one-to-one format, but also, as a collective. I felt a compelling need to gather the participants together as a family, as a community, as a living being, to create a bridge between the individual and the collective experience by physically seeing each other as participants and co-creators of an Ubuntu journey within the context of the Evoking Belonging enquiry. This became the *Ubuntu Reflections* process designed to:

- Engender deeper meaning and purpose of our revisited experiences through visceral connection between each other as participatory performance
- Continue the process of re-living personal experiences of migration in a collective way where we could 'bear witness' to each others' experience.
- Generate pathways where our collective story could be linked to broader socio-cultural and political issues connected to migration, culture and the imagination.

Voyage Two: Part 2 The Research Practice

2:2 Ubuntu Reflections

The Ubuntu Reflections event

The *Ubuntu Reflections* event, took place on Sunday, 14 January, 2018 from 11:30 – 15:00 at Headington Hill Hall, Oxford.

The location was selected for its pertinent historical background. On arrival, one participant said to me:

“I’m interested in your choice of venue, I read your notes and immediately, I said to myself – ‘that’s not my heritage’! But actually, I guess it is. The colonial aspects **are** a part of my heritage”.

Natasha Regisford, Participant

At each step in the research journey, I intentionally create opportunities to ignite sensibility and awareness of the broader issues engaged in this research enquiry.

Participation

Five of the *Ubuntu Conversations* participants were able to come to the *Ubuntu Reflections* session due to various reasons.

Participants

NAME	FAMILY CONNECTION
Allan and Methlyn Regisford	Mum and dad
Mascal and Laura Regisford	Aunt and uncle
Natasha Regisford	Cousin
Dianne Regisford	Daughter, niece, cousin (respectively)

Event Design

The *Ubuntu Reflections* event comprised three distinct sessions, aspects of which took place in different places at the venue.

The three sessions are entitled: 1) Footprints in the Sand, 2) One Bowl, and 3) From Where I Stand.

The sessions were developed to work in sequential order with transitions and short breaks in-between to enable energy shifts, space and time for reflection. I incorporated a series of small acts, some of which were developed during

the scoping phase of the research practice and some new acts into the event design.

Session One: Footprints in the Sand

This hour-long practice serves as a ceremonial opening to the event. It comprises three small acts:

- **Act one:** A poetry recital: *The Urban Indigene*
- **Act two:** Ancestral Roll call
- **Act three:** Gifting Attention – *Annals & Chronicles of Belonging*

Between acts two and three; I create a dialogue space for discussion. This includes: reflections on the evolutions of the *Evoking Belonging* research journey. The journey so far & the power of storytelling

Footprints in the Sand



Image one: Poetry recital: The Urban Indigene

Image two: Circle in the Round - Honouring the ancestral

Photography: Éliane Poney

Session Two: One Bowl

For session two, I revisit the participatory performance practice entitled, One Bowl, which I developed during the scoping phase of this research enquiry. My intention was to create a circle to engage a different mode of enquiry.

This expression of One Bowl featured fragments of the original full durational work. For the *Ubuntu Reflections* event, I included the welcome ceremony and the act of eating together in one bowl. This act is a creative strategy designed to shift focus from the individual experience to the communal space.



Hand washing ceremony: One Bowl
Participant: Uncle Mascal Regisford

Session Three: From Where I Stand

This session is designed to create more opportunity to explore the dynamic space between the individual and the collective. I define this space as the *Ubuntu*sphere: a transformative space that sits between the inner landscape of the imagination and at the same time, in the external landscapes we occupy.

In this session, we turn once more to purposeful dialogue, focussing on what *Ubuntu* means to we, both as individuals and as a collective.

To keep the inner substance moving, after the One Bowl session, I invite the participants to join me in the dialogue circle. We discuss notions of *Ubuntu* as an epistemology and, as this research proposes, as a culture - a way of seeing, being and doing. After up to 15 minutes of reflections and exchanges, I invite the participants to join me on a slow walk outside in the verdant grounds of Headington Hill House.

Slow walking practice

As we walk, I ask the participants to observe silence and to go within themselves as we walk and contemplate the question: 'What does *Ubuntu* mean to me?'

The decelerated walking practice, where we all follow each other in a line, works on a corporal level, which complements a thinking process.

During the walk, at random moments, when I sense deep resonance, I chant out loud: '*Ubuntu*, without you, I do not exist!'. This is to create a call and response storytelling ambiance, which, when in cadence with the decelerated steps, creates an inner opening and heightened awareness of our beings. This is an expression of a connective aesthetic practice.



Slow Walking Practice

Reflections in the round

Once the walk is complete, still in silence, the participants and I return to the dialogue circle.

I then invite the participants to join me a short breath-work practice to ground and centre the participants back into the dialogue circle. I then invite participants to share reflections on the walking practice and to elaborate on the various modes of reflection experienced during the day.

Closing ceremony: The family portrait shoot

This section of the event is a continuation of the cultural identity image making research strand of the enquiry, which began in the *Ubuntu Conversations* phase.

This section is included as a celebratory closing ceremony. Using the same photographic backdrop, screen printed with the *Evoking Belonging* guiding image, as used in the *Ubuntu Conversations* practice.

The Ubuntu Reflections event

Reflections, insights and observations

Overall, the event was a success and the objectives were achieved. The research impulse to bring the collective together to act as ‘witness and spring board’ was an accurate and important step. After having enacted the *Ubuntu Reflections* sessions, I believe it is still important to gather the collective once more in larger numbers for the holistic closing of the circle. This came in the form of the *Ubuntu Town Hall* practice.

Time allocation

For future practice, I will design the two phases of the *Ubuntu* practices with a shorter time span between the events. I believe that the enlivened substance that was ignited during the *Ubuntu Conversations* would become even more potent and potentially revealing if the two events were scheduled in closer time proximity.

Thoughts on Ubuntu

A few mentioned how, in preparation for the event, they read through the invitation pack given to them for the *Ubuntu Conversations* event to remind themselves and re-ignite their sensibility to all the possibilities that *Ubuntu* offers beyond a fixed notion or ideology.

Participation

For future experimentation, I will shape the *Ubuntu Reflections* practices as a three-step process, which organically blossoms according to the group dynamics and emerging insights.

Insights gleaned from this enquiry illustrate the potential for deeper level engagement through the Ubuntu Practices by incrementally expanding the number of participants. This process could begin by working with individuals, then in smaller groups before forming with the entire collective group. The practice enables trust, familiarity with the terrain, and an opening of our organs of perception leading to a deepening of our voyaging capacities.

Invitation process

I chose to experiment with an approach, which was different to the previously envisaged process as described earlier in this section. I decided not to create a new invitation for this event. Instead, I asked the participants to review the contents of the invitation pack offered to them for the *Ubuntu Conversations* event. I also invited them to continue placing memoirs, anecdotes and the like in their *Ubuntu* books.

The Ubuntu Books

The hand-made Ubuntu books that were offered to participants were much appreciated as aesthetic objects and memoirs of the process. However, they were hardly used during the time between the *Ubuntu Conversations* and the *Ubuntu Reflections* session.

The *Ubuntu* book was created to serve a variety of purposes including: a memory space, documenting our narratives and journalling in an imaginative dwelling space where participants could 'map' their thoughts, and images arising in-between the *Ubuntu* events.

Additionally, the *Ubuntu* book was designed to be a source of raw primary data, which could be used for analysis, and the creation of a form of cultural mapping for archiving. I decided to use the book as part of the *Ubuntu Reflections* event and in this way, capture some of the 'enlivened substance' that was emerging. Going forward, this approach could work equally well in the *Ubuntu Conversations* process.

Discussion: Reflections on the Evoking Belonging research journey so far & the power of storytelling

Dialogic mode

As researcher-practitioner, through this practice, I have seen how it has become increasingly important to nurture my own capacity to manage dialogue processes in a way that I too can fully participate, whilst also being responsible for ensuring the evolution of the process.

This insight reveals how it is possible to develop ‘new organs of perception’, through dialogic processes, which evoke a particular quality – that of enlivenment, which emerges through the practice. This emergent capacity is co-created and co-constituted through the collective and in turn, illuminates how *Ubuntu* can be considered as a process of co-creation towards a cultural practice.

ONE BOWL

Heightened awareness

As described in the scoping section of this reflective commentary, reflections of One Bowl illustrate how the combination of the welcome ceremony and the chanting of *Ubuntu*, is a powerful evocation. This alchemic process of eating with our bare hands whilst seated in a circle has been seen to enhance receptivity for personal interpretations of how *Ubuntu* can be experienced. All participants experienced an elevation to a heightened sense of awareness and connectivity.

Once all participants were seated around the bowl, we began eating with our hands and sharing anecdotes through naturally occurring conversations.

“When I was growing up, I lived with my grandparents and this was the way we ate – all together around one bowl. We also used our hands to eat. So, you see, this is an African way to eat, but also exists in the Caribbean.”

Allan Regisford, Participant

Ubuntu Reflections: Session two: One Bowl

Closing reflections: The Ubuntu Practices

The event illustrated the potency of connective aesthetics in the *Evoking Belonging* practice within a group setting and, enabled evolution of the practice.

Voyage Two: Part 2 The Research Practice

2:3 Ubuntu Town Hall Event

The Ubuntu Town Hall Event

The *Evoking Belonging* approach comprises three practices, which awaken a sense of civic enlivenment. The *Ubuntu Town Hall Event* is the third process of the *Ubuntu Practices*.

It is designed as an opportunity to bring together participants who have already undergone the *Ubuntu Conversations* and *Ubuntu Reflections* processes to meet with stakeholders in local government, community leaders representing grassroots organisations and other civil society bodies.

By participating in the first two practices, it is envisaged that those who come to the *Ubuntu Town Hall Meeting* are tacitly aware of the issues underpinning their narratives of migration and belonging. In this heightened state of awareness, those who have shared and reconstructed their narratives of migration and belonging are, in theory, better prepared to engage in participatory governance process.

Typically, local governments have used the 'Town Hall meeting' as a community consultation practice. I choose the Town Hall, the seat of city governance as a place in which we gather to bring to light issues affecting grassroots communities.

This *Ubuntu Town Hall* practice is in essence an *UbuntuSphere* created to engender a participatory approach to local governance through dialogue and exchange.

The Research Practice Event

I created one *Ubuntu Town Hall* event.

It was held on October 2, 2019 at the Oxford Town Hall in the Council Chambers.

The event was presented as an platform to discuss : **Migration: an opportunity for cultural transformation towards *Ecological Citizenship*.**

I invited policy actors, activists, Diaspora communities and civil society bodies. A total of 15 people attended the event, with over ten different African countries and three Caribbean Islands represented.

The Invitation was circulated electronically through networks and reads as follows:

Evoking Belonging: Migration, Culture and Ecological Citizenship For Sustainable Cities

The world is experiencing unprecedented rates of migration and urbanisation.

Evoking Belonging is a connective social sculpture practice proposing new strategies for meaningful engagement and participatory governance practice between policy makers and civil society around issues of migration and social inclusion.

Developed as PhD research by international cultural advocacy and development strategist, Dianne Regisford; *Evoking Belonging* is a qualitative research practice, which creates tangible and intangible spaces for civic enlivenment through dialogue, exploration and deep level, meaningful engagement. Additionally, the practice illuminates cultural perspectives and ethical priorities for stakeholders in sustainable city making.

Evoking Belonging addresses issues specific to sustainable development goals 11 and 16 in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, specifically:

- **Goal 11:** *'Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable'*
- **Goal 16:** *'Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels'*.

Understanding how culture, the fourth dimension of sustainable development, can play a role in nurturing societies, which are just, equitable and inclusive is a critical opportunity to build sustainable cities.

Working with the African philosophy of *Ubuntu* as a lens for exploration and enquiry, *Evoking Belonging* invites us to re-consider how we sense of belonging. Using imaginative, ARTivist approaches; the practice offers pathways to render visible the invisible images, beliefs, attitudes and values we hold about migration, culture and social inclusion.

It is envisaged that this research will also disrupt mainstream perspectives about migration where grand narratives often position Africans as illegal migrants and Africa as an impoverished, war-torn continent in need of international aid and development. Whilst aspects of this discourse may be true, this research practice asserts the African philosophy and living practice of *Ubuntu* as a regenerative, positive, cultural force for change in migration and social inclusion in advancing the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

The Event Venue

The Council Chambers at the Town Hall provided the perfect ideological backdrop in which to hold this event. Whilst logistically, it was not an easy venue to work with due to its fixed bench structures that lined the room. Nonetheless, I believe the symbolic value of creating an *UbuntuSphere* to look at migration and belonging in the shadow of the Mayoral presiding chair in a room decorated with oil paintings of the former Lord Mayors and other high authorities of Oxford, formed an ideological tension that would not be achieved if the event was held in a local community hall.

The vision I intended to communicate is that the notion that in order to deepen democratic ideals, spaces of governance such as the Oxford Town Hall should be accessible for all interested in civic engagement. I created a space in the centre and gathered all attendees in a circle.

The Event Programme

I began by welcoming all and in story telling mode, explained the intention and evolution of the *Evoking Belonging* research practice to date.

As is typical when opening an *UbuntuSphere*, I offered a short version of the *Imaginative Voyaging* practice with a focus on what belonging feels like for all gathered. People were then invited to share their experiences of the *Imaginative Voyaging* journey.

The Dialogue sessions

I presented the ideas behind the *Ubuntu Research Axis* and shared information about how this illustration captures the core research strands of this enquiry.

I then invited the participants to play their role as co-researchers in discussing what the Axis means for them in their everyday reality. I presented the proposition: **Migration: an opportunity for cultural transformation towards Ecological Citizenship** as a focus for discussion.

We then all split up into four groups. I asked for volunteers to act as hosts for the discussions. Some notes of their discussions follow over the next few pages.

Reflections

The discussions were heated and the inputs were rich, illustrating the diversity of experience, opinion and perspective that gathered in the room.

Many asked for more time and commented that this kind of process was the first of its kind in their experience. There were many calls for more time and also for more events of this nature.

Through this event, I gleaned many insights, which affirmed the need for such a practice. I was also able to see how I could unfold the event over a few hours, a full day or even as a series of events to get to deep level enquiry.

With extended time, I also see how I could integrate more of the methods shared in the other two *Ubuntu Practices* to deepen the process for revelation and transformation.

Group 1: Participant Reflections: Ubuntu Research Axis

Social groups always have a tradition. These migrating in may not know the traditions or may challenge them.

~~The~~ The UK has a class system. Many migrants do not see how it works. Should we try to ignore class? The class system is a barrier.

Oxford has a huge gap between rich and class and cultural groups.

Migrants ~~are~~ tend to 'join the marginalised groups'.

The town class tends to be hostile to migrants because they feel threatened.

Black people in the UK have no clear identity in the way that African Americans do.

Some people in Oxford are institutionally racist because they have limited education & limited travel.

People in power are not willing to challenge lack of education.

Group 3: Participant Reflections: Ubuntu Research Axis

Identity and Self-hood

"When we are born, we are all migrants."

Circumstances change, but we are all born equal.

Migration is an opportunity.
We have gifts as migrants - we see from a unique perspective. We can connect easily between experiences and peoples! Our life experience is an asset and an advantage.

Intersections with classism.

Challenging ingrained societal power structures.

Education - advantage / disadvantage
↳ shapes our identity?

"Retune our minds."

Group 4: Participant Reflections: Ubuntu Research Axis

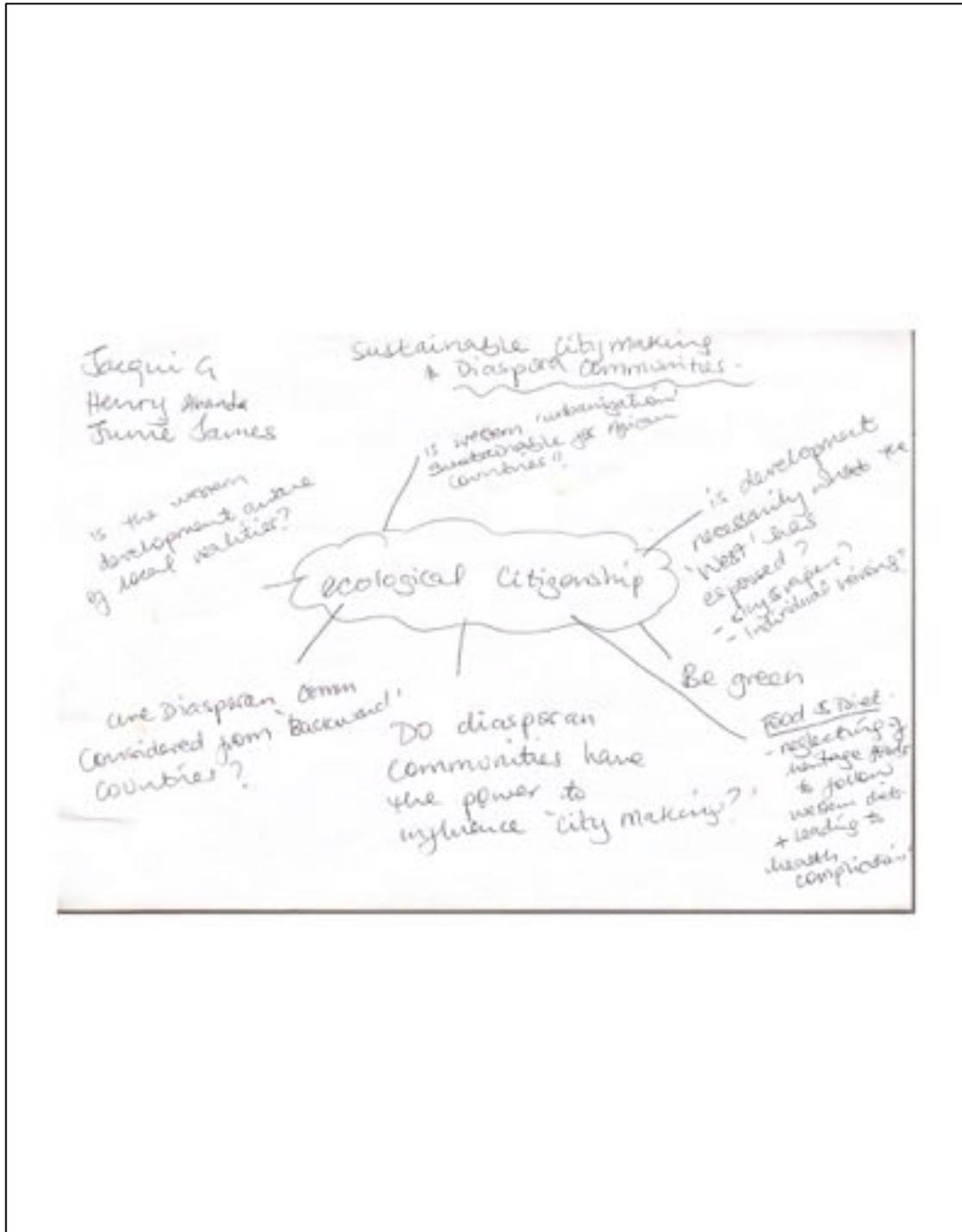


Image Gallery

Ubuntu Town Hall Meeting, Oxford Town Hall, Oxford City, 2 July, 2018



The Ubuntu Axis: Dialogues
Ubuntu Town Hall Meeting
Oxford Town Hall



The Ubuntu Axis: Dialogues
Ubuntu Town Hall Meeting
Oxford Town Hall



The Ubuntu Axis: Dialogues
Ubuntu Town Hall Meeting
Oxford Town Hall



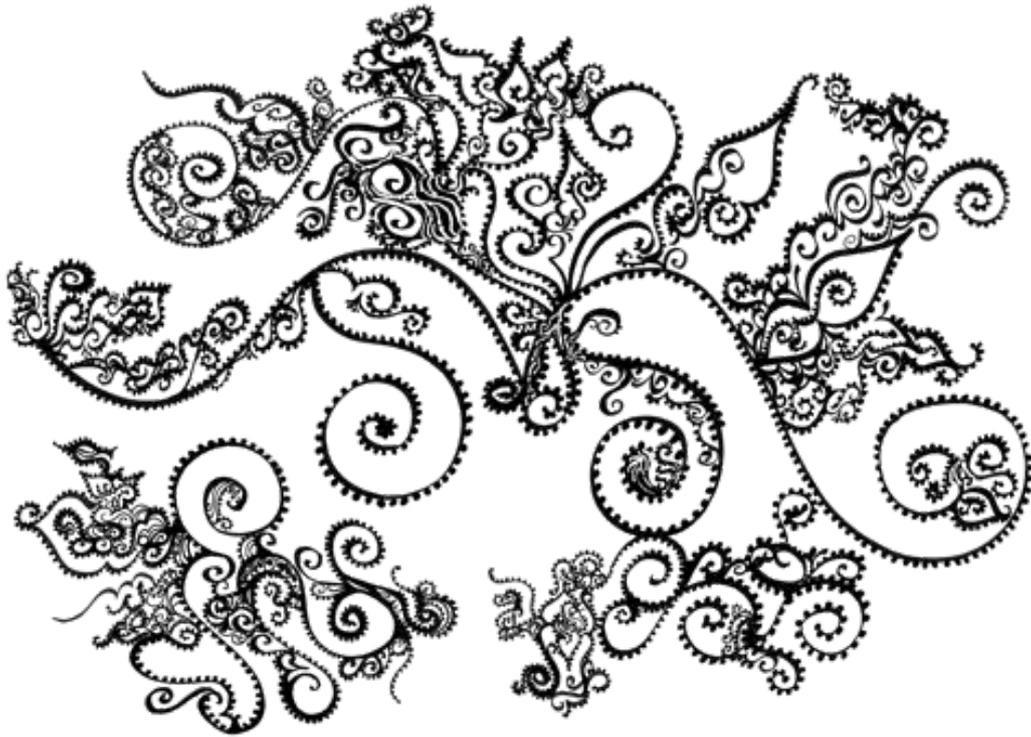
The Ubuntu Calabash
Ubuntu Town Hall Meeting
Oxford Town Hall



Mayoral Seat: Visioning participatory governance
Ubuntu Town Hall Meeting
Oxford Town Hall

VOYAGE THREE

The Evoking Belonging Approach: Evolving Understandings



Evolving Understandings

In *Voyage Three*, I revisit the research questions and review the significance of the *Ubuntu* agenda by highlighting perspective shifts emerging through insights gained in the research practice. This section illustrates evolving insights, reflection on and understanding of the research questions explored in this practice-based research.

I reference the *Ubuntu Research Axis*, presented in the Introduction to guide the following outline of evolutions and insights. These are clustered into core themes emerging from the research routes. The insights unfolding through the research practice provide direction and future possibilities for enlivening *Ubuntu* as a form of Social Sculpture.

Evolutions & Insights

Auto-ethnographic enquiry

In this enquiry, I witness myself emerging as a social sculpture researcher/practitioner and auto-ethnographer now offering a new practice to the field of participatory development practice. I also see myself as a migrant, ARTivist and cultural advocacy interlocutor.

By encompassing all these roles, I am afforded a position of deep insight, privilege and potential advantage as I am able to experience the issues from both sides.

I have had to be mindful to cultivate 'connective distance' during the course of this enquiry. At times, the issues explored are so close to home that the inherent and often invisible traumas associated with migration and displacement would emerge during reflection time and also in the midst of practice.

In what began as a research impulse, to find ways to valorise and work transformatively with stories from those less heard, became a personal mission. For, as I sat in the *Ubuntu Practices*, I came into contact with my own experiential knowing; I could sense the evocation in the story in the round.

When my father spoke, I could feel the flanking of history, and the protection of being in community, also: the aspiration and possibilities arising as thought and perspective shifted. When people who have experienced similar life migrations expressed views of culture and belonging that were vastly different to others, we all felt seen and heard.

By embodying the conceptual space of *The Urban Indigene*, it was evident that we together, as co-creators and co-researchers were able to access our experiential knowing. From this perspective, our 'stories', now seen and heartfully heard, become transformative narratives, thus, nurturing the capacity to engage the complexities, contradictions and uncertainties confronting us.

Migration and Displacement/Identity and Selfhood

To the Diaspora community, I ask: *'when will we no longer see ourselves as migrants? When and how will we feel as if we belong? How can we transcend notions of a grasping a 'sense of belonging' and, work with those that govern processes and systems affecting our lives to assume our place'?*

It was evident that those of the older generations still held a notion of home as the place where they were born. The younger generations identify with home and some, like myself, work consistently to cultivate affinity and familiarity with the geographical space of our foreparents. In this way, we find some footsteps of belonging in the world.

Overall, I gleaned that the complexity of identity and selfhood is an important space for further exploration. Belonging is a difficult concept to grasp. Yet, as stories were shared, the expressions of cultural practices, which give meaning to the notion of belonging were emotively crystallised. The complexities arose when the experiences in the outer sphere were examined.

In creating the *Ubuntu Agenda*, I intentionally planted seeds for an activist research process. It was evident to me that this perspective was not shared by all the co-researchers, some wary of shaking the status quo.

Whilst the invitation to share our stories was appealing, the prospect of actively engaging in processes that engaged policy actors and the like, was less enthusiastically received. This is likely due to high levels of mistrust of authority that exists amongst migrant communities.

I propose that, over time, from a place of enlivenment, we could come to a place where we, in our diverse spheres of life and philosophical orientation, could find ourselves in an *UbuntuSphere*. And, in this way, co-create a practice of 'belonging'. A practice, which affirms our diverse heritage, examines our relationship between our migration ancestry and the Diaspora spaces in which we dwell.

I believe, it is the city, with its vibrant diversity that can hold and nurture new connective cultures asserting the: *'emancipatory spirit of Diaspora heterogeneity'* proposed in Research Route V.

In the Conclusion section, I share perspectives on future explorations regarding ecological citizenship as an alternative to dominant ideas of citizenship, belonging and participatory governance.

Diaspora Communities and Sustainable Cities

The *Ubuntu Practices* stand as the principle exploration process looking at Research Aim: Two seeks to illuminate the transformative relationship between belonging, experiential knowing and civic enlivenment, amongst African-Caribbean diaspora communities in the UK. The related question is: *'How can I work with embodied migration experiences of African-Caribbean diaspora communities in the UK to evoke a sense of belonging, agency and civic enlivenment?'*

The experiences recounted and the issues raised in relation to these topics were explored in a more focussed way detail at the *Ubuntu Town Hall* meeting. The diverse group of practitioners, activists, artists and civil society that gathered examined the *Ubuntu Research Axis* through dialogue and storytelling. Their notes illustrate questions of visibility for Diaspora communities and a general disconnect from the notion of a consolidated Diaspora community effort to participate in the co-creation of a sustainable city.

In regard to collaboration, the participants shared that this event was a rare opportunity to gather in this way to think together about the questions and implications presented in the *Ubuntu Research Agenda*.

My reflections lead me to understand that, potentially there are cultural barriers, which minimise the impact of messaging, activism and advocacy about sustainability issues amongst migrant communities. For most in the group, sustainability issues were understood on a general level, but not actively engaged with. This gap presents an opportunity for cultural enquiry, which examines belonging and activist uptake in relation to sustainability issues.

Participatory development practice

Research Aim: Three explores cultural and ethical priorities for equitable community engagement and participatory enquiry amongst African-Caribbean diaspora communities. The question linked to this aim asks: *'How can this social sculpture connective aesthetics practice, enable equitable approaches to inclusive community engagement and participatory enquiry?'*

The research practice seeks to engender pathways towards voice, participation and representation. The enquiry reveals the need for a re-imagining of the role of government and civil society from both the practitioner and migrant perspective. At the *Ubuntu Town Hall Meeting*, these, ethical perspectives and beliefs were considered and discussed, mostly from a prevailing binary, dualistic viewpoint of the world.

Whilst the notion of participation and egalitarian space is well understood in theory, most responded that co-creation is a rare reality in practice.

This was not surprising. I found questions of ethics and responsibility were sensorially explored by sharing the philosophy of *Ubuntu*, through dialogue and a performance (small act) drawn from the *One Bowl* practice. In this way, I successfully inspired the notion of collaborative research amongst those gathered as they sensed into the chant: *Ubuntu, Without you, I do not exist*'.

This lays a firm foundation for a longer durational practice of perhaps one to three days, where together, we the policy actors, cultural animators and civil society bodies representing less heard and less visible members of society can consider:

'What role is envisioned for migrants in sustainable city making? Are migrants viewed as a problem or an opportunity? Where are migrants in the development conundrum as we, practitioners, work with increasing urgency, to tackle issues of social cohesion, inclusivity, resilience and civic engagement in sustainable city making?'

Ubuntu as a cultural lens for enquiry

The proposition of *Ubuntu* and its meaning was embraced by all the participants as some form of experiential knowing, even if by another word. The knowing, the sense of deep understanding of what constitutes *Ubuntu* was visibly awakened with the co-researchers at all stages of the enquiry. This was true for the co-researchers in all the *Ubuntu* research practices and, also in the *One Bowl* research residency.

I developed aspects of the *Ubuntu Practices* by layering the concept of the *'Land of Interiority'* with my formulation of the cultural imaginary.

This multi-layered formulation enabled exploration into questions of how to work with *Ubuntu* as a lens for cultural enquiry. And, whether there is a difference if I work with *Ubuntu* as a cultural lens for enquiry?

I assert that *Ubuntu* is intrinsically cultural and, the former emphasises the intent and objective of the enquiry as one of cultural orientation, sensibility and excavation. I explored both perspectives in the research practice and believe that both perspectives hold merit. I conclude that this is essentially a matter of semantics.

As such, going forward, I have developed strategies, which enable the use of *Ubuntu* either as a lens for cultural enquiry with groups of any origin. How culture is understood is the key issue as is outlined in the next section.

Culture

Exploring Culture, Belonging and Transformation

In *Voyage Two*, I illustrate how, I developed aspects of the *Ubuntu Practices* by layering the concept of the '*Land of Interiority*' with my formulation of the cultural imaginary.

This multi-layered formulation enabled exploration into ideas of how culture is understood. I saw that working with *Ubuntu* as a lens for cultural enquiry created powerful resonance for those who identified with and knew *Ubuntu*. Creating resonance is a powerful foundation to unfolding the *Evoking Belonging* approach.

Given the previous insights highlighting the cultural barriers that can exist in communicating the messaging of sustainable development, I saw that the forms of knowing awakened by just an utterance or a chant of *Ubuntu: Without you, I do not exist*, give rise to a palpable sense of belonging. This in turn, makes the invisible structure of place, visible.

As such, in transcending approaches, which use culture as a 'tool for development', this enquiry reveals ways in which we can move towards transformative practice, which highlight the emergent understanding that: belonging is a co-created cultural practice. This is achieved through the application and practice of the Southern African philosophy of *Ubuntu*.

Culture: Embodied Knowledge and Experiential Knowing.

I chose to look at migration and displacement to understand more deeply how cultural practices and traditions shift as we, as migrants cross borders. From an auto-ethnographic perspective, I have witnessed and experienced the contradictory, often dismembering process of adaptation to new environments.

Research Aim: One is to work with the philosophical concept of *Ubuntu* as a lens for enquiry in connective and imaginative social sculpture practice. The related research question asks: *'how can I work with Ubuntu to enliven a sense of belonging as a cultural practice?'*

In the context of a post-colonial socio-political migrant landscape of dislocation, disinheritance, othering and other forms of prejudice, the juxtaposition of these questions with the ethical proposition of *Ubuntu*, creates a pivotal interface for exploring issues, embodied knowledge and experiential knowing.

Looking ahead, the nexus of culture, transformation and belonging opens up the horizon to explore: *'what is and how can we develop connective **cultural** enquiry? What does connective cultural enquiry enable?'*

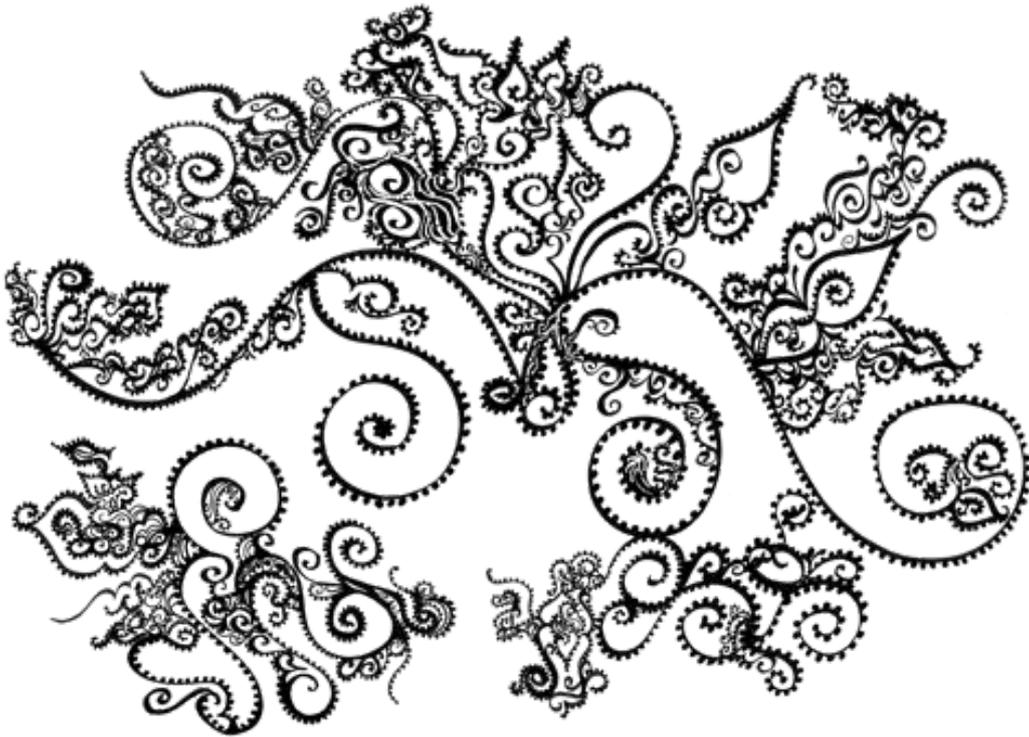
This enquiry provides insights into the primacy of auto-ethnographic enquiry and experiential knowing. I reaffirm my position and assert that *Ubuntu* is an enlivening epistemology for creating social sculpture practice.

And, that the cultural dimension of sustainable city-making will be enriched by the diversity created by increased migration and urbanisation.

In the Conclusion, I will expand on the potential value of knowing differently and the opportunities enabled by locating this research in the field of Social Sculpture.

CONCLUSION

UbuntuSpheres: Dwelling Places for Evocative Ways of Knowing & Ecological Citizenship



Conclusion: Part One

My contribution to new knowledge

This social sculpture research contributes to new knowledge through the transformative approaches it offers to participatory development practice in sustainable city making.

By re-imagining pathways, which link migration, culture and civic enlivenment, the *Evoking Belonging* approach creates a new dimension of trans-disciplinary research in the field of social sculpture and connective practice.

The approach emphasises the significance of *experiential knowledge*, *enlivenment* and *performance* in participatory development practice. It illuminates cultural perspectives and ethical priorities for stakeholders invested in creating equitable spaces, which enable social inclusion.

The research practice offers a regenerative approach to exploring issues of migration, inclusion and belonging by enabling new expression of participatory development practice as inclusive, enlivened co-creation.

By using the African Bantu philosophy of *Ubuntu*, meaning: '*Without you, I do not exist*', as an epistemology, this research creates *UbuntuSpheres*: Dwelling places for new ways of knowing, which make visible the invisible substance of belonging.

Through social sculpture connective aesthetic practices, which access inner spheres of *evocative* knowing, the *Evoking Belonging* approach cultivates civic enlivenment and creates pathways to envisioning belonging as a co-created cultural practice.

In this way, looking beyond the dominant focus on sustainability towards regenerative participatory development practice, which embraces diversity for new ways of knowing and enables inclusion through equitable approaches towards ecological citizenship.

Conclusion: Part Two

Placing Ubuntu in the field of Social Sculpture and Connective Practice

'Evoking Belonging: Enlivening Ubuntu as Social Sculpture for Cultural Transformation Towards Ecological Citizenship for Sustainable City-Making'.

I compose the title of this research practice to provoke poetic possibilities for the term social sculpture to be understood and practiced as a form of active expression of *Ubuntu*. This by means of acknowledging and building on the firm foundation laid by founding father of social sculpture, artist, activist, politician: Joseph Beuys and founding mother of contemporary social sculpture and connective practice, Professor Emeritus: Shelley Sacks.

Ubuntu is an African Bantu word, which I translate to mean; *'Without you, I do not exist'*. Other translations of *Ubuntu* include: *'Humanity'*. *Ubuntu* is an African philosophy, which invites us to consider what makes us human and what in our humanity connects us to other human beings.

The the language of the Zulu people of South Africa, the IsiZulu, phrase is; *'Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu'* – meaning: *'a person is a person through other persons.'*

In this research, I create *UbuntuSpheres* to reawaken and vivify an *Ubuntu* sense of connectedness as an intangible heritage and indigenous knowledge system, which, I propose, exists in all humans. I link the emphasis on the human being *'in relation'* to others and other ways of knowing as I explore using the three modes of enquiry developed in this research practice: poetic, imaginative and evocative.

Referencing Beuys' definition of social sculpture as; *'an expanded concept of art'* in which: *'Every human being is an artist, a freedom being, called to participate in transforming and reshaping the conditions, thinking and structures that shape and inform our lives'* (Sacks S, Beuys J. 1998). I focus on the human being as an artist, creator and co-creator of the humane, equitable and just society.

In my role as a social sculpture practitioner exploring evolutionary possibilities for participatory practice, Beuys' quote opens transformative opportunities to re-view the qualities and re-envision the ethos that guides our personal approaches and expression of participatory practice.

The *Ubuntu Research Agenda* frames my research orientation for exploration of ethics and values, belief and attitudes, which enliven the soul of this social sculpture practice as offering to identity centered, social justice activism.

The field of *contemporary* Social Sculpture and Connective Practice explores the relationship between the imagination and transformation as a pathway to shaping a humane, just and ecologically viable future.

This enquiry expands contemporary social sculpture research by Sacks, which emphasises the '*invisible materials*' of attitudes, values and habits of thinking. (Sacks S, 2017). Specifically, I explore how opportunities for cultural transformation can be enabled through imaginative processes of close encounter and engagement with the invisible materials we carry, such as beliefs, attitudes in the intangible space of the cultural imaginary.

I use *connective practice*, as an enabling framework for experiential knowing. Connective practices are understood as approaches, which foster the development of '*new organs of perception*' to bridge the gap between information, consciousness and action. (Sacks S, 2012)

Through this enquiry, I create spaces intangible and material, to explore culture, our '*invisible materials*'. I focus on stories narrating our embodied experience.

By using a set of '*understandings and creative strategies integral to several social sculpture instruments of consciousness,*' my practice works with what Sacks describes as '*the inner atelier*'. (Sacks S, 2012) The inner atelier is understood as an internal, intangible space and process of thinking that connects the inner and outer realms of experience. In this imaginary creative space, we are able to experience an inner sculpting process.

This enquiry builds on contemporary social sculpture research by Sacks, which expands the '*invisible materials*', to include '*attitudes, values and habits of thinking*'. (Sacks S, 2017)

Aligned to Sacks' proposition that: '*the 'aesthetic' understood as the opposite of 'anesthetic' or numbness has to do with enlivened being and connective practice*', (Sacks S, 2012) *Evoking Belonging* comprises inter-disciplinary approaches, which accent story, participation and enlivenment. In this research practice have created the *evocative* mode of enquiry to orient the transformative, alchemical, inner movement, embodiment and *enlivenment* of belonging as an act of social sculpture creation and connective aesthetics practice.

Conclusion: Part Three

Revisiting the Ubuntu Research Agenda

I originally crafted the *Ubuntu Research Agenda* to frame the research routes (outlined in the Introduction) and, to present the ethical orientation of the research practice. I described three ethical perspectives as cornerstones of this enquiry, namely: power, ARTivism and *Ubuntu*.

The previous voyages outline the evolution of the research practice in detail. Here, I revisit the *Ubuntu Research Agenda* to illustrate and re-orientate the focus of the current research framework towards the insights and new knowings created during the research practice.

Through this enquiry, I have come to understand the connections between migration, culture and belonging in new light. As such, I assert that:

- 1) Migration is an opportunity for cultural transformation towards ecological citizenship
- 2) Belonging is a co-created cultural practice
- 3) The imagination is a transformative locale cultural enquiry of belonging.

Looking ahead, these perspectives will frame the continuation of the research practice through *UbuntuSpheres* created as dwelling places for new ways of knowing and ecological citizenship.

Transformation Agendas & Sustainable Cities

My personal transformation agenda, crafted in 2012, inspired me to look at other global transformation agendas, pertinent to this enquiry.

From inception, I envisioned *Evoking Belonging* as a research contribution to the advancement of Sustainable Development Goals 11 and 16 of the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. (United Nations, 2016)

In 2019, at the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, the current UN Secretary General, António Guterres called for:

*'All sectors of society to mobilize for a **decade of action** on three levels: **global... local... people...** to generate an unstoppable movement pushing for the required transformations'*.

Through the research practice, I have illustrated how the *Ubuntu Research Agenda* presents pathways to participatory development practice, which align to the ethics and spirit of an activist movement.

I believe the *Evoking Belonging* approach can accelerate progress in the ‘decade of action’, through its focus on the inner locale, local knowledge and co-created actions.

I posit that: ‘**the imagination is a transformative locale for belonging**’. The *locale* is presented here as an intangible space, which I translate into the concept of *The UbuntuSphere* and enacted through the *Ubuntu Practices*.

Additionally, my assertion that **belonging is a co-created cultural practice**, underlines the research focus on ways of understanding ethical priorities and approaches for developing cultures of co-creation in participatory development practice.

As such, the Agenda 21 for Culture (United Cities and Local Government, 2015), which is aligned to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, is a guiding framework for my future work. Specifically, I consider this statement from the Agenda 21 policy guide on role of culture in sustainable cities, as an ethical orientation, which aligns to the *Ubuntu Practices*.

‘Human development can only be effective if we explicitly consider the integral value to the process of culture and cultural factors such as memory, creativity, diversity and knowledge...’ (United Cities and Local Government, 2015)

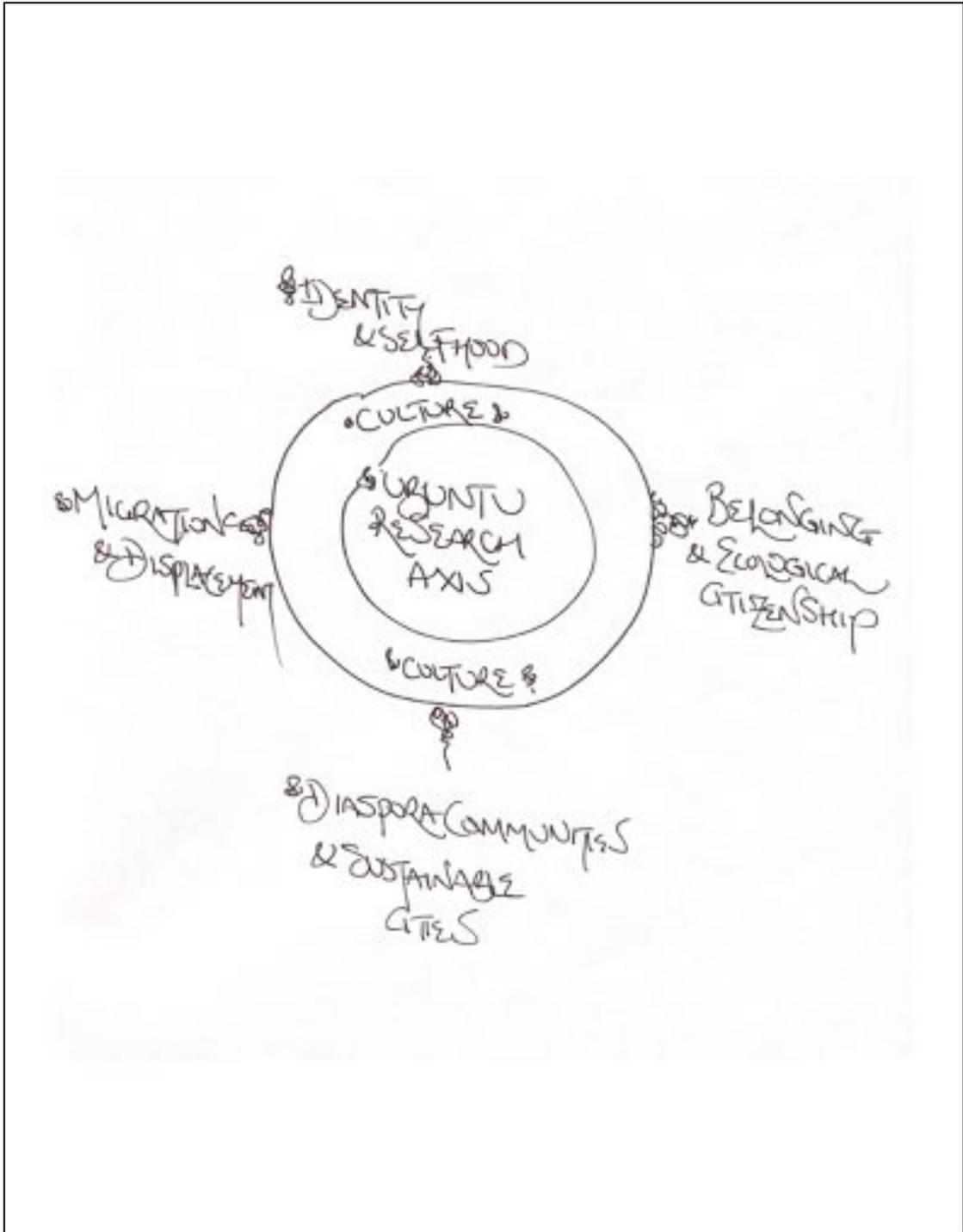
Regenerative practice

Following on-going research into sustainability, culture and the co-creation aspect of *Ubuntu*, I have reoriented my view to look beyond sustainability to what I believe can create deep level transformation: regenerative practice.

The regenerative network, Re-Alliance describes regeneration as: ‘*processes that restore, renew or revitalise their own sources of energy and materials, ensuring the capacity to sustain and nurture all life*’. (Re-alliance, 2020)

From this perspective, I present *Evoking Belonging* as a regenerative approach, which, through enlivening processes which restore, renew and rejuvenate civic consciousness, is in itself, regenerative and ultimately, transformative.

In the continued crafting of *The Ubuntu Research Agenda*, I weave my experiential knowledge with my social sculpture practice to address the evolving ethical considerations and key issues relating to the research impulse as located in the *Ubuntu Research Axis* illustrated below.



The Ubuntu Axis Revisited

Conclusion: Part Four

UbuntuSpheres: Dwelling places for *evocative* ways of knowing and ecological citizenship

Through insights gleaned in this enquiry, I present the *UbuntuSphere* as a dwelling place for all stakeholders invested in creating inclusive participatory forms of exploring and thinking together.

The *UbuntuSphere* is a concept of the *Evoke* theory (see Voyage Three) for transformative participatory practice, created during the course of this enquiry. The theory emphasises the significance of *experiential knowledge*, *enlivenment* and *performance* in participatory development practice.

The *Evoke* theory is enacted through three *Ubuntu Practices*: *Ubuntu Conversations*, *Ubuntu Reflections* and *The Ubuntu Town Hall Meeting*. The seven principles presented in the theory such as communion, resonance and encounter, are key to enabling the seventh *Evoke* principle: *enlivenment*.

By working with *Ubuntu* as a lens for cultural enquiry, the research practice reveals that the participants, now referenced as co-researchers emerge with a feeling that a primordial sense of humanity and connection is awakened in their being. This experience opens up new *organs of perception*, allowing us to see things anew and, through the processes outlined in the practice, come to new ways of knowing ourselves.

I describe this state of being as a sense of *enlivenment*, which occurs in the inner sphere. From an intangible space of *enlivenment*, by using the *Ubuntu* lens as a way of seeing (epistemology), explorations of the relationship between the inner and outer spheres of one's experience can inspire the *enlivened* to act, to participate. In this way, becoming, as Beuys said: '*... an artist, a freedom being, called to participate in transforming and reshaping the conditions, thinking and structures that shape and inform our lives*'. (Sacks S, Beuys J, 1977)

Through this process, I believe that the individual, previously less heard, less seen and easily ignored is, through their enlivened state, more adequately prepared to participate in participatory processes in a way that is inclusive and therefore, more equitable.

Transformative participatory practice

The transformative aspect of the *Evoking Belonging* approach is a transformative contribution to participatory development practice, which blurs the prevailing dualisms between practitioner and participant.

This, in turn generates trust, shifts the boundaries of the transparency and accountability paradigm of ethical participatory practice and ultimately engenders empathy.

As such, in my future practice, I will create *UbuntuSpheres* where all can be equitably enlivened to more fully engage in processes of participatory development practice.

Ecological Citizenship

I define the ecological citizen as one who, in an *enlivened* state, is actively engaged in questioning and acting to change the processes and systems, which mute their voice, marginalize participation and misrepresent their true being.

From this regard, I posit that **migration is an opportunity for cultural transformation towards ecological citizenship**. By combining the ethical priorities outlined in the *Ubuntu Research Agenda*, with the perspectives above, I present a case for nurturing **belonging as a co-created cultural practice**. In this way, through processes of enlivenment as experienced and co-created in the *UbuntuSphere*, make for regenerative and transformative participatory development practice.

Culture in this way, also speaks to the awakening of a deep sense of knowing that is indigenous, woven, over generations, into our DNA. This form of culturally enlivened, *evocative* knowing and its relationship to regenerative practice unfolds new questions emerging from this research practice.

Conclusion: Part Five

Evocative Knowing: The Urban Indigene

Story as enlivenment

I write poetry in order to delve into intuitive inklings, diffuse multi-layered ideas, beliefs and values and, to deepen emotional connections by using somatic intelligence to unfurl deep layered knowing of the subconscious.

Embodied as *The Urban Indigene*, I, with self-reflexive intent, evoke memories, re-visit story using the *Evoking Belonging* modes of enquiry: *poetic, imaginative* and *evocative*.

Through auto-ethnographic processes of excavation and exploration of my migration stories, I come to revelation and restoration. Using my imagination, I enter, depart and re-enter an inner *UbuntuSphere*. There, I, the migrant soul, searching for belonging, find dwelling place to safely explore the complexities of my diverse experiences, to honour my ancestry, to with ritual devotion unfold into my *enlivened* being.

Enlivenment is an intentional process. Designed in the *Evoking Belonging* approach as *excavation* and *exploration*, both actions begin with 'ex', meaning 'out of' or to take out. By delving into and taking out *invisible materials*, I come closer to a sense of authorship, of belonging.

I counter balance this with another intentional process; *revelation* – to uncover, lay bare and also, *restoration* - a healing, a recovery of something that is lost. The word formation of 're' in this case, speaks to the ability to come back to the place of origin, 'anew, with a sense of undoing'. (Etymology Online)

Both 'ex' and 're' are significant transformative elements of the *Evoking Belonging* practice. For, this work is also, I believe, a necessary process of healing on the journey to belonging.

Healing and belonging

In my experience, development practitioners working with belonging often overlook the healing imperative. As this research process illustrates, healing is not only for those whom are deemed the 'beneficiaries' of the practice. I see healing as a powerful opening to re-orienting an egalitarian process of participatory development practice.

The complexities I explore are inevitably, interlinked with material places of dwelling and other contextual systems governing my being. As *The Urban Indigene*, I cultivate the 'organs of perception', opening spaces, which my second supervisor, Prof Nabeel Hamdi referenced many times as the 'invisible structure of place'. Through this work, I now add to the social sculpture concept of 'organs of perception', the *Evoking Belonging* concept of *evocative knowing*.

Belonging as Soulcraft

My 2012 agenda for transformation expresses a soul calling to examine new forms of citizenship engendered from a space of civic consciousness and **sovereignty** of self.

My personal experience of developing a process, which enables self-reflexivity from an *enlivened* state of being has been, in itself, a transformative process. This heightened awareness of self, inspires me to live up to the principles of *communion* and *co-creation*, to *connect* and *encounter* others through intentional *reconnaissance*. The *resonance* is felt soul deep. The healing is palpable not only for me, but for all with whom, I co-create. I see this as a gift.

Africa gifts the world with *Ubuntu*. I feel the skin that I am gifted in, as offering to this brave new world, where I, and others dwell in *UbuntuSpheres* of *evocative* and transformative knowing.

EPILOGUE

Poetics of The Urban Indigene

Evoking Belonging

For all those, in whose footprints, I find my own...

This be an offering...

For all those, who will search for their footprints in my own

This be a devoted calling...

For all those, who in this moment, shape footprints of sovereignty

This be an expression of poetic solidarity...

Poem by Dianne Regisford, 2019

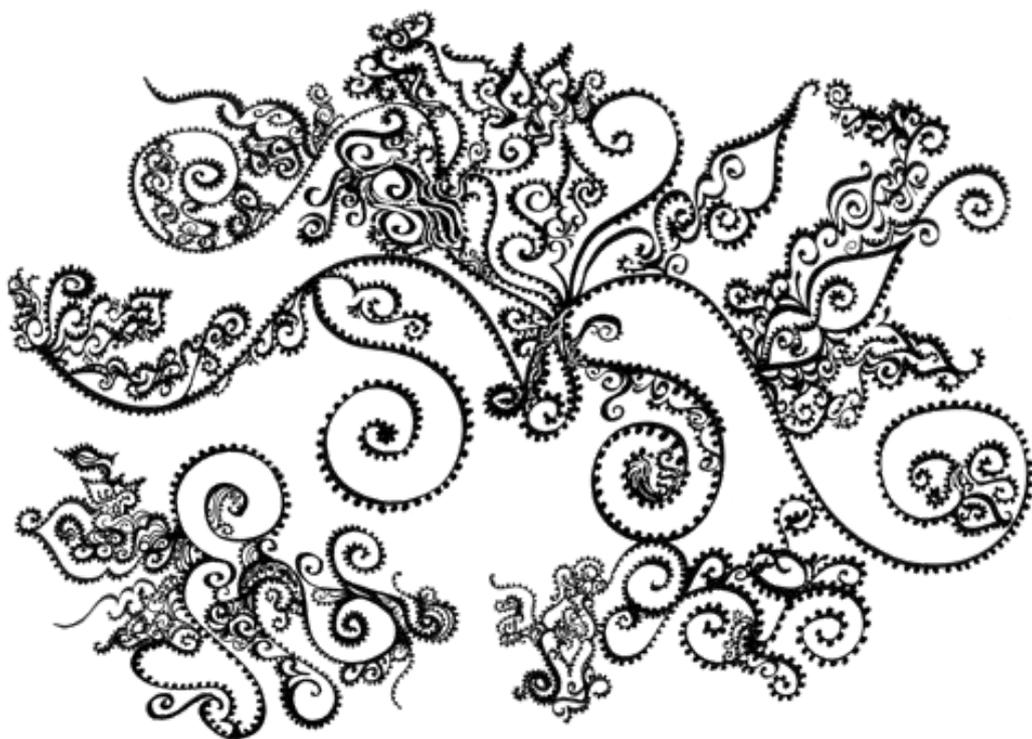
Extract from the book: Evoking Belonging: Poetics of the Urban Indigene



Photoshoot: Sensing the Urban Indigene

Photo credit: Samuel Nja Kwa

Oxford, 2014



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