

## Journey into Relatedness

Ways to overcome the separation between inner and outer action, engender eco-social insight and facilitate new forms of transdisciplinary Connective Practice, Social Sculpture and Socially Engaged Art.

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## Abstract

*Journey into Relatedness* is a practice-based research investigating ways to redress the lack of attention given in Socially Engaged Art to the necessary interconnectedness and continuity between social engagement and individual mind-shift work. Mind-shift-work is a term now used in the expanded art field of Social Sculpture and Connective Practice. It was coined by Shelley Sacks, one of its key researcher-practitioners, to emphasise the ‘work’ involved in shifting one’s points of view, attitudes, and values. This reflective commentary presents and considers the explorations undertaken through my research journey, with the aim of developing a practice of relational engagement based on reciprocity and self-reflectivity and on relational methods enabling a kind of intersubjectivity in which both the inner individual-context of the participants and the shared social-context become sites of action.

The practice-based exploration and reflective commentary deal with questions that have arisen as a practitioner of Socially Engaged Art and responses to these questions inspired and informed by Social Sculpture and Connective Practice methods and strategies. In contrast to the ethos of Socially Engaged Art, Social Sculpture and Connective Practice recognise the intimate relationship between social transformation and personal mind-shift work and the link between socially constructed assumptions and personal attitudes and mindsets. This view has been explored through my research process by re-engaging with the evolution and transition between two of my key works: *Bait-al-Karama* (2010) and *You Are But You Are Not* (2016). The research process does this by revisiting the reasons and sensibilities that motivated me to find new ways of practising that could broaden my work beyond the limitations of Socially Engaged Art’s emphasis on a problem-solving and context-specific approach.

This commentary highlights the dangers inherent to this kind of approach when artistic interventions are understood primarily as functional and useful responses to the visible outer social-context, eclipsing the invisible individual inner-context. Having interrogated these questions through a research process, I go on to propose new relational engagement approaches – such as ‘reflective arenas’ and ‘terrain of concern’, as well as new methods and strategies – like ‘situating glossary’ and ‘image-word’ that integrate aesthetic processes with discursive modes. The new approach to ‘participatory practice’ in the research, and presented in this commentary, is designed to reduce the danger of reductionist I-Other relations prevalent in much participatory social art. In which the participant’s identity risks being fixed in homogenised categories, and in which an in-group out-group divide is reinforced, echoing, I have discovered, attitudes of ‘collective narcissism’.

This study intends to contribute to the much-lacking dialogue around some of the core differences between Socially Engaged Art and Social Sculpture and Connective Practice through its development of new methods and the insights leading to and arising from them. It also asserts that if one is to commit consciously to relational and participatory processes, which encourage an eco-social attitude of co-existence, then a holistic philosophy of engagement is required that builds on the human capacity for genuine self-other listening.

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## 1. Introduction

*Journey into Relatedness* is a practice-based research enquiry speaking to the lack of attention given, in Socially Engaged Art (SEA), to the interconnectedness and continuity between social engagement and *mind-shift work*<sup>1</sup>. As asserted in the field of Contemporary Social Sculpture and Connective Practice (SSCP), when a relational art practice envisions working toward a viable eco-social future, it cannot be situated solely, or even primarily, in the outer, non-personal, social field. It also needs to engage with and act upon the inner context of values and attitudes if it is to foster the necessary mind-shift towards an eco-social perspective<sup>2</sup>.

I have chosen to explore relatedness because of the un-relatedness experienced first hand through my practice. After almost fifteen years engaging with numerous Socially Engaged Art projects and in different social contexts, I came to question if social concerns and injustices are to be tackled and acted upon solely in the outer shared social-context. Interrogating, if this outward-looking prevents us from adequately considering and acting upon how we participate in those conditions of social injustice in the individual inner-context, where mindsets, attitudes and values are produced<sup>3</sup>.

In this reflexive analysis, I use *inner individual-context* to identify with the personal, invisible, inner-field of mindsets, attitudes and values, while with *outer social-context*, I address the discernable and quantifiable shared social matrix we inhabit.

Although those are intrinsically interconnected, in SEA, the primary emphasis and “dependency on social intercourse as a factor of its existence” (Helguera, 2011, p. 2), underlines their separation. “A key problem with this” states Shelley Sacks, “is that the source of many eco-social problems – the consciousness and mindsets of individuals, groups and cultures – is not adequately engaged with by focusing on solving the external problem” (Sacks, 2019, p.175). Unlike SEA, for SSCP the inner individual-context is a field of engagement, and its key relational understanding is to make visible and act upon the interconnectedness between the outer social and inner individual contexts of work. The Italian philosopher, Gemma Corradi Fiumara articulates and reminds us, with regard to western epistemology, “dichotomies [between outer social-context and inner-contexts of action] are not only abstract schemes of order designed to organise complex phenomena; they become integrated

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1 Mind-shift-work is a term coined by Sacks (2019) to highlight the work involved in shifting one’s points of view, attitudes and values.

2 Mind-shift work plays a central role in Social Sculpture-Connective Practice, developed by Sacks, building on Joseph Beuys’ proposals with reference to Rudolf Steiner and Wolfgang Goethe. “Learning to work with the invisible materials of our values, attitudes, perceptions and ways of thinking” asserts Sacks, “[is essential] to reconfigure our relationship to the world, and to develop a mindset based on interdependence as the only sound basis for a viable future[...]. Accepting and recognising this responsibility for how we think, perceive and relate to the world, illuminates the need for a dimension of sustainable development that engages actively with the world ‘in here’ – our mindsets, values and attitudes – as much as with the world’ out there” (Sacks, 2019 p.172).

3 Among others, the theoretical physicist David Bohm has widely elaborated upon the relationship between mind and matter, elucidating the interlocks between the way we think and act in the world. In *Thought as a System* he states: “When you are thinking something, you have the feeling that the thoughts do nothing except inform you the way things are and then you choose to do something, and you do it. That’s what people generally assume. But actually, the way you think determines the way you’re going to do things” (Bohm, 1992, p. 16).

into life itself” (Corradi Fiumara, 1990, p. 26). In this polarisation, she continues, lies the “denial of any ecological totality in favour of obstinate attention to the part” (Corradi Fiumara, 1990, p. 17). This ecological totality implies finding ways to act in the social-context while working on one’s inner individual-context. As the art critic Suzi Gablik states in her seminal text *Connective Aesthetics*: “art that is rooted in a ‘listening’ self rather than in a disembodied eye challenge the isolationist thinking of our culture because it focuses not so much on individuals but on the way they interact” (Gablik, 1992, p. 4).

Acting out there without consideration for what is in here fails to consider the mindsets shaping our thinking and the attitudes informing our actions. Perceiving this fragmentation challenged the foundations of my thinking and being in the world, uncovering questions that could not be silenced or dealt with by merely reiterating my SEA approach in new projects.

*Journey into Relatedness* is a practice-based research and reflective commentary that explores new relational engagement approaches and methods to overcome the risk for this polarisation in my practice. This reflective commentary shows how this takes place and what it consists of by looking at the transition between and the nature of two of my key works, *Bait-al-Karama* (2010 – ongoing, Nablus, Palestine) and *You Are But You Are Not* (2016 – 2017, Bolzano, Italy). It does so by revisiting the reasons and sensibilities that motivated me to find new ways of practising that could surmount some of the issues experienced in developing *Bait-al-Karama* (BAK) and broaden its relational engagement scope beyond the SEA problem-solving approach, towards a more reflexive and participatory practice by creating what I have come to describe ‘reflective-arenas’ as in *You Are But You Are Not* (YABYAN).

This reflexive practice includes finding ways to make visible and activate the inner individual context of all those involved, including myself, around shared social concerns.

Public Art and Socially Engaged Art are the fields in which I first took my bearings, providing the conceptual and experiential backdrop to the explorations in this practice-based PhD. *Journey into Relatedness*, however, is inspired and informed by core methods and strategies of Social Sculpture and Connective Practice, developed by Shelley Sacks, to work with and build on the Social Sculpture ideas and proposals of Joseph Beuys<sup>4</sup>. This inquiry field offers strategies and insights, highlighting the intimate relationship between social transformation and personal mind-shift work. As Sacks asserts, “the human being is a being in becoming, and the encounter with oneself is a primary arena of change” (Sacks, 2013, p. 18).

Although this reflective commentary relates to various positions and perspectives on relatedness, it is not presenting and investigating the numerous SEA viewpoints, nor is it building a logical

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4 See also [www.social-sculpture.org](http://www.social-sculpture.org)

argument for my practice in relation to different SEA theories and positions on relatedness. Instead, it is a reflective analysis of my SEA practice's evolution through the lens of core SSCP methods and strategies; a study that aims to offer a systemic approach to participatory art, one that can integrate inner and outer contexts as a continuum of transformation and work<sup>5</sup>. This practice-based doctoral research began in 2014, during my last year of permanency in Nablus (Palestine) and covers the period between my on-site commitment with *Bait-al-Karama*, returning to Italy and engaging with *You Are But You Are Not* in Bolzano in 2016.

This inquiry began by identifying and unpacking, through the SSCP phenomenological method of 're-entering' the process of *Bait-al-Karama*, my mindset and its dichotomies and attitudes underpinning certain assumptions of I-Other relations that are evident in the project (Chapter 2). The insights gathered in this initial stage set the foreground for my engagement in Bolzano with *You Are But You Are Not* (2016). The 're-entering' process involved observing – with new and non-judgemental eyes – the internal processes taking place as well as the range of inner longings and frustrations that I had pushed to one side whilst working on *BAK*. These frustrations and longings fuelled the challenge of looking at what was going on in the inner non-visible field and uncovering questions that would lead me to, and give shape to the research process that became central to *YABYAN* (Chapter 3).

The new methods and strategies of relational engagement that emerged from *YABYAN*, that of 'situating glossary' and 'image word', contributed to shaping a 'reflective-arena' approach as a proposition for present and future participatory processes and practices. Furthermore, the insights gathered by 're-entering' the *BAK* process enabled an in-depth analysis and reconsideration of the site-specific approach's limits and narrowness in my previous SEA projects.

This analysis engendered a new approach to combine work in-context with the concerns and urgencies of our times, which I have named the 'terrain of concern' approach.

This reflective analysis intertwines with my personal narrative; this is because biography, with its sensibility, longings and desire, is the ground where we embody the contradictions and tensions between the condition of relatedness we inhabit and the tendency to categorise life into binary schemes.

*I began this practice-based doctoral research whilst living between Palestine and Israel and shortly after giving birth to my daughter Yasmin.*

*At the beginning of my forties, and after almost five years of work in Palestine, I faced the most complex and painful challenge in my life – causing me to flee back to Italy with Yasmin due to a legal conflict with her Israeli father.*

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5 The transitoriness of all phenomenon is central to understanding in Social Sculpture (Sozial Plastik), as stated by Shelley Sacks: "This term [Sozial] 'Plastik' highlights our role as 'artists' of our own lives and social forms. It also emphasises that the forms of our lives and the structures in which we live are not fixed. It reminds us that we can reshape our own lives by working on habits and attitudes, whilst working toward structures that are supportive of all life forms" (Sacks 2017, p. 76).

*I remember my last visit to Nablus in the spring of 2015. Sitting in Bait al Karama's kitchen, sipping coffee with the women I had been working with for many years. I was filled with feelings of despair; about to leave these people, who were like my family, in the ongoing traumatic situation. I found myself weeping in the arms of Ahoud; her embrace was firm and reassuring. In that moment, I could suddenly see the distortions: the despair was not with and for Ahoud, whom I regarded as a woman subjugated to terrible conditions of life between family constraints and poverty. The despair was mine. The sense of being a privileged western woman became secondary in that hug, and so did the assumption of being there to do 'good' for others.*

This experience, though momentary, confronted me with my assumption of being a privileged western woman, reproducing patterns of cultural paternalism that polarise the world into categories of South-North, Needy-Caregiver, Privileged-Unprivileged relations. Although the differences in privilege remain undisputable, what surfaced, in crossing that threshold of dichotomous assumptions, was a concrete experience of a shared condition, where I could begin *talking with* conditions rather than *about* conditions. In Paulo Freire's words: "even when one must speak to the people, one must convert the 'to' to a 'with' the people. That implies respect for the 'knowledge of living experience' [...] based on which it is possible to go beyond it" (Freire, 1994, p. 20).

The scope of this reflective commentary is to explore and articulate the evolution of my artistic approach and methods by examining the participatory processes of *Bait-al-Karama* (2010) and how the findings emerging from this analysis leads into the work, *You Are But You Are Not* (2016). Insofar as both works stem from a complex social matrix, in this commentary, I have decided to leave aside an in-depth analysis of each work context (Nablus and Bolzano). In particular, with *BAK*, this choice is to avoid labelling the artistic initiative as a 'humanitarian' response to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Although *BAK* has emerged from a precise context, it is also true that the specificity of Nablus is far more layered and complex than the often reductionist 'Israeli-Palestinian conflict' lens. Emancipating from reductionist perspectives meant, in this commentary, avoiding advocating *BAK* as a mere response to its context, focusing instead on the inner dynamics and criticality of *BAK*'s participatory process.

Similarly, I did not include a comprehensive analysis of the South Tyrol border region context in this commentary with *You Are But You Are Not*. The motivation, in this case, relates to the work's primary 'terrain of concern', that of the European legal system of hospitality in response to the escalating refugee drama taking place in Europe from 2014 onwards.

### 1.1 A practitioner explores the terrain between Socially Engaged Art and Social Sculpture and Connective Practice

I first encountered the genre of Socially Engaged Art during my studies at the MFA program in Public Art and New Artistic Strategies at the Bauhaus University in Weimar in 2002.

Here, the artistic strategies encompassed numerous modes of engaging with the public space, becoming attentive to its social, historical and economic fabric and thinking of the audience simultaneously as viewers and participants.

While the meanings and approaches to working in-context unfolded new possibilities beyond the studio-based art practice, it also sparked a doubt in the back of my mind. Why were we not asked to explore the reasons and impulses underpinning the intentions behind our acts in the social realm? To interrogate and explore that doubt, in 2003, I joined the MA exchange program at Oxford Brookes University, where I first encountered the field of contemporary Social Sculpture and Connective Practice, with its creative strategies and self-reflective methodologies developed by Professor Shelley Sacks. What runs through all Sacks' work is a focus on developing an expanded understanding of the senses and working in-depth with what Beuys and, before him, Goethe, described as the new organs of perception required for a truly Social Art<sup>6</sup>. In particular, the Social Sculpture and Connective Practice expanded understanding of the I-Sense, "as the sense with which we are able to recognise the being and integrity of all life forms, [and by] which the other-than-human-world, as well as fellow human beings, can be appreciated and properly respected" (Sacks, 2019, p.185).

SSCP and SEA both focus on the social sphere as a field of action. However, central to the understanding of social action in SSCP is the mind-shift work needed to question and explore how we think and act in the world: to observe and become aware of how we inhabit and relate to socially constructed assumptions; how we reproduce them in our thinking and actions and what kind of mind-shifts are required to act upon and transform them.

In the words of psychologist James Hillman's, "outer means simply we are outside looking at it, it is closed in its factual literalism. This and that happened, and then this. Inner means we are taking it in, it is open to insight. Ingestion slows down the happenings for the sake of chewing" (Hillman, 1983, p. 27).

Based on a similar inner-outer perspective, SSCP understands participation as intersubjectivity built on collective and shared self-reflective inquiry processes where one can encounter oneself and others.

On related grounds, the art critic Grant Kester in *Conversation Pieces* questions whether or not it is "possible to develop a cross-cultural dialogue without sacrificing the unique identities of individual speakers?" (Kester, 2004, p.8).

However, the emphasis on direct social actions in SEA (Van den Berg, Jordan, and Kleinmichel, 2019), with "its overall objective [to bring] about real-world instances of progressive justice, community building, and transformation" (Sholette, Bass and Social Practice Queens, 2018, p.13), risk turning participatory and relational processes in mere instruments to produce a range of social

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6 See also <http://www.social-sculpture.org/taught-masters-degree-in-social-sculpture-2> and Sacks' specific processes, like Earth Forum and Frametalks, see <https://universityofthetrees.org>.

results. Results like social cohesion, community empowerment, urban regeneration, social inclusion, and integration often required by the funding institutions and organisations.

When terms like participation and relation turn into results and products, a process of reification may take place, abstracting from the situated embodied reality of these processes, leaving “a sense of common understanding that is not either situated or participated” (Wenger, 1999, p. 59).

Such common understanding may over-simplify otherwise profoundly complex processes of human interactions. One could say that in SEA participation and relation are often turned into generalised characteristics, aims and products. When this is the case, we risk overlooking the nature of the participation and the kind of situated intersubjectivity it enables.

A project that exemplifies this oversimplification and lack of complexity is *Green Light* by the artist Olafur Eliasson when exhibited at the Venice Biennale in 2017<sup>7</sup>. For this work, forty asylum seekers, brought together by a Venice based NGO, worked throughout the exhibition as participants, assembling lights, designed by the artist’s studio, as a form of income for the NGO. Disguised as a participatory strategy, what *Green Light* reinforced by displaying asylum seekers in the exhibition venue, is the binary hegemonic relation of ‘giver’ versus ‘needy recipient’.

Here, the participant, validating the project’s social engagement, is labelled under a fixed social category, that of the ‘refugee’, from which emancipation is neither possible nor envisioned.

The complexity of each singularity is glossed over by a homogenised group identity which “fixes group membership around a particular way of being” (Adams, Glenn, and Hazel, 2001, p. 286).

Furthermore, a similar process entailed in fixing group identities and leading towards tendencies to differentiate in-group from out-group (Dervin, 2012, p. 182) is described in Social Science as ‘collective narcissism’. This particular process sets the links between homogenised group identities formation and attitudes of hostility and exclusion, based on the belief of in-group’s exceptionality and expectation of recognition. “Collective narcissism is a belief that the in-group is exceptional, [and] entitled to privileged treatment, but not sufficiently recognised by others” (Zavala de, 2019). In Social Science, ‘collective narcissism’ refers to ideological, religious and racial extremist group dynamics. However, ‘collective narcissism’ provides a valuable lens for SEA projects to critically reflect on the risks of fostering group-identity formation that is fuelled by exceeding in-group self-esteem, leading to exclusiveness and striving for recognition.

Through the ‘re-entering process’ employed for *Bait-al-Karama* (2010), I became acutely aware of how particular group formation processes, underpinning the newly formed in-group of *BAK*, inadvertently brought about polarisation and certain hostilities between the in-group and out-groups. Thus, observing how ‘collective narcissism’ can easily take root in SEA projects (see Chapter 2).

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<sup>7</sup> *Green light* was first conducted at TBA21, Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary in Austria 2006.

This insight into the fertile ground of aspects of ‘collective narcissism’ has motivated me to develop methods and strategies of relational engagement, which offer alternative ways of working with people without categorising them into fixed group identities.

## 2. Embarking on the research Journey

This section explores the initial phase of my practice-based research (2.1.1 and 2.1.2) consisting of a reflexive analysis of *Bait-al-Karama* (2010), using the key SSCP method of ‘re-entering’ its process, under the guidance of my supervisor, Shelley Sacks.

Following a brief introduction of *BAK* (2.1), I will draw on some of the core insights that this phenomenological analysis of the process uncovered, in particular, insights that challenged the role I took upon myself while working in Palestine, as well as the modalities in which a new group identity took shape around *BAK* (2.1.3). Those insights and challenges guided my transition from *Bait-al-Karama* to *You Are But You Are Not* (Chapter 3), enabling the emergence of new methodological insights and relational engagement methods, rooted in what I have come to describe as the ‘reflective-arenas’ approach (Chapter 4).



Entry of Bait-al-Karama, photograph by Beatrice Catanzaro, Nablus 2012

### 2.1. *Bait-al-Karama*: an introduction

*Bait-al-Karama* (House of Dignity) is a long-term Socially Engaged Art project consisting of a self-initiated women’s centre and social enterprise including a cooking school and culinary tours and located at the heart of the Old City of Nablus, Palestine. *BAK* was conceived in 2009 when I first visited Nablus and met with Fatima Kaddumy, a local activist and co-founder of the initiative.

After this first visit, I returned to Nablus a year later, in 2010, and remained a permanent resident until 2015. Following a series of informal fund-raising activities<sup>8</sup> between 2009 and 2010, *BAK* was established in an ancient Ottoman building in the Old City in late 2011, donated by a local family. With the income generated, the building was renovated by local artisans, and a kitchen, beauty salon and multifunctional room were set up.

## 2.2 Exploring past work through Social Sculpture and Connective Practice methods: re-entering the process of *Bait-al-Karama*

My practice-based doctorate's initial phase consisted of 're-entering' and 're-inhabiting' *Bait-al-Karama* (2010) through a key Social Sculpture and Connective Practice method, enabling a reflective analysis and imaginative journey into my personal inner experience while working in Palestine. This phenomenological method's scope is to observe and engage with those inner drives, motivations and emotions that often remain unseen while acting in the outer social-context. To 're-enter' a practice, in this phenomenological way, requires a careful attitude of self-listening. This is particularly important given that the objective is not judging what did or did not work in the project but rather observing what was going on in the inner individual-context while working in the outer social-context.

Furthermore, the 're-entering process', is a reflective and visual-thinking method allowing one to explore and gather insights into the connection or disconnect between the inner and outer context of action. Moving beyond the project-narrative of *BAK* to an exploration of the invisible inner dynamics taking place while working in Nablus, I could acknowledge the disconnect between what was going on in my inner individual-context and the outer social-context of actions.

The 're-entering process' offered an arena to engage with those emotional conditions I had set aside and silenced while working on *BAK*, unable at that point to acknowledge them or make them integral to my practice. Allowing me instead to unpack the emotional discomfort I experience while working in Nablus and become aware of the attitudes and mindset underpinning these emotions. This process highlights the capacity one has to unveil one's inner drives, motivations, and emotions and observe what attitudes and mindsets produce them.

### 2.2.1 *Bait-al-Karama*: challenges and insights

The idea of *Bait-al-Karama* (2010) as a women's centre and social enterprise was conceived of and fixed at a very early stage during my first visit to Nablus in 2009. The 're-entering

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<sup>8</sup> The start-up fundings for *Bait-al-Karama* was raised through dinner events in Italy and the UK and private donations. Only when established, the project received small scale grants from organisations such as Cittadellartee - Fondazione Pistoletto and the Doen Fund.

process' made visible how, by setting the form of *BAK* so prematurely, other imaginative processes were hindered, turning *BAK* into a 'direct action' Socially Engaged Art project with an explicitly 'problem-solving approach'. The implementation of *BAK* consisted of a series of 'functional' actions (fundraising, branding, communication etc.), through which I had somehow removed myself from questioning my internal connection to the phenomenological complexity I was experiencing – resorting instead to a position of 'silent facilitator' on the one hand and 'problem solver' on the other.

What inner impulses and emotions were underpinning this position of 'silent facilitator', speaking on behalf of others while silencing my voice? The 're-entering process' enabled me to revisit and observe those impulses and emotions. I became aware that silencing my voice had been an unconscious strategy I set in motion as I sought acceptance and appreciation from the local community. But also, and more profoundly, the role of 'silent facilitator' concealed and hijacked any careful consideration of the cultural assumptions I carried with me: the assumption of locating the struggle with the other and that my role was to enable them to emancipate from such a struggle. These, I realised, were assumptions central to an I-Other relationship engrained in cultural paternalism and mirrored by certain positions of SEA. This is summed up in the statement on *Art for Social Change* on the TATE website: "what unites these [SEA] approaches is a new take on who holds the power, shifting agency away from institutions and even artists, and giving ordinary people the ability to create meaningful change in unprecedented ways" (*The Art of Social Change*, 1998). In response to this 'empowering' mechanism, disguised as an altruistic will to aid the disenfranchised and subjugated 'other', and yet bond them to 'who holds (or gives) the power', SSCP offers an antithetical and valuable perspective. From a SSCP standpoint, agency derives from

"relating to a situation in the 'aesthetic mode', which is imaginal and phenomenological". [Agents] "not only think about situations and calculate responses based on linear reasoning. They live the situation in themselves, in the inner space of their imagination, and are mobilized internally" (Sacks, 2017 p. 82).

This shift in perspective emphasises the importance of integrating the *what* should be done out there, with the *how* do I respond and become internally activated, which in turn makes it impossible to withdraw from oneself while acting in the world.

A second and cardinal insight gathered through the 're-entering process' relates to how *BAK* shaped a new group identity, in particular how the emerging cluster of *BAK* in-group members – shaped through the dynamics of group self-identification – differed from non-*BAK* out-group members.

In re-visiting the numerous conversations I had with *BAK* in-group members across the years, I noticed a recurrent striving and need for recognition, as 'we' (the *BAK* in-group) had capacities that 'others' either did not have or did not express. Examples of this were the reinforcing of the belief

that the Nabulsi cuisine is qualitatively superior to other Palestinian food cultures or praising the exceptional food-making skills of the ‘*BAK* women’ compared to other Palestinian women’s groups. It became evident that *BAK*’s group identity was to build and strengthen itself through the belief of being exceptional and worthy of recognition, becoming progressively more ‘exclusive’ and self-protective towards new participants, especially if coming from areas beyond the Old City of Nablus. This can be seen as a spontaneous process of differentiating ‘us’ from ‘others’ when forming a particular interest group. However in hindsight, I began questioning if, in *BAK*’s development, we encouraged this separation between *BAK*’s in-group from out-groups members, resulting in a lack of openness towards others.

In order to comprehend and make sense of this drift towards ‘exclusiveness’ and division, I related it to the notion of ‘collective narcissism’. The term ‘collective narcissism’ originated in the social sciences to “explain processes involved in the construal of social identity and in-group identification, as well as inter-group hostility” [‘collective narcissism’] emphasis the need to assert appropriate recognition of the in-group’s exceptionality” (Golec de Zavala, 2019, p.39), which, in turn, may lead to inter-group prejudice and conflict.

I am aware that migrating the notion of ‘collective narcissism’ from its original field of study exposes me to approximations and inaccuracies. Bearing this in mind, I have nevertheless found it useful to use ‘collective narcissism’ as a lens to carefully analyse the kind of grouping processes set in motion with *BAK*. In particular, to make sense of certain attitudes of separation that I observed and, to some extent, supported, which allowed the in-group to expect and demand recognition for its exceptionality from the out-group. Unpacking the construal of *Bait-al-Karama*’s in-group identity through the lens of ‘collective narcissism’ challenged my SEA methods and strategies. Uncovering how, despite benevolent intentions – such as ‘community empowerment’ and ‘social cohesion’ – what could easily arise by promoting specific group identities was, in fact, differentiation and separation.

In the following Chapter, I will further explore how the insights gathered through the ‘re-entering process’ challenged my I-Other assumptions and guided me into the transition to a new practice-based research, *You Are But You Are Not* (2016).

### 3. Transitional questions and insights: from *Bait-al-Karama* to *You Are But You Are Not*

After twelve years, at the time of writing in 2021, *Bait-al-Karama* (2010) is still up and running, expanding and taking on a life on its own. *BAK* is no longer dependent on my narrative, and I am not essential to its open-ended narrative. Leaving Palestine purged me of my narrative, that of being an artist devoted to a real change in society through a problem-solving approach,

which I had taken upon myself and with which I had defined my practice for several years. The ‘re-entering process’ enabled me to observe and act upon the roots and construction of this narrative, making sense of the attitudes, mind-sets and longings that had brought me to Nablus – listening to unheard inner emotions meant “to move from asking the question ‘and then what happened’? To the question ‘why did it happen?’” (Hillman, 1983, p. 9).

In preparation for an artist talk I gave whilst doing this research and to find ways to share with the audience the insights gathered through the ‘re-entering process’, I set in dialogue two biographical images, symbolic of different attitudes of relational-engagement I encountered in my practice.



*Alfred and the Sofa*, photograph by Beatrice Catanzaro, 2020

The image on the left, dated 1885, depicts Alfred Fagerholm, my Swedish great-grandfather, on a horse in northern China. Alfred was a Lutheran pastor and missionary for the American Church in China between 1875 and 1900. The image on the right shows the sofa in Fatima’s courtyard, where Fatima and I spent numerous evenings conversing during the five years I lived and worked in Palestine. Those images conflate distant stories and geographies, weaved together through my biography. They stand as metaphors for profoundly different attitudes of relational engagement.

On the one hand, my great-grandfather stands for the act of proselytizing in the restless endeavour to fulfil his ideology. I now relate this, by analogy, to the philosophy underpinning the cultural mind-set of humanitarian aid and Socially Engaged Art or community-art, where the caregiver and the care-receiver are neatly polarised in a binary relation of power<sup>9</sup>. On the other hand, the sofa

<sup>9</sup> As Grant Kester affirms, “Community art is typically centred around an exchange between an ‘artist’ (who is understood to be ‘empowered’, creatively, intellectually, symbolically, expressively, financially, institutionally, or otherwise), and a given subject who is defined a priori as ‘in need of’ empowerment, access to creative/expressive skills, etc. Thus, the ‘community’ in ‘community art’ often, although clearly not always, refers to individuals marked as culturally, economically, or socially different either from the artist themselves, or from the audience for the particular project” (Kester, 1995).

stands for the capacity to go beyond this binary-ism of I-Other relation, making space for relations grounded in reciprocity and nurtured by self-reflectivity.

As Fatima once reminded me, “I encounter my self through the other”<sup>10</sup>.

The dialogue between those two images resonates with a core question that runs through my practice-based enquiry and this reflective commentary. What methods of relational engagement are needed to enable intersubjectivity based on reciprocity and self-reflectivity, where acting upon the shared social-context does not deny the ‘inner’ aspects of those actions?

In light of discoveries gained from a phenomenological ‘re-entering’ of *BAK*, I had to reconsider the ‘problem-solving approach’ central to *BAK* in its entirety. This included reexamining the project’s site-specific character, where both its conception and production were direct responses to a specific and situated context, speaking-to and acting upon a precise social matrix. In fact, it became evident from the presentations I gave on *BAK* on numerous occasions at western art venues that *BAK*’s narrative had hardly any resonance for people beyond the geopolitical and cultural frame of the Middle-East and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Instead, these talks, seminars and conferences, raised a sense of pietism among the public, echoing the words of Hal Foster and Know Miwon:

“community-based artists may inadvertently aid in the colonisation of difference - for benevolent and well-intentioned gestures of democratisation can have effects of colonialism, too - in which the targeting of marginalised community groups (serving as Third Worlds found in the First World) leads to their becoming both subject and co-producer of their own self-appropriation in the name of self-affirmation” (Miwon, 1997, p.139).

Since my intention in unearthing the repressed histories of the Nablusi women’s community was to make visible their dignified resistance against a long-lasting Israeli occupation, I became aware that “the siting of art in ‘real’ places can also be a means to extract the social and historical dimensions out of places” (Miwon, 1997, p. 53). And in this way, serving a western-centric desire for doing good in the name of paternalistic reparation instead. At the same time, I turned myself into the benevolent and committed artist in my ‘heroic’ endeavour to help the ‘weak-other’.

Further on in the presentations of *BAK*, my emphasis on the Nablus context triggered an ethnographic distance, which possibly prevented the public from seeing the shared responsibility for the production of unjust conditions – allowing for a view of the Palestinian occupation in terms of a specific relation between Israel and Palestine – and obscuring the multiple entanglements of our historical colonial past and the current western geopolitical and economic interests in the region.

As Edward Said reminds us in *Culture and Imperialism*: “none of us is outside, or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is

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<sup>10</sup> In a private conversation with Fatima Kaddumy, March 2015.

complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings” (Said, 1993, p. 7).

The insights about the site-specific and problem-solving approach of *BAK* gave rise to questioning whether or not I was reiterating I-Other attitudes built on global humanitarian assumptions. As a consequence of this, a careful reconsideration and re-articulation of my SEA approach was needed. How could my practice respond to concerns situated in specific locations and still enter a dialogue with other contexts where similar concerns are present, albeit in different specific forms? How could I talk from a wider perspective – what I’ve come to call ‘terrain of concern’ – that connects distant geographies and mitigates against attitudes of *talking about* or *on behalf* of others? When embarking on the issue of migration and borders with *You Are But You Are Not* (2016) in the northern Italian city of Bolzano, these questions accompanied me. In response to them, I developed and applied what I describe as a ‘terrain of concern’ approach.

The ‘terrain of concern’ approach attempts to set in dialogue multiple ‘elsewheres’, where similar concerns are present. Not to de-territorialise the concern, reifying it from its situated territory, but to instead enable connections among multiple territories and situations sharing similar conditions and, while drawing out those connections, to unveil the mind-sets and cultural attitudes that produce them. In the evolution and development of *YABYAN*, I, therefore, intended to set in dialogue multiple locations through contiguity of concerns: to talk simultaneously about the border region of South Tyrol and the ongoing reinforcement of borders throughout Europe.

By so doing, *YABYAN* avoided becoming a ‘problem-solving’ SEA project. Its deepened, more holistic scope was to engender a ‘reflective-arena’ enabling connections around the migratory crises and border reinforcement in, and beyond, Bolzano.

#### 4. Embarking on a new practice of relational engagement

This Chapter elucidates how the insights and questions that emerged through the ‘re-entering process’ of *Bait-al-Karama* (2010) evolved and shaped new relational engagement methods and strategies – inspired by those experienced in the Social Sculpture Forum<sup>11</sup> – in the practice-based research and production of *You Are But You Are Not*. Following a brief introduction of *YABYAN* (2016, paragraph 4.1), I will draw on some of the cardinal aspects of my approach to setting the scene for *YABYAN*, such as the ‘transdisciplinary-companionship’ strategy (paragraph 4.1.1), the ‘terrain of concern’ approach, and the ‘reflective-arena’ approach. I will then introduce the relational-engagement methods (paragraph 4.2), which were exemplified through this practice (paragraph 4.2.1 and 4.2.2). Finally, I will analyse the outcomes of *YABYAN*, the audio-guide and the ‘activation process’ (paragraph 4.3, 4.3.1, 4.3.2) in light of my findings: findings upon which new challenges and insights have emerged for both present and future practice (4.4).

##### 4.1 *You Are But You Are Not*: an introduction

The outset of *You Are But You Are Not* (2016) was an invitation<sup>12</sup> by the Art Association Lungomare (LM) to participate in a research and production-based artist-in-residence program<sup>13</sup>, running from February 2016 to July 2017 in Bolzano, South Tyrol (Italy). The theme proposed by the curatorial team related to the issues of border and migration in South Tyrol during the climax of the refugee crisis, which had significantly increased since 2014.

The process that would become *YABYAN* was articulated in three core phases: an initial field research phase (February to June 2016), a secondary practice-based research phase, which included workshops and public initiatives (July to September 2016), and the third phase of production and public presentation (October 2016 to May 2017).

I employed transdisciplinary exchange strategies in all work stages, inviting into dialogue activists, researchers, representatives of NGOs and refugees in and around Bolzano.

Central to *YABYAN*, was the facilitation of a ‘reflective-arena’ to critically reflect-back and engage with some of the core implications and consequences of the reception procedures performed in Europe today in response to the refugee crisis.

*YABYAN* resulted in a permanent 20-minute audio-guide for the city Bolzano, walking the audience on a given route through the town.

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<sup>11</sup> An annual forum offered by the Social Sculpture Research Unit at Oxford Brookes, University.

<sup>12</sup> See Appendix Note 1

<sup>13</sup> The artist-in-residency program of Lungomare is an ongoing program supported and funded by the Municipality of Bolzano and the Region of South Tyrol.

The walk begins at Bolzano's train station, from Platform 3, where trains run from Bolzano to Germany via Austria. The walk then takes one along the city's margins, ending in Rosegger Park, opposite the central police station. The route's trajectory connects the most decisive sites for migrants and refugees arriving in Bolzano: the train station is the crossroads for arrivals and departures, and the police station is where the procedure of refugees reception unfolds. An integral part of the audio-guide is what I have called an 'activation-process', designed to accompany and mediate the audio-guide to larger groups. The activation-process invites participants into a space for shared critical reflections around questions of hospitality and border. The work was made available to a wider public in May 2017 in a public installation in the park opposite the train station. The public installation functioned as a pick-up site for headphones and a meeting-point for a weekly public program of talks curated by LM. The audio-guide continues to be available as a permanent audio experience, through the network of Bolzano's civic libraries, the tourist office, and also online on a devoted website<sup>14</sup>.



*You Are But You Are Not*, photograph by Beatrice Catanzaro, 2017

#### 4.1.1 Setting the scene: a transdisciplinary strategy

In concert with the artist-in-residence programme, Lungomare invited a theoretical research contribution to the cultural geographer Kolar Aparna. The artistic and academic contributions were not required to overlap nor to intersect.

During the first field research visit in Bolzano in March 2016, however, Aparna and I worked

<sup>14</sup> [www.lungomare.org/youarebutyouarenot/index-en.htm](http://www.lungomare.org/youarebutyouarenot/index-en.htm).

together, enabling a series of conversations with individuals and organisations involved at different levels in refugee reception in Bolzano. They included NGO's, refugees, volunteers, lawyers, public officers, among others. These conversations provided a situated understanding of the refugee crises in South-Tyrol and a comprehensive overview of refugees' national and international reception modalities and procedures.

One of the things that surfaced in these conversations was how the refugees arriving in Bolzano reignited pre-existing inter-ethnic conflicts among linguistic groups in the Province, particularly between Italian and German-speaking communities. Like salt in a wound, the large-scale arrival of refugees aroused the pain of past traumas, taking the conversation back to the regional history of forceful annexation after WWI by the Mussolini Regime. Also, these interlocutors' testimonies displayed a tangible sense of impotence in the face of the legal procedures and norms that constitute refugee reception in Europe today. The impotence became clear: of being a subaltern in bureaucratic structures which separate and fragment attempts to assist into prescribed norms and protocols, despite all the human desperation involved.

From my first visit, fragmentation became an issue of concern. It was emphasised and mirrored by the distinct invitations for a theoretical researcher and an artistic researcher-producer.

In disagreement with this, Aparna and I began working together in such a way as to reconcile disciplinary fragmentation. We decided to bring our intentions and fields of knowledge into dialogue and pursue an active exchange and transdisciplinary research.

I have come to describe this way of working as 'transdisciplinary companionship' to evoke and remark the attempt and willingness to walk together as companions on a journey to unsettle field-related and individual assumptions.

In this striving for and commitment to unsettling field-related and individual assumptions, it became evident that the subject of our conversations, the refugee-voice, was still absent as an active interlocutor, becoming the object of discussion instead. To contrast with this rapid drift into *talking about others*, a third voice was needed – a voice speaking from the embodied account of refugees experience.

In May 2016, Mehbratu Efreem Gebreab, a young Eritrean geographer based in the Netherlands, was invited to join the research practice's first two phases. Efreem fled from the Eritrean military regime in 2011, embarking on a four-year life-threatening journey to the Netherlands, arriving and receiving asylum in 2015. The inclusion of Efreem – subject of and witness to hospitality procedures central to the investigations of *YABYAN* – as a research companion contributed to focusing attention on the terrain of shared responsibilities underpinning the current migration crisis.

For instance, this meant inviting some of the institutional interlocutors in the reception system of Bolzano (politicians, NGO's managers and academics, to mention some) into a direct dialogue with real-life experiences produced by processes based on abstracted norms and protocols of reception.

Extending the ‘transdisciplinary companionship’ in this inclusive way meant to enable a continual conversational environment between Aparna, Efrem and myself: a conversational setting in which I could explore, experiment with and give shape to new relational engagement methods which I will elucidate in paragraph 4.2.

#### 4.1.2 Setting the scene: ‘reflective-arena’ approach

The sense of impotence expressed by most people working on the ground in Bolzano in relation to the refugee crises had much to do with the pressure and haste to follow legal procedures, which in turn meant that the need to collectively consider and reflect on the personal emotional dilemmas, conflicting intentions, and linguistic and cultural disconnects, were neglected in the refugee reception system.

This sense of impotence was made tangible by the ethical dilemma experienced by C., a volunteer at the reception centre for refugees at Hotel Alpi in Bolzano, who was in charge of collecting biographical narratives of refugees applying for asylum:

“I felt I was a kind of guardian, a silent witness ferrying, like Charon, souls between the world of the living and the dead. As Charon got paid a coin, the coin I was paid is their stories. Stories that should meet validation criteria and expectations and, of course, be true. Sometimes, as we victimise the migrant person, flattening their identity to the unthinkable conditions they are faced with, we act as a voyeur of atrocities, demanding full details. Are we looting their story? Who has the right to one’s own story? What about the right to lie?”<sup>15</sup>.

What C. experienced in the institutional procedures of hospitality is the radical disconnection from other ways of encountering rooted in empathy and reciprocity. Disconnection and fragmentation of I-Other relations, pleading for a space for consideration and shared reflections. This need for a shared reflective environment resonated strongly with my intention in *YABYAN* (2016) to disengage from the problem-solving SEA approach endorsed by *Bait-al-Karama* (2010). I, therefore, decided to focus on exploring and developing other approaches to I-Other relations grounded in relational engagement methods of collective self-reflective inquiry. I have named this approach the ‘reflective-arena’ approach, intending to enable participatory settings where shared self-reflective enquiry processes underpin intersubjectivity. With this approach, I hoped to avoid, on the one hand, generalised overarching group identities replacing singular persons’ voices, as was the case in *BAK*. And then, on the other hand, engaging in intersubjectivity while activating all participants’ inner individual-context, including my own, to attempt overcoming power-imbalances between artist and participants.

The ‘reflective-arena approach’ entails participatory self-reflective processes to observe and

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<sup>15</sup> Extract from the conversation with C. on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 2016.

collectively engage with emotions, assumptions and mind-sets related to questions of social injustice. In *YABYAN*, the ‘reflective-arena’ approach served to create space to identify and inhabit the conditions produced by the system of juridical norms of hospitality procedures.

To internally inhabit those conditions by resonating and connecting through personal life experiences, enabling an intersubjective setting emerging from shared self-reflective explorations. In this light, the ‘reflective-arena’ approach mitigates against polarisation into I-Other relations that easily glide into *talking about or on behalf others*. Instead, it is an invitation to understand the fabric of the social and cultural assumptions we inhabit through careful self and collective non-judgemental listening.

The ‘reflective-arena approach’ includes and combines dialogical and discursive methods (e.g. the ‘situating-glossary method’) with imaginal language methods (‘image-word method’) to find ways to listen to oneself through the other, which will be expanded on in paragraph 4.2.1 and 4.2.2.

#### 4.1.3 Setting the scene: introducing the ‘terrain of concern’ approach

*“Your story is based on fear.  
Can you share your fears?  
Can you trust your secret will be kept?  
Even if you get the papers, your fear stays with you...  
Being raped you will never get married.  
If you share your story you may get the papers,  
but what if your story gets out from this room?  
Can I trust the translator?  
What about the right to my story.”  
(in conversation with Mehbratu Efreem Gebreab*

Chapter 3 highlighted the reasons for reexamining the SEA site-specific and problem-solving approach of *BAK* (2010), in response to the humanitarian compassion and ethnographic distance the project triggered as it reached international visibility. It also referred to how these approaches possibly prevented the public from seeing the shared responsibility in the production of unjust conditions and the inability of *BAK* to speak adequately to people beyond Palestine. By doing so, it created the danger of reinforcing “the imperial ‘generosity’ of providing for those dispossessed by imperialist policies” (Azoulay, 2019, p.12) and contradicting, in this way, the project’s emancipatory intentions.

Thus, when I was invited to the border territory of South Tyrol, rather than focusing on the site-specificity of Bolzano, I chose to speak from borders as shared conditions that ripple and proliferate globally and at multiple levels. What ‘terrain of concern’ could emerge from Bolzano in the light of the migration crisis, which could connect Bolzano to other borders in Europe? How could *I talk from* Bolzano while talking to multiple ‘elsewheres’ that echo similar border conditions?

Arriving at Platform 3 of Bolzano's train station; the waiting room has been locked since early 2015, restricting migrants from halting. The locked waiting room echoes the increased levels of police control, the reinforcement of the Italian-Austrian border and the closure, during the evolution of *YABYAN*<sup>16</sup>, of many public exchange forums in Bolzano. The locked waiting room mirrors the general condition of waiting imposed onto migrant bodies, entrapped in a morass of bureaucratic procedures, which give rise to ongoing delays, forms of imprisonments and human desperation.



*The locked waiting room*, photograph by Beatrice Catanzaro, 2016

Refugees reception procedures are complex and evolving webs of norms based on national and international rights and laws. In particular, the Dublin Regulation<sup>17</sup> forces refugees to begin their legal procedure for asylum protection within the first arrival nation's borders and regardless of their destination. When refugees arrive at the shores of South Italy, border-police collect fingerprints and database recordings, after which refugees can apply for international asylum protection in Italy only. Although police personnel are required to give legal guidance to refugees, and an interpreter or a mediator should be present, both aspects remain discretionary and overlooked. This is similar to the deficiency of psychological support to refugees to overcome the

<sup>16</sup> At the time of research, numerous actions have been taken in Bolzano by public institutions to hinder refugees' presence and mobility in the city. For instance, the open WI-FI access of the contemporary art museum, MUSEION, was temporarily closed to prevent migrants from halting in the museum's proximity. Similarly, to avoid migrants camping in the park opposite the train station, the irrigation system was timed to start at 3 am rather than 6 am. The public library sealed all the electronic plugs in the reading rooms to prevent refugees from charging their mobile phones.

<sup>17</sup> See also [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum/examination-of-applicants\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum/examination-of-applicants_en).

unspeakable traumas experienced by many. From this initial reception phase, asylum applicants can wait up to two or three years until a verdict is delivered. To seek asylum is to enter a “condition of waiting, uncertainty, and dependency that frustrates any chance for self-creation” (Farrier, 2011, p. 6).

As I came to experience more of this legal system of refugee and asylum reception it seemed fitting to define it as ‘hegemonic hospitality’. ‘Hegemonic hospitality’ refers to the language in which the host rules out hospitality. In Jacques Derrida’s words:

“the foreigner is first foreign to the legal language in which the duty of hospitality is formulated, the right to asylum, its limits, norms, policing etc. He has to ask for hospitality in a language which by definition is not his own, the one imposed on him by the master of the house, the host, the king, the lord, the authorities, the nation, the State, the father etc. [...] that is where the question of hospitality begins: must we ask the foreigner to understand us, to speak our language in all the senses of this term, in all its possible extensions, before being able and so as to be able to welcome him into our country?” (Derrida, 1998, p. 15).

The language of the host is emblematised by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, an idea which Azoulay describes as a “sovereign universal human rights discourse, based on abstract equality [which] renders obsolete and irrelevant the real, concrete inequalities perpetrated by imperialism and inherent in the position of citizens in a differential body politics” (Azoulay, 2019, p. 54). Thus, the seemingly neutral procedures and protocols of the refugee and asylum seeker reception process enhances differential sovereignty while imposing a universal legal system to which all identities should unconditionally adapt.

“When I had to fill the C3<sup>18</sup> form” stated S., an asylum-seeker in Bolzano, “they ask me for my official birth certificate. In my country, on the ID, we only write the year and place. I asked my mother, but she remembers only that I was born in spring. If you cannot prove your birth date, they assign you the 1st of January.”<sup>19</sup>

A key intention of *YABYAN* was to engage with and reflect on the modalities in which ‘hegemonic hospitality’ is performed in Europe today, and by so doing to possibly speak-back to “cultural mechanisms that put the foreigner on a precariously wavering border between being and not being a valid, culturally sanctioned, subject” (Rae G. and Ingala E., 2017, p.93). This would hopefully make visible the fact that national borders, in contrast to concrete objects, are “first and foremost a legal fact [...] that is reproduced and kept alive by a large ensemble of connected practices, ranging from printed bodies of law and maps to corporeal inscriptions and the surveillance of boundaries on the landscape. The border is an active verb” (Houtum, Kramsch, Zierhofer, 2005, p.3).

Identifying the ‘terrain of concern’ out of which *YABYAN* would grow, along with ‘hegemonic hospitality’, enabled navigating and making sense of the substance gathered in the

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18 The form C3 consists of an application document through which the application for international protection is officially formulated.

19 Extract from the conversation with S. on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March 2016.

field research phase and bringing to the foreground the cause and effect relations between reception procedures and their embodied experiences. When life trajectories are interrupted, drawn in bureaucracies' faults, and human bodies, denied visibility, are confined in reception centres waiting for a verdict.

#### 4.2 Introduction to a new 'relational engagement' approach and its methods

*Think of an iceberg whose peaks emerge from the horizon line. These peaks are what you see, while the massive volume connecting all of them lies invisible beneath.*

The iceberg is a metaphor for the interconnections beneath the visible. It invites one to look beneath the appearance, beyond the fragmentation of social forms and disciplines, at the underlying shared social structures and cultural mechanisms that we are part of rather than separate from.

Looking beneath the appearance entails engendering capacities to set in relations and connect what comes from the outer social-context with responses from the inner individual-context, as

“the more we are involved with a culture that seemingly exalts the individual while possibly rendering him ever more dependent upon external ruling and incapable of sustaining a [...] contact with his own inner 'void', the more we become compulsively dependent on external messages and incapable of letting any inner message spring to life” (Corradi Fiumara, 1990, p.129).

Entering a dialogue and connecting with the “inner void” described by Corradi Fiumara, means enabling ways to engage with the outer social-context while listening to and activating<sup>20</sup> the inner individual-context where emotions, thinking and attitudes shape our mindsets and assumptions.

“Listening”, states Corradi Fiumara, “is not simply an activity of applied thinking in which [...] one occupies oneself with an object of study; it is, on the contrary, a procedure whose authentic advancement depends upon one's ability to re-enter one's own self” (Corradi Fiumara, 1990, p.115).

The kind of relational-engagement I am addressing consists of raising awareness and acting upon personal mindsets and assumptions as done in the first act of mind-shift and transition to overcome reproducing those “comforting values” reiterating forms of inequality, as the philosopher Krishnamurti states:

“though intellectually we may perceive that life is a continual process of flux, of mutations necessitating constant change, emotionally or sentimentally we cling to the establishment and comforting values, hence there is a constant battle between change and the desire for permanency” (Krishnamurti, 1992, p. 2).

With *YABYAN* (2016), looking beneath the appearance through this 'relational-engagement'

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<sup>20</sup> The notion of 'activating the inner individual-context' refers to what Shelley Sacks describes as becoming 'mobilized internally', core scope of SSCP to enable us to respond in an eco-social perspective. “The ability to respond comes from being moved: to take care, to engage, to make whole. In this connected mode, the judging 'I' with all its prejudices no longer separates itself from the thing perceived. Instead, it is open to encounter what is [...]. When my response arises from such empathic knowing, the call to respond is lived in me. I choose to respond from a state of connectedness. [To give raise to] connective actions based on both individual transformations and through empathic engagement and exchange between individuals, groups and cultures” (Sacks, S. 2017, p.175).

approach, meant to *speak from border conditions*, instead of about border conditions, out of understanding the individual intimate relation to conditions that, although differing in privileges, are, nevertheless, shared by the host and the guest. Practising relational-engagement in this way focuses on recognising the inner individual emotional and imaginal account of border conditions, by which it is possible to resonate and become aware of the broader cultural and social construction of border conditions and relate to those of others. Thus, the ‘terrain of concern’ of ‘hegemonic hospitality’ is explored by connecting to the social and cultural context in which it sits through individual emotions, values and mindset – rejecting a disembodied, conceptual or abstract understanding of border, whereby the border is othered to human beings who are in the box of being refugees only.

In the following two paragraphs, I will elucidate two core phenomenological methods of a relational-engagement approach, emerging from the practice-based research of *YABYAN*.

These methods aim to enable participants to activate and share their biographical narrative, emotional connections with and images of border conditions.

#### 4.2.1 The ‘Situating Glossary’ method and its practice

Invited to explore the question of borders and migration in the current refugee crisis, I was confronted with dreadful pain and traumas. How could I inhabit these wounds? Was it possible to relate to these hurts by resonating with similar conditions I have encountered in my life?

What images, emotions and stories, gathered from my biographical and imaginal narrative could resonate with these wounds and enter into dialogue with others’ while activating my inner-context?

The ‘situating glossary’ is a method that emerged while questioning how one could relate to refugees’ stories without turning them into objects of observation or the recipients of pious emotional attention. The ‘situating glossary’ is designed to resonate with others’ stories, allowing personal narratives, images, and thoughts to be re-activated; to disengage from generalised and reified terminologies, and taking-in and situating in individual embodied experiences, otherwise abstracted terms, like border. Hence, ‘situating glossary’ is not a practice of direct response or identification with others’ narratives. Instead, it is a self-reflective method to shift back one’s gaze and engage with what personal embodied narratives, emotions and images, spring from the inner individual-context.

The ‘situating glossary’ method requires what Shelley Sacks describes as “connective distance” (Sacks and Zumdick, 2013, p.8), a distance that she says “makes space” – a proximity that enables one to recognize an other’s singularity and to become internally active with and through the other. The philosopher Chul Han refers to something similar. He writes: “The abolition of distance

does not create more closeness, but rather destroys it [...]. Closeness and distance are interwoven, kept together by a dialectical tension. This tension consists in the fact that things are given life precisely by their opposite, by that which is other than themselves” (Chul Han, 2018, p.12).

In *YABYAN* (2016), the ‘situating glossary’ phenomenological method enabled me and others to enter in empathic resonance with conditions produced by legal procedures of hospitality applied to refugees in Europe today, to begin *talking from* shared conditions rather than *talking about* or *on behalf of others*.

Below are two concrete examples of applying the ‘situating glossary’ method:

1) a co-writing process with Aparna (the cultural geographer) and Efrem (who had come to Europe as a refugee) within the frame of a presentation held at LM’s cultural space in Bolzano and open to the general public in June 2016 and 2) the design of collective self-reflective processes for a workshop in July 2016 with a group of invited participants selected among the interlocutors met during the initial research phase and involved, at different levels, in the refugee crisis.

#### The ‘Situating glossary’ in practice

During the second research phase of *YABYAN*, I invited Aparna and Efrem to experiment with a co-writing practice to explore and interweave our biographical narratives, emotions and imaginal thoughts around border conditions. This intuitive and experimental co-writing process came about when confronted with the unspeakably adverse life journey of Efrem.

Instead of remaining a passive receiver, the co-writing practice offered us the possibility to set in dialogue our inner landscape of images, personal narratives of, and emotions about borders while fully listening to each other. This co-writing process was a preliminary process in defining and further applying the ‘situating glossary’ phenomenological method.

I invited them both to explore the term border through re-entering conditions experienced in our lives, thereafter returning the images, stories and emotions to the group.

The process changed the term border to a material substance we could connect and dialogue with, as the border was no longer an abstraction but rather a concrete constellation of multiple images, stories and emotions. Those images, stories and emotions intertwined in a collective writing process, producing a text performed in a public reading at the LM’s cultural space in July 2016 in Bolzano.

Here is an extract of the text:

- K:       Where are you?  
E:       I am here. I am in a place after having crossed the hottest desert,  
          the most dangerous sea, wild forests, and big cities. But, where are you?  
B:       I am in a prison, taken by smugglers, in the middle of the desert.  
K:       Who are they?  
B:       I am in a metal container.

1.5 meters underground and 50 cm above.  
The wall to my back is burning my skin.  
So it should be the west.  
From the south-east comes the sounds of the prayer.

E: Where are we?  
K: We are at the border.  
E: Where is the border?  
B: Non vedi come mi guardano. Questo e' il confine.<sup>21</sup>  
K: Just don't look back, look down, just sit like the way they sit.  
Behave normally till you cross the border.  
B: Are we in Europe?  
E: Here I feel like I am in Asmara.  
My grandfather, every time he was angry, he preferred to curse in Italian.  
Testa di gallina!<sup>22</sup>  
He found no more words in Tigrinia for his anger.

K: We are at Latitude: 46°29.4402' N and Longitude: 11°20.3892' E.  
This is exactly where we are.  
B: But you? Where are you?  
E: I am also where you are but you just don't see me.  
K: What do you see? Do you see rocks or water?  
B: I see the mountains floating in the horizon and the sea hardening beneath my feet.  
I don't see you.  
K: You don't see me because I am Medea, the foreign woman, the barbarian.  
E: Here I give you half of this stone that has travelled across many seas and passed  
through many hands. It has travelled from Cairo to Napoli, Nablus to Mumbai,  
and Addis to Breda to Bolzano.  
Now, with this I am part of your network and you of mine.  
B: They used to call it tessare hospitales. So, where is the stone going next?  
K: To the mountains where there is incessant metamorphosis.  
A horizon of mixing tongues, mixing bloods, mixing smells, mixing traces ...  
B: Where is the border then?  
E: The Border is always moving because the mountains have been and are always  
moving.  
B: What are you leaving behind?  
E: I left you some Schuttelbrood on the table in the kitchen.  
K: I take with me the smell of fenugreek from your blouse.

A second example of the 'situating glossary' method in practice is in the workshop session's processes of July 2016. This workshop involved twelve participants I invited among the people met in the first field research phase who had particularly inspired and contributed to my understanding of the emotional dilemma and sense of impotence produced by the refugee reception system. The workshop built on a series of four collective self-reflective processes to explore some

<sup>21</sup> "Don't you see how they look at me, this is the border".

<sup>22</sup> "Chicken head".

of the core questions rooted in the ‘terrain of concern’ of ‘hegemonic hospitality’.

Each self-reflective collective process combined with a contribution by one of the participants, addressing different aspects of ‘hegemonic hospitality’ through their discipline or personal experience.

Due to space constraints and relevance, I will focus only on two of these self-reflective processes.

The first introduced by Mehbratu Efreem Gebreab in his contribution on a geographical and experiential perspective on borders; the latter introduced by Francesco Strocchi’s contribution based on his doctorate entitled ‘A Historical Perspective on Migration at the Time of the Roman Empire’.

Efreem shared with the participants the multiple borders he encountered along his journey from Eritrea to Europe, both as a trained geographer and as a refugee. His contribution, entitled “In/Visibility of Borders”, explored the visible (walls, check-points, lines, etc.) and the invisible (political, economic, and language) borders he endured as a refugee. After Efreem’s intervention, I guided the participants into visualising with closed eyes what border-image arose within their biographical narrative. I asked them to stay with their internal image, observing without judgement, what emotions surfaced. Subsequently, in writing, the participants captured their internal image of border conditions and their emotions. These associations were first shared in pairs and then to the group as a whole.

The process enabled the group to situate the otherwise abstracted term border in the realm of the participants’ embodied experiences and emotions and to share collectively.

“I never connected my personal experiences of ‘border’ to that of others” – affirms B., translator and cultural mediator – “listening to so many different emotional experiences [of borders] awakened a sense of connection among the group, even if we all come from different cultural backgrounds and life-journeys”<sup>23</sup>.

The second self-reflective process was built on Dr. Francesco Strocchi’s contribution; an examination of the interrelation between personal stories and the construction and narration of migratory movements’ history. Strocchi emphasised the role objects can have in reconstructing historical events, made possible because of the stories of human relations taking place through and by that object. After Strocchi’s contribution, I invited the participants to think of a story of migration occurring in their family and to recall a memory-object connected to that story. Each would then write their story and describe or draw the memory-object. Subsequently, participants were clustered in small groups of three people and invited to share their migration stories and memory-objects. Finally, those stories and memory-objects were shared with the whole group by each one telling the story of another small group member.

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<sup>23</sup> Extract from a feedback session with B. on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July 2016.



*Memory objects*, photograph by Beatrice Catanzaro, 2016

Inviting participants to tell others' stories highlighted the narrator's role and responsibility, becoming a witness of others' stories, as takes place in the hospitality procedure.

By this process, stories of migration and their memory-objects began talking and resonating one with the other. It also made evident that all participants from European countries underwent migratory experiences in their family genealogy, making visible the largely overlooked history of migration in the creation of Europe.

“The difference”, stated B. B., chief geologist at the Natural Museum in Bolzano, “is that I still have the object [a watch], of my grandfather, while most of the people arriving as refugees today get any memory-object they carry ripped off them – this [being ripped of memory-objects] is like cutting-off a connection with your place of belonging and your family<sup>24</sup>.”

It is important here to highlight the reasons for collectively sharing the self-reflective explorations. Its purpose is not to compare multiple embodied understandings to show the different ways each participant understands border and migration conditions. Instead, the collective sharing is to make visible how otherwise reified words can be reconsidered and renegotiated through embodied realities. Biographical narratives and imaginaries enable recognising others

<sup>24</sup> Extract from a feedback session with B.B. on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July 2016.

as singularities. Singularities that are not compared with or conformed to predetermined social categories but are carefully heard for what they are.

“I thought I would spend a day with colleagues of the ‘reception business’” – observed A. from the minor-protection centre Volontarius in Bolzano after the workshop – “I thought we would sit and complain, as we usually do, about things that do not work. Instead, I experienced a way of conversations that connected us [the participants] all - there was a space for everyone”<sup>25</sup>.

#### 4.2.2 The ‘Image-Word’ method and its practice

Inspired and informed by James Hillman’s work *Alchemical Psychology*, I developed the ‘image-word’ method to relate to and work with the condition of impotence shared by the worn-out discussants in Bolzano in the face of the whole ‘hospitality’ situation.

An example of this impotence and distress was reflected in the words of ‘E’ from the informal volunteers group Binario<sup>26</sup>: “When I practice my daily support, providing food, drinks and shelter, I feel like I am the boundary to their [the refugees] destination”. E. shared the emotional distress in understanding that her caregiving actions were somehow interfering with the migrant’s final travel-destinations in central Europe.

The more I heard of these people’s distress and witnessed their feelings of impotence, the clearer it became that an anchoring process was needed. A process that would enable people to zoom out from the immediate state of emergency to facilitate a reflective space, but without reifying reality in such a way that one ends up with concepts and abstractions.

Hillman’s proposition, building on Carl Jung’s insights, aims to enable a phenomenological re-inhabiting of conditions otherwise abstracted into psychiatric concepts, and through the language of alchemical transformation, to return the imaginative material to words. This was Hillman’s proposal about ways in which language might capture the embodied condition of psychosis and enable the “movement of the soul”. Hillman’s invitation, as described by the author Tom Cheetman, is to restore the “alchemical mode to imagine things” and “return material to our words” (Cheetman, 2015, p. 26). This ‘image-word’ relationship for Hillman is central to the way we experience and know the world:

“The concept is the workhorse of rationalism. Rationalism accounts for the world in concept words rather than images or thing words or craft words. It is based on establishing identities – what something is rather than what it is like. And to say what something is, we have to treat it schematically [and] rather than describing it metaphorically, we categorize it with a concept and say what it is” (Cheetman, 2015, p.67).

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<sup>25</sup> Extract from a feedback session with A. on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July 2016.

<sup>26</sup> See also [www.binario1bz.it](http://www.binario1bz.it).

Hillman's work recovers phenomenological conditions back from abstraction and into an embodied reality, searching for *what is like* instead of fixing assumptions of *what is* through concepts.

Inspired by Hillman's radical take on the imaginal language, I conceived the 'image-word' method for use with *You Are But You Are Not* (2016). This method consisted of identifying guiding-images, which, through their embodied nature, were vivid metaphors for and reminders of lived understandings of migration and movement. Such metaphors, sparked by the geographic location of Bolzano and its history, could enter into dialogue with, interrogate and reflect on the human-migratory crises of today. The following two images are mine: they have informed my research and the development of *YABYAN*. The one is an image of the mountains with their metamorphic rock formations; the other of a 'shifting-compass'.

### Image-word in practice

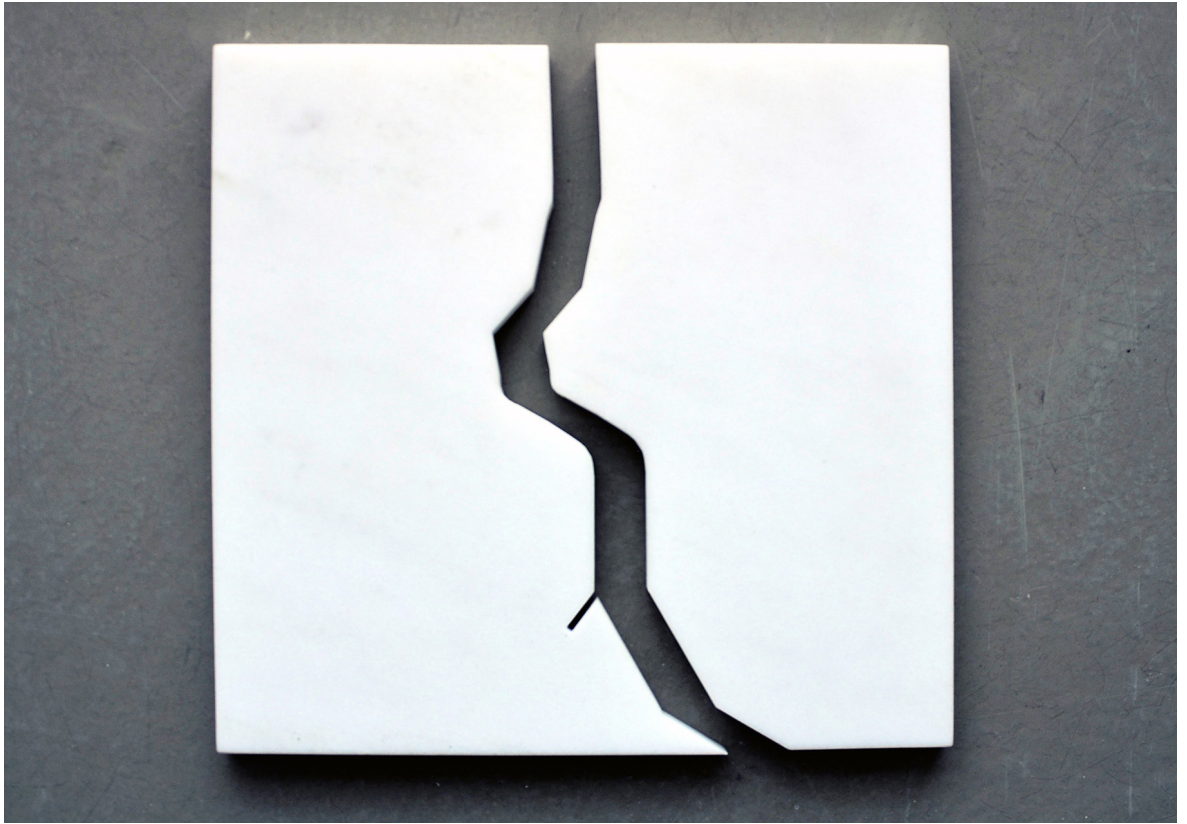
The sense of impotence and feelings of paralysis among the subjects of and witnesses to migration seemed to be calling for further engagement. Were there images capable of opening up the possibilities beyond closure and entrapment?

*I looked at the mountains.*

Bolzano, located in a crater of geological volcanic formations, is surrounded by a crown of mountains, an impassive witness-reminder of other time-scapes and continuous movement. A movement produced by imperceptible shifts of the tectonic plates, migrating all of us elsewhere, beyond the human-made borders we so fearfully enforce and protect. The mountains offered an opportunity to *zoom out* from the refugees' crises situations on the ground, of burnout and impotence. *Zooming out* in space and time could enable one to question human-made borders by entering a geological time-scale where boundaries are no longer fixed but inevitably shift and change. Geological movements are imperceptible, yet the geological plates' slow dynamics are the primary cause of the metamorphic rock formations, widely present in South Tyrol. Metamorphic rocks result from transformation occurring beneath the terrestrial crust, where rocks subjected to heat and pressure undergo physical and chemical changes. This change in form leaves indelible traces on these rocks' patterns, making visible the direction of the tectonic movements. The metamorphic rock formation is a potential 'image-word' if entered as a metaphor and concrete reminder of all things' inexorable movement. A reminder of how this dynamic planetary system leaves, even when invisible, everlasting trails – as such, the metamorphic rock 'image-word' is a metaphor for human migratory fluxes, which, although often hijacked out of public visibility, these human movements leave indelible traces of their passage.

The metamorphic rock inspired the design of a 'guiding-object' to facilitate a collective self-

reflective process to explore ways of practising hospitality in the context of the workshop in July 2016. The guiding-object, made out of white Lasa marble, a local metamorphic rock, was shaped into a *tessare hospitalis*; an interpretation of a document used in Roman times to sanction access to people external to the community networks and organisation.



*Tessare Hospitalis*, photograph by Beatrice Catanzaro, 2016

The *tessare hospitalis* consisted of two equal parts in its original shape, each kept by a person or a family whose names it recorded. Inspired by this notion of travelling objects – witness to relations and situations across distances – I designed a marble tile-like form, cut into two parts.

The dividing cut echoes the Insubric line, marking the separation between the Eurasian and the African plates.



*Tessare Hospitalis*, photograph by Beatrice Catanzaro, 2016

In the collective self-inquiry process, the two parts of the tessera hospitalis were passed on to two people simultaneously, inviting each person to share their first gesture of hospitality. This simple process set in dialogue embodied hospitality practices with institutional procedures, confronting the group with the dissonance between personal stories of hospitality and the institutional system of ‘hegemonic hospitality’.

A further example of an ‘image-word’ informing my practice-based research is the ‘shifting compass’, emerging from investigating how South Tyrol’s identity changed with its annexation to Italy: from being the South of Austria to the North of Italy.

Before the annexation to Italy, Austria regarded South Tyrol as an exotic resort destination with a Mediterranean flavour. Symbolic of this southern identity was the constellation of now-forgotten greenhouses built across Bolzano, which even created plantations of oranges and pineapples in the city. In the aftermath of the annexation to Italy, the perception of South Tyrol shifted to that of a northern Italian region, a destination for winter vacations and mountain-related tourism.

The ‘shifting compass’ as ‘image-word’ stands for the changing perception of geographical divides, questioning the fixing of North-South cultural ontologies, which produce polarisation in subaltern relationships.

Both the ‘image-word’ of the mountains with its metamorphic rock formations and the ‘shifting-compass’ worked as concrete reminders of the transitory nature of fixing I-Other relations in binary schemes and became narrative threads underlying and informing the audio-guide script.

#### 4.3 Elements of the methodology in practice

This paragraph exposes and analyses the core outcomes of the practice-based research of *You Are But You Are Not* (2016): a permanent audio-guide for the city of Bolzano and an ‘activation process’, which facilitated the audio-guide to groups. A central intention in pursuing these forms was to foster and scale-up occasions for collective self-inquiry processes with a broader public.

Those two primary intentions emerged in *YABYAN* from the practice-based research process.

The audio format was inspired by the dialogical approach that had so far underpinned all exchanges and in which listening played a central role. Also, the audio-format contrasted with the overwhelmingly visual media representation of refugees at the time of research, which reinforces and contributes to the construction of ‘racialised others’.

To strengthen the centrality of collective self-reflective processes in *YABYAN* I designed an ‘activation process’ accompanying the audio-guide for groups to engage through relational-engagement methods to question border and hospitality. The intention with the ‘activation process’ was to make visible the discursive research process by offering a similar discursive setting to a broader audience avoiding creating a stand-alone artwork.

### 4.3.1 The Audio-guide

In September 2016, *You Are But You Are Not* moved into the audio-guide production phase, conceived as a strategy to critically reflect on and engage with the conditions of entrapment produced by the reception procedures for refugees and asylum seekers.

The audio script's plot, rooted in the 'terrain of concern' of 'hegemonic hospitality', interwove narratives and anecdotes gathered from the participants' voices in the Bolzano workshop, drawing-out insights from the mountains', the metamorphic rocks and the 'shifting-compass' as guiding-images. One aim of the audio-guide was to expand one's experience of the everyday urban fabric of Bolzano. It did this by interspersing geological metaphors specific to the region with the geopolitical claims of Europe (for example, the self-image of Europe as standing for *justice, freedom and security*)<sup>27</sup>, and the imaginaries built on individual and context related biographies of people involved in refugee and asylum seeker reception procedures. It also aims to enable an intimate connection with a social drama that is often seen as that of 'others': lacking self-responsibility and free of consequences and implications.



*You Are But You Are Not*, photograph by Ivo Corrà, 2017

The audio-guide<sup>28</sup> walks the listener along the city's border – without accessing the inner-city – from the Train Station to Rosegger Park opposite the Central Police Station. This trajectory is symbolic of confining the foreign-body to the periphery, shining light on how obscuring the 'refugee-other' from the public sight entangles with denying the "right to the city" (Lefebvre, 1968).

The audio-guide is made available to the audience through headphone devices, which hold the

<sup>27</sup> See also [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/chapter/justice\\_freedom\\_security.html?root\\_default=SUM\\_1\\_CODED=23](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/chapter/justice_freedom_security.html?root_default=SUM_1_CODED=23).

<sup>28</sup> For the full-text of the audio-guide see Appendix Note n. 2

listeners in an intimate sound space while simultaneously guiding them across the city's public space.

Key figures invited to collaborate in the production were the Jurist, Dr Claudia Pretto and the playwright Elena Pugliese. Pretto, with her long experience with the UNHCR as a member of the refugee reception commission in Turin, contributed to the audio guide production with her in-depth knowledge of Migration Law and its procedures. She provided consultation on the legal stages of the procedures and their application to real-life circumstances. Elena Pugliese, an experienced scriptwriter, contributed to shaping the raw material gathered earlier into the audio-guide text.



*You Are But You Are Not*, photograph by Ivo Corrà, 2017

In both cases, numerous visits to Bolzano were required to enter into dialogue and connect with the network of people *YABYAN* had engaged with and explore the embodied and situated reality of how 'hegemonic hospitality' unfolds in this border Province.

The script crystallised in three chapters, which correspond to three distinctive locations on the route: the train station (*The Wait*), the path to the police station (*The Procedure*) and Rosegger Park (*The Orbit*).

The three audio-guide versions – English, German and Italian – were recorded with a male narrator, whose voice was as neutral as possible in terms of accent and inflexions. This avoiding of specific geographical inflexions was to make it difficult to locate the voice-sound in any particular cultural setting. The narrating voice embodied both the witness and the story's subject to remind the listener of the inevitable entanglement of both witness and subject in conditions of subjugation.

Choosing a male voice also resonated with the male-centric character of Juridical Science and Law. In retrospect and through this reflective analysis raised some still unresolved questions: did the

male-voice prevent part of the audience from connecting intimately with the audio-guide narrative? Did it reinforce a reductionist correspondence between the refugee and the male body? In ex post facto, I would today reconsider using a single male voice to perhaps explore multiple female and male voices by setting them in dialogue and even overlaying them to echo a choir soundscape.



*You Are But You Are Not Booklet*, photograph by Beatrice Catanzaro, 2017

A booklet was designed to integrate the audio-walk with further information and research insights. The trilingual booklet, distributed with the headphones, contains the audio-guide text, expanded with reflections and research references and a map of the walk.

An ‘arena platform’ installed in the Station Park functioned as the site for distributing the audio-guide and booklet. Besides making the work visible and accessible to the public, the ‘arena’ functioned as a site for the ‘activation process’ and a gathering place for the public program of talks curated by Lungomare. In concert with the opening, a dedicated website was launched with project information and the audio-guide in two versions, one for on-site use and one for remote listening. The architectural design for the ‘arena platform’ and the graphic design for the printed and digital communication material were outsourced to third parties, and the execution coordinated by LM. In paragraph 4.4, I will refer to some of the challenges involved in these outsourced productions and how they both ultimately failed to be in tune with the research practice’s ethos.

#### 4.3.2 The Activation process

Throughout the audio-guide production, I became sharply aware that, as a self-standing and

solitary experience, the audio-piece could hardly enable an environment for a collective self-reflective process around the ‘terrain of concern’ of ‘hegemonic hospitality’. Therefore, I began questioning what other processes could capture the experiences that surfaced during the audio-guide to avoid leaving the audience in a disruptive vacuum. Additionally, how could I maintain consistency with the methodology and relational-engagement methods applied throughout the research? In response to these questions, I decided to design an ‘activation process’ accompanying the audio-guide experience, one which could be offered to larger groups, in this instance, to young adults from the 8<sup>th</sup> Grade school classes.

A key aim of the ‘activation process’ was to develop knowledge exchange processes based on embodied experiences rather than projections about migration, rooted mostly in opinions informed by social media, popular culture, and journalistic representations. My intention was to facilitate critical reflection on how the perception of migration in Europe today is based largely on opinion instead of experiential understanding. Opinions conveyed by the media, in the words of Zygmunt Bauman, “to create the atmosphere of a state of emergency, of an enemy at the gate, of plots and conspiracies – in sum, of the country, and also of our own homes, facing a mortal danger” (Bauman, 2016, p. 24). I wanted to bring to the fore the chasm between media filtered realities and lived experience, and make visible how this disconnect affects our mindsets and assumptions around the phenomena of migration, and to relate this to the increasing numbness and impotence toward human suffering “in a culture” as Gemma Corradi Fiumara states, that

“determined by the technology of information the human condition is ever more scrutinized and exposed, [...] with the result that we are increasingly immunized through exposure to human suffering as it is passed to us by the media. Thus humans seem to reconcile themselves to indifference while they are induced to constantly say: ‘We know everything and we can’t do anything about it’” (Corradi Fiumara, 1990, p.171).

With the ‘activation process’, participants are invited to connect to border conditions and hospitality practices by situating these themes in their biographical narrative and everyday life experience. Though one might not have faced the physical crossing of a closed-border, it is still possible to connect with the understanding of ‘closed-border’ by expanding this notion to our daily relations with others and the surrounding environment.

Informed and inspired by key Social Sculpture and Connective Practice strategies, I have described this dialogical process as ‘activation’, to accentuate the intention to “internally mobilise”<sup>29</sup> and giving voice to the multiple participants’ emotions, experiences and images of border conditions and hospitality practices.

‘Activating’ differs from ‘mediating’, as its scope is not to facilitate or mediate between different

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29 See also [www.social-sculpture.org](http://www.social-sculpture.org).

positions and understandings of the migratory crisis. Instead, the purpose of ‘activating’ in the context of *YABYAN* is to trigger and make visible the intimate connections each participant can draw from their life journey in relation to broader social dramas.

This process is particularly relevant in a culturally fragmented region like South Tyrol. In this context, the refugee crisis lies alongside a predetermined fracture that has to do with the reinforcement of visible and invisible borders and raises questions on hospitality practices.

The ‘activation-process’ format consisted of a two-hour series of shared collective self-inquiry activities, including the audio-guide walk, accessed at the ‘arena platform’ installed at the Station Park. A group of five ‘activators’, which included refugees and local people involved in the reception procedures, were trained to deliver the ‘activation process’ during the exhibition period, the process of which consisted of the following steps:

Meeting at the ‘arena platform’ at the Station Park.

The activators introduced themselves and briefed the group with practical information and distributed the headphones.

Walking the group to platform 3 of the train station where the audio-guide begins.

Activators and teachers discreetly followed the students and intervened if needed.

Teachers were also invited to experience the audio-guide.

The walk ends at Rosegger Park in front of the Police station.

At Rosegger Park the activators instructed the group to silently walk back to the Station Park.

The group came together in a circle at the ‘arena platform’ and the activators handed out the *YABYAN* booklet.

First open round of reflections around the audio-guide.

The activators invited the participants to reflect on the term ‘border’ through its various etymological meanings in different languages.

The activators invited the group to participate in a dialogical exercise in pairs on the question of ‘border’, asking:

What is your perception of borders?

What are the external and internal borders you have experienced in your life?

Use of the booklet as a space to write or draw your reflections.

Back to the larger group: collective sharing and gathering of the terms and definitions emerging from the group around ‘border’.

Activators took notes on a large sheet of paper, to make visible the groups’ words associated with ‘border’.

The activators invited the participants to reflect on ‘hospitality’.

A *tessera hospitalis*, made of a simple two parts object, was circulated among the participants with the invitation to express their first gesture of hospitality to the group.

Final question to the group: ‘How would you want to be hosted in a new place of arrival?’

Final round of feedback and reflections



*'Activation process'*, photograph by Beatrice Catanzaro, 2017

Students from the 10<sup>th</sup> Grade of the Walther von der Vogelweide Gymnasium in Bolzano left the following feedback of the audio-guide and activation-process:

“We felt authentic emotions regarding the heartbreaking memories of a so-called ‘outsider’. We realised the difficulties they have to go through and saw our city from a different angle. Everyone had a different experience: some felt alone but not lonely, some comfortable, and some disorientated [...].

On the way back to our meeting point, we thought about how every door or gate or wall can be a border for someone. [...] A group of refugees sitting together in the park made us think about how isolated they are from us, from our reality, from our world — just sitting there and listening to music together. Here there was no need for walls or doors.

There is a border between them and us, an invisible one.

We talked about the word ‘border’ in Italian, German and English, realising how many different interpretations are there [...]. We listen to each other’s and felt closer as many shared stories we hardly ever talk about”<sup>30</sup>.

The ‘activation process’, delivered in three languages (Italian, German and English), was attended during the public presentation of *YABYAN* between May and June 2017, by over 250 pupils from High School and Universities from the South Tyrol Province.

The conception and design of the ‘activation-process’ fell at a relatively late stage of the

<sup>30</sup> Feedback on the audio-guide and ‘activation-process’ from the 10<sup>th</sup> of May 2017.

production phase; hence, not enough time was ensured for its full experimentation and implementation. Furthermore, concerned about the insufficient experience in guiding group processes by the invited collaborators, I invited a professional art-mediator to take charge of the daily organisational aspects and overview the activities. However, while this choice guaranteed logistical efficiency, it also gave rise to a conflicting understanding of the kind of process I was aiming at. Based on a ‘debate’ format, the mediator’s background training favoured an attitude of triggering and confronting opinions among the groups’ participants, trying to resolve arguments instead of activating the participants’ inner images, thoughts, and emotions, setting them in open relation one with the others. I will elucidate these challenges, emerging from the way the ‘activation process’ was practised in the following paragraph.

#### 4.4 *You Are But You Are Not*: challenges and insights

In this paragraph, I attempt to illuminate some of the core challenges and insights encountered in the research and production of *You Are But You Are Not* (2016).

The first challenge refers to the expectations and assumptions engrained in the invitation laid out by the host organisation Lungomare and its curatorial team. In particular, the expectation for developing an artistic Socially Engaged Art type project with a problem-solving approach – like *Bait-al-Karama* (2010) in Palestine – assuming that I would encourage refugees’ inclusion and empowerment and offer concrete ‘solutions’ to the current refugee crisis. LM’s expectations were for a kind of SEA project in which local refugees would play a visible and central role and become my core interlocutors. These presumptions arose from the longings and desires of LM members to effectively act upon the visible injustice conditions experienced by refugees in South Tyrol and beyond.

In response to these longings and desires and in light of the insights gathered through this PhD inquiry, presented in Chapter 3, I had to find strategies to overcome the curatorial team’s projected expectations and protect the delicate emotional environment in which the research process was carried out.

One of these strategies was to avoid finding a quick formal solution to the project, as had happened in *BAK*. Instead, I managed to keep to the reflective approach engendered in the research process, which allowed for the form in which *YABYAN* crystallised to emerge from it.

A further strategy to minimise the pressure for a problem-solving initiative was the ‘transdisciplinary companionship’ with Aparna and Efrem. Due to this active exchange, I was able to increase the research autonomy of *YABYAN* and depend less on the desire and needs of LM and work instead with a relational engagement methodology and ethos.

A second core challenge relates to the production phase of *YABYAN*. In particular, the external commission to professionals for the graphic design of the communication campaign,



*Are But You Are Not*, photograph by Beatrice Catanzaro, 2017

including the booklet and the website, and the architectural design of the ‘arena platform’ installation. LM conducted and carried out these commissions following a business-oriented logic that could not be integrated with the relational engagement approach proposition of *YABYAN*. As a result, both the graphic and the architectural design failed to meet the qualities and sensibilities of the overall

endeavour of *YABYAN*. An example of this rupture with the relational engagement approach in the development and production of the graphic design was the lack of interest expressed by LM to engage the designers in a field trip to Bolzano, where they could have had a first-hand experience of the context and of



*You Are But You Are Not*, photograph by Ivo Corrà, 2017

the ‘terrain of concern’ explored with *YABYAN*. Instead, the collaboration was left only to online encounters. This lack of in-depth engagement resulted in a graphic design inspired by national flags’ shapes and colours contrasting with the scope of *YABYAN* as it remarked instead on nationally sanctioned borders.

Similar problems in insufficiently integrating the design production with the scope and approach of *YABYAN*, occurred with the ‘arena’ platform architectural design. In this case, the architects commissioned the design, outsourced its realisation to a third party at the very last moment, shortly before the opening. In this swift handing over of the project, the platform’s central function, that of

being an ‘arena’ for encounter and conversation in the public space, got lost. The platform which resulted had a dispersive shape that could hardly accommodate group conversations. In hindsight, both commissions failed in quality and functionality due to how those collaborations were carried out; in a modality unable to integrate with and make sense of the research process’ methodology and methods.

A third and final challenge emerged from the practice of the ‘activation-process’.

As previously stated, the ‘activation process’ was conceived at a very late stage of the production phase, leaving insufficient time to experiment and train the activation-team; for this reason, and to assure the ‘activation-process’ efficiency, M., a professional art-mediator, was hired.

The activation-team also included S. and H., two asylum-seekers living in Bolzano and involved as conversant with *YABYAN* since its early stage. After the third ‘activation process’ was carried out with a high-school class, S. shared with me the discomfort and distress he experienced. His discomfort related to how M., the professional mediator, projected on him the ‘refugee-other’ role during the group sessions, asking him to deliver his account and testimony. Exhibiting S. as the ‘refugee-other’ profoundly conflicted with the ethics and intention at the heart of *YABYAN*.

So as not to ignore this, I invited M. and S. to join me in a conversation, to unpack and make visible the emotional distress, unintentionally, provoked by projecting a reductionist ‘refugee’ identity onto S. that confined him to being an object of observation and pitifulness.

## 5. Conclusion

A key motivation for this practice-based research was to make sense of and find ways to overcome the different forms of unrelatedness in both the forms of engagement and the development of Socially Engaged Art's participatory processes. From a careful unpacking of my own earlier practice, plus the text and practice-based research in this doctoral enquiry, it has become evident that the unrelatedness and disconnection I perceive in my SEA practice, is directly related to the emphasis given in SEA to interventions that act only on the visible and quantifiable outer social-context, leaving unexplored and unconsidered the invisible individual inner-context. Through this exclusion, a disconnection and fracture from the personal inner-context as a field of engagement occurs, glossing over and ignoring the dimension where individual and collective paradigm work and mind shifts can occur.

My engagement with core Social Sculpture-Connective Practice's methods and strategies informed my interrogation and exploration of both the interconnectivity between the outer and inner-context in certain forms of social art and the correlation between socially constructed assumptions and personal attitudes and mind-sets. Based on such explorations, it is clear that if one is to commit consciously to relational and participatory processes, then a holistic engagement is required. In other words, a mode of engagement is needed that enables recognising and practising the interconnections between the outer-social and inner-individual contexts, as the philosopher Krishnamurti says:

“in [a] relationship the primary cause of friction is oneself. If we can but realize that it is not how another acts that is of primary importance, but how each one of us acts and reacts, and that if that reaction and action can be fundamentally, deeply understood, then relationship will undergo a deep and radical change” (Krishnamurti, 1992, p.2).

Building on such relational understandings, *Journey into Relatedness* explores this interconnectivity between the inner and outer context. It unearths, develops and enables new methods of relational engagement through revisiting the Socially Engaged Art practice of *Bait-al-Karama* (2010) and developing the new practice-based research of *You Are But You Are Not* (2016) through the lens of SSCP.

This unearthing practice, undertaken to avoid replicating modes and patterns that shaped previous projects, includes the investigative self-reflective journey into *BAK* and the transition from *BAK* to *YABYAN*. Investigating *BAK* through the SSCP method of 're-entering' an action, object, project or experience, enabled identifying and inhabiting the disconnection between the outer and inner-context experienced in *BAK* and preceding practices. Re-inhabiting and making sense of this disconnection was essential to adequately acknowledging the agency arising from the 'silent facilitator' position I had taken on in *BAK*. Examining the effects of remaining at the margins in

this way revealed the echoes of the paternal attitude in humanitarian enterprises’, which, under the guise of benevolent intentions, maintain and reinforce a hegemonic distance safeguarding the binary relation of ‘giver’ versus ‘needy recipient’.

Furthermore, with the hindsight of the critical analysis involved in unearthing my practice and truly enabling an intersubjective dialogue rooted in participation, I came to reject the SEA’s problem-solving attitude, proposing instead a reflective approach, which I describe as the ‘reflective-arena’ approach. The ‘reflective-arena’ approach is an approach to participatory practices that, I have realised, post-*YABYAN*, reduces the danger of reductionist I-Other relations transpiring in much participatory social art, where the ‘participant-other’ is subjected to a generalised group identity. In contrast, in the ‘reflective-arena’ approach, each person is invited into a self-inquiry process that lays the basis for a collective sharing to activate an intersubjective dialogue grounded in the embodied biographical and emotional experience of all participants.

The ‘reflective-arenas’ approach also radically reduces the risk of reproducing social mechanisms of ‘collective narcissism’ when in-group identity formation promotes and reinforces polarisation and separation between in-groups and out-groups. Investigating SEA participatory and relational strategies through the lens of ‘collective narcissism’ has shown the risk of promoting homogenised in-group identity that obliterates singular identities and can reinforce implicit antagonism with out-group others. These new insights made clear that a different methodology and ways of practising were necessary. It suggested the need for a methodology that involved moving away from *talking about others* or *talking on behalf of others* to forms of relational engagement that enable *talk with others* by discovering the social-emotional-inner experiential terrain that can be shared and inhabited together. This could be summed up as a methodology to encourage an eco-social philosophy of coexistence that builds on the human capacity for self-other listening. In the words of the philosopher Corradi Fiumara,

“If we were apprentices of listening rather than masters of discourse we might perhaps promote a different sort of coexistence among humans: not so much in the form of a utopian ideal but rather as an incipient philosophical solidarity capable of envisaging the common destiny of the species” (Corradi Fiumara, 1990, p.56).

Therefore, it became essential to envision new methods and strategies of relational engagement to renegotiate the often reified SEA terms such as participation and relation. The insights gleaned in this reflective analysis clarify the limits and dangers inherent in the SEA’s problem-solving approach when artistic practices turn into largely functional and useful responses to context-specific needs.

With the new horizon of this reflective analysis, I was also enabled to re-articulate and expand the context-specific approach into what I describe as a ‘terrain of concern’ approach.

This approach shows that it is possible to set in relation and connect distant locations and contexts

by identifying and understanding how their shared social and cultural mindset reproduce similar forms of injustice. In the case of *YABYAN*, exploring *migration* and *borders* through this new approach implied recognising what shared ‘terrain of concern’ connects the Italian-Austrian border in South Tyrol to similar border conditions throughout Europe. In *YABYAN*, I have described this ‘terrain of concern’ as the ‘Hegemonic Hospitality’ involved in identifying border conditions as conditions produced by the legal language in which refugees’ hospitality is performed in Europe today. With the ‘terrain of concern’ approach, this practice-based research suggests new phenomenological methods to disengage from disembodied understandings of social concerns.

In this practice-based research, I, therefore, propose new phenomenological methods of relational engagement to disengage from such disembodied and reified terminologies, not to build new abstractions but to learn how to stay with their embodied experience.

The methods of ‘situating glossary’ and ‘image-word’ integrate aesthetic processes with discursive modes. This, in turn, enables collective self-reflective enquiries that engender a kind of intersubjectivity, which makes visible the connection between the outer social and inner individual context of work. Those relational engagement methods offer a way to dialogue with oneself through others: to begin *talking from shared conditions* rather than talking about or on behalf of others.

The form in which the practice-based research of *YABYAN* crystallised – that of an audio-guide and ‘activation process’ – has also given rise to insights about artistic research processes that can enable genuine relational engagement. This includes highlighting the shifting from self-standing artistic results to developing processes that enable the art-work to be activated and engaged with, in ways built on modes of collective self-enquiry.

In the research and production of *YABYAN*, the need to avoid turning the audio-walk into a standalone artistic object of interaction became evident. It became clear that unless specific efforts were made to avoid this – and further strategies were included – the audio walk could easily become an object divorced from a self-reflective process designed to enable a personal connection to the question of border and migration. The ‘activation process’ embodies one of the possible strategies to mitigate against such breaches between the art object and the public.

It also shows that, when working in the realm of social and participatory art, it is essential to explore ways to foster and enhance genuine relational engagement processes at all stages of the work.

Reflecting on the month and a half in which *YABYAN* was made available to the public, which included a large number of people experiencing the audio-guide in itself and about 250 pupils joining the ‘activation process’, besides the feedback of many teachers and students, the importance of the way the listener unearths personal reflections in the ‘activation process’ becomes clear and reveals how it greatly enhances the potential for a relational engagement with the complex terrain of migration.

One participant, a university student, F., asserted that the audio-guides overall experience and the

‘activation process’ connected him back to his border condition of being a non-German speaker with southern Italian origins, born and raised in South Tyrol:

“my condition of being an outcast in my city connected me to the refugees’ experience of not being recognised when arriving in Bolzano – I could feel with them through my story”<sup>31</sup>.

Finally, it is important to observe and consider the differing outcomes of *BAK* and *YABYAN*. At a glance, the ongoing, self-sustaining nature of *BAK* represents a successful SEA project, bringing about concrete results for a group of women in Nablus. The impact of *BAK* is undoubtedly far more immediate to grasp than tracing the effects and repercussions triggered by *YABYAN*. However, since my purpose in *YABYAN* became the catalysing of a ‘reflective-arena’ around a specific ‘terrain of concern’, its value cannot be meaningfully determined by applying similar SEA criteria of effectiveness and impact. The kind and depth of experiential awareness brought about by the collective self-reflective enquiry mode in *YABYAN* may, nevertheless, have significant ripple effects and many indirect or less immediately identifiable outcomes.

One example of such indirect outcomes was witnessed by Dr. Claudio Pretto, a legal consultant on refugee law and migration and a key contributor to *YABYAN*. Pretto emphasises how *YABYAN* drew the legal attention of networks of lawyers and jurists engaged in migration affairs in Italy to the autonomous province of South Tyrol:

“After all the research work and the audio-guide and ‘activation process’ of *YABYAN*, lawyers in South Tyrol, as well as experts in the field, became more connected with lawyers from other Italian regions, overcoming the self-isolation of the autonomous province”<sup>32</sup>.

With *YABYAN*, extensive bonds were strengthened between experts in and beyond the autonomous province, leading to unprecedented collaborations.

### 5.1 Reflections for future practice

By looking at practices in the field of Socially Engaged Art in relation to core methods and insights of Social Sculpture and Connective Practice, this practice-based research has enabled experimentation with approaches and relational engagement methods that can now be further developed and explored both in my own and, hopefully, in other SEA practices.

Although every context has its particular inner dynamics and characteristics, as this research has underlined meaningful processes and methodological approaches can be developed as frameworks and criteria, what follows is an attempt to outline some of these frameworks and criteria.

Firstly, when invited to engage with a research theme by an institution or organisation – as I was with Lungomare – it is essential not to leave unexplored the host’s intentions, perceptions,

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31 Extract from a feedback session with Pedagogy Students at the University in Bolzano, after attending the audio-guide and the ‘activation process’ in September 2016.

32 Extract from a feedback session with Dr Claudia Pretto on the outcome of *YABYAN*.

desires and motivations connected with the research topic, as well as the overall and specific expectations embedded in the invitation.

In the case of *You Are But You Are Not*, the collaboration with LM was motivated by its firm commitment to engage with and act upon the refugee crisis in Bolzano. However, what was not identifiable at the outset were the diverging intentions, expectations and perceptions of what needed to be done. One overarching expectation by LM that surfaced during the research phases was implementing a project engendering concrete solutions in a problem-solving fashion, in which refugees would play a central role, both as recipients of and participants in the work. This expectation derived partly from LM's knowledge of my previous work in Palestine and the possibility of replicating similar outcomes in Bolzano. It was also related to individuals' inner longings in the curatorial team to impact the refugee crisis by offering a helping hand to local refugees and asylum seekers. However, these expectations, assumptions and longings were never the subject of conversation and shared reflections, which it seems might have been a key factor that resulted in the sense of unfulfilled potential with *YABYAN* by some of LM's members. To avoid similar situations in future collaborations, where divergent intentions are not expressed or, perhaps, even conscious, I would commence by inviting the host organisation into a self-reflective process to unpack the reasons and expectations underpinning the invitation. It is clear now that such a reflective process is necessary from the beginning to deepen, unpack and share personal drives, reasons and expectations implicit in any invitation.

Secondly, it is necessary to be mindful from the outset of a new project of the need to maintain the 'reflective arena' approach in all phases of the work and identify the things that can undermine this. In *YABYAN*, as the research process moved to the production stage, I became acutely aware of the difficulties in maintaining the 'reflective-arena' approach throughout the work. This was especially the case towards the concluding production phase of *YABYAN* when the curatorial team took over the production design's coordination - including the graphic design for all communications and the architectural design of the 'arena' public installation. In outsourcing these tasks to other professionals, what was not given enough consideration was how these professionals were invited and how they would relate to the particular research-practice ethos central to the work. As a result, a clear rupture between the research-phase and the production phase took place. The 'production mode' increasingly conflicted with the 'reflective-arena' approach, consistent with its evolution. In light of the unsatisfactory outcomes developed by the designers, I now recognise, for future practices, the importance of carefully considering how experts are invited in and informed about all aspects of the work. This includes an emphasis on working with the host organisation to envision ways in which such a 'reflective-arena' approach and relational engagement methods can inform collaborations.

The third reflection for future practices has to do with the importance of integrating into SEA projects strategies that enable general and specific publics to have access to the ‘reflective-arena’ approach and its relational engagement methods. In the case of *YABYAN*, this would involve participation in an ‘activation-process’ like that accompanying the audio-guide.

Although the ‘activation process’ is a central component of the project, due to the evolving nature of *YABYAN*, its conception and design occurred at a relatively late stage. The consequence of this was that insufficient time was devoted to its experimentation and practice. Despite this, the ‘activation process’ worked well enough for participants to gain a richer and more profound experiential knowledge of border conditions and questions of hospitality explored with *YABYAN*. The reflections gathered from the groups participating in the ‘activation process’, made evident the importance of designing strategies that integrate the aesthetic element, object or installation with a reflective discursive process. It is clear from the feedback that this combination of aesthetic and discursive modes enables and activates collective self-reflective enquiry processes among the spectator/participants. Although the ‘activation process’ will require different forms depending on each specific context and practice, this connection between the aesthetic and the discursive mode is an essential relation-enabling aspect of such ‘reflective-arena’.

## 5.2 Contribution to New Knowledge

*Journey into Relatedness* contributes to Socially Engaged Art discourse by investigating and problematising, through Social Sculpture and Connective Practice lenses, assumptions of the I-Other relation. It suggests that certain types of engagement with the ‘social’ in SEA risk reinforcing homogenised group identity categorisation and polarisation of I-Other relation – glossing over the intimate connection and contiguity of the I-Other relationship from a more integral and holistic eco-social perspective.

The research practice’s central intention has been to expand the somewhat reductionist understanding of the ‘social’ that comes about in much SEA practice. One of this study’s contributions to SEA discourse highlights how the polarisation and lack of contiguity of I-Other relations risks complicity with mind-sets locating problems with the other leading to attitudes of talking about or on behalf of others – risking in this way to obscure, undermine and hijack the intimate relationship between outer-social context and the individual inner-context.

A further contribution to SEA emerging from this practice-based research and reflective analysis is to make visible the dangers in SEA of reifying terms such as *participation* and *relational*.

Such reification turns terms into products, outcomes and criteria, becoming the habitual categories of value for artistic intervention. With the real participatory potential often masked by these reified

assumptions and, furthermore, detached from situated embodied experience, the complexity of the relational and participatory dimension in its entirety remains largely unexplored.

As James Hillman reminds us, “one-sided [abstract and conceptual] language splits immaterial psyche from soulless matter. Our concepts have so defined [certain] words that we forget that matter is a concept ‘in the mind,’ a psychic fantasy, and that soul is our living experience amid things and bodies in the world” (Hillman, 2010, p.10).

This practice-based enquiry also highlights another often-overlooked aspect of SEA practices. This has to do with the dangers of fostering and empowering in-group identities by employing group dynamics reminiscent of ‘collective narcissism’. Therefore, there is a need for the SEA artist to question whether tendencies toward ‘collective narcissism’ are at play and perhaps even being promoted. For example, when practices seek to empower communities, particular attention should be given to how modes of in-group identification, formation and recognition are promoted, for instance, by reinforcing the in-group exceptionalism by differentiating it from out-groups. Strategies to increase and enhance group differentiation risk bringing about hostility between in-group and out-group, rather than connectivity and porosity.

Finally, *Journey into Relatedness* contributes to identifying and enabling dialogue around some of the core differences between Socially Engaged Art and Social Sculpture and Connective Practice. What they share is easier to see. Both fields pay attention to the social context, and both involve some form of aesthetic or imaginal practice. These similarities often misleadingly lead to SSCP being clustered under the SEA’s umbrella, thus overlooking their radical differences. By uncovering certain significant differences through an in-depth phenomenological analysis of my practice, I have initiated a dialogue between SEA and SSCP that is new and unprecedented.

The reflective methods and approaches of relational engagement, emerging from my practice-based research, inspired by SSCP, open up new ground for present and future socially engaged explorations whilst encouraging a careful rethink and re-articulation of the glossary of SEA and its relational and participatory methods and assumptions. Setting this SEA-SSCP dialogue in motion will help overcome the increasing collapsing of terms and value about what is truly meaningful in both fields.

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## Appendix note 1: Invitation by Lungomare

### Concept-statement Lungomare Residency 2016

In 2016, Lungomare will lay its focus on migration, and more specifically on the actuality and multiplicity of issues related to this thematic for South Tyrol –a region located at the border between two European states like Italy and Austria – and its societal structures. If the coasts of Italy and other states in the South of Europe represent one of the first places of arrival for the refugees, there is no doubt that the political and geographical border defined by the Brennero is a massive obstacle for the migrants directed to other European countries.

One of the key aspects of Lungomare is its engagement with the urban and geopolitical context in which the cultural association is located and this is why migration for Lungomare is not an abstract topic. We do not want to take migrants and refugees as a subject for observation or as an issue to be examined in an isolated way. Instead, living in a territory which has a complex history of relationships between different “ethnic groups”, we are interested in the question of how to address the everyday challenges that the flow of migrants to South Tyrol and through South Tyrol towards the Brennero border involve.

The desire to transform Europe into a fortress becomes more and more the only viable solution for many. And this fact does take our future away. Currently we miss the tools to find solutions and to face the problem as a positive challenge for all of us. We have a complete lack in defining instruments and enhance a knowledge production which could help us in facing the actual situation as an opportunity to change our living together.

These are some of the aspects related to recent and less recent flows of migration in the Bolzano area: Parallel to forms of solidarity expressed by charity associations and private citizen, racism is spreading: the raise in popularity of neo-fascist organisations is unfortunately just one of the most evident signs of that; Political representatives far too often do not take a clear and joint position against racism when taking decisions about issues directly related to it; Local mainstream media and politic representatives call for a regime of security and control that might instigate a climate of fear and paranoia on many fronts.

The Lungomare residency project 2016 will develop on two different and parallel channels – the first one focused on creative practices and the second one on the cultural background of the thematic – that are supposed to influence and enrich each other. Our aim is to define ways in order to mobilise art, theory and culture to intervene and create instruments that foster collaboration and critical tools for political interventions from below instead of control and canalize them since this, in our point of view, could generate more space for fear.

[www.lungomare.org/youarebutyouarenot/index-en.html](http://www.lungomare.org/youarebutyouarenot/index-en.html)

Chapter One: The Wait

Have you ever been here before?

Here trains pass, people, things, days, months, even years can pass.

A certainty: the sun rises behind you.

The north is to your right.

Over the mountains: the border.

Every hour a train goes straight through it, splitting my horizon.

Its whistle is a punctual reminder of where to go.

I've been hearing it since 2014.

I spent 1552 days to arrive here where you are now.

Nothing has changed since then.

The waiting room behind you, always closed.

The whole platform is a waiting room – the whole station, the city, the whole world has become a vast waiting room.

*Follow me – take the stairs on your left.*

*Go to platform 1*

Here I learnt to measure space with time.

You know what I mean?

60 steps, one minute.

I know every inch of this place.

*Continue to platform 1*

*Turn left to platform 1 A South. Go up the stairs.*

*Walk straight ahead*

The Bedouins say you can't inhabit the desert but only cross it.

That people become who they are along the way.

After covering miles and miles, I've been here since 2014, locked up in this space of freedom, security and justice.

It seems there is a type of butterfly, also here, that can't cross the border. Too high. In case of a disaster, they say, its species will die with it.

*Proceed, straight ahead, to the end of the platform, and keep going.*

Nobody will notice us, I assure you, nobody will even look at us. I do it all the time. I pretend I'm on the phone. I read a newspaper. I sit down. I carry a backpack with me, even empty.

Normality is a uniform – I wear it every day.

*Keep going straight*

Do you see the mountains on your left?

*Stop.*

One day, they will cross over all of us.

The African plate is moving, pushing, merging onto the Eurasian one. Even now, imperceptibly. For millions of years its crust has been carrying us a little bit further north, like a raft adrift on the ocean. The horizon is moving, the landscape dynamic. The borders are shifting. Over time, we will look at maps the way we look at the portrait of a face that has already changed. The south is riding on the north. The north is further south. In the end I will wake up one day and find myself on the other side of the border.

And so, I might as well wait.

*Continue walking, always straight ahead.*

*Leave the border behind you.*

*Walk south.*

*Just keep going straight.*

You know how you cross a border?

You cross it with a name, a surname, a place and a date of birth, a profession, an address, a nationality. That's how you cross a border – with the possession of requirements that I don't have.

*I stop here. You who can, keep going straight.*

*Stop at the entrance of the circular building in front of you, and listen.*

## Chapter Two: The Procedure

Index of the left hand, index of the right hand. Centred, with the right pressure of the fingertip, with no inclinations, vertical or horizontal, perfectly flat, with no lateral rotation.

If it's not possible to take the fingerprint of the index, proceed in this order: middle finger, ring finger, and thumb, for each hand.

Every individual is unique and irreplaceable.

No cut, no burn, no trauma can change your true identity.

*Now enter the building.*

*Take the staircase and walk down one floor. Then exit the building.*

Procedures, protocols, documents, records, interviews, interpreters, trials, reports, sentences, regulations, examinations, archives, conventions.

Welcome to the procedure of hospitality.

*Once out of the building proceed to the left.*

Like a tightrope walker, I walk neither to one side, nor to the other.

Not in, not out, on the border.

One step after the other I keep my balance.

*Walk straight ahead, along the sidewalk, cross the traffic lights and continue.*

The procedure of hospitality.

An interpreter is already present.

The procedure doesn't accept unknown languages.

First name

Surname

Date of birth

Date of birth

Do you know the place of birth?

Family status: are you married? Do you have children?

Profession. What is your job?

Date of departure from the country of origin. When did you leave?

What route did you take? From where did you cross?

Which borders did you cross?

What was your destination?

Do you have a destination?

Domicile. An address? Where do you live here?

Where did you leave your things?

Your things. Where are your things?

You have nothing with you?

You brought nothing?

You have nothing?

Memories are an ugly beast. I can't tell them all.

Form filled.

He declares he was born in spring, in a place 1552 days' travel from here, in a place not found on maps.

Has a first name, doesn't seem to have a surname.

Attributed date of birth: 1st of January, as per the procedure.

Borders crossed: mountains, deserts, seas, walls, prisons, debts, promises.

*Keep walking straight, along the sidewalk.*

My story is here now, written in a language I don't know.

Reconstructed from words foreign to the events and places.

What was written?

My story – the only requirement in my possession.

The procedure of hospitality has begun.

The story is on record, waiting to be verified.

Here names pass, surnames, places and dates of birth, reports, verdicts. Days, months, even years can pass.

The Bedouins say you can't inhabit the desert but only cross it.

That people become who they are along the way.

Since 2014 I've been walking locked up in this space of freedom, security and justice, waiting for

requirements I don't possess.

But the horizon is moving, the landscape dynamic. The borders are shifting.

The south is riding on the north. The north is further south.

In the end we will wake up one day and find ourselves on the other side of the border.

I might as well wait.

The procedure has begun.

*Stop before the bridge. To the left, the police station, to the right, a park.*

*Cross the traffic lights and enter the park. I will wait for you there.*

It seems a body needs to slightly oscillate in order to stand still. Imperceptibly. It is a question of balance.

You are free to stop where you like. Find your place and listen.

### Chapter Three: The Orbit

We used to play hide and seek among the trees. They would shout: go, it's your turn, go, don't look back.

I would run. A tree – I just needed a tree. My eyes were searching for my tree. Creating trajectories.

A tree I could hide behind, a tree for me, to become a tree myself, to become its secret.

As a tree in a tree, I could see everyone and no one could see me.

Many trees, many secrets.

Secrets are an ugly beast. They never leave you.

And you?

Still in your place?

Where are you from?

And before you?

And before that?

What is your secret?

Stories shift, intersect, merge, like the African plate on the Eurasian, even now, imperceptibly, yours in mine, theirs in yours. An endless possibility of stories in History.

It is the celestial mechanics: each body is in movement around another body.

A stable and dynamic balance, never equal to itself.

We are all in orbit: if we don't look into each other in the eyes, we will have nothing to say to each other.

I stop here.

Appendix note 3: Visual documentation of *Bait al Karama*



Fundraising dinner events in Italy and UK for *Bait al Karama*



Rehabilitation of the *Bait al Karama* women centre



*Bait al Karama*'s multifunctional room

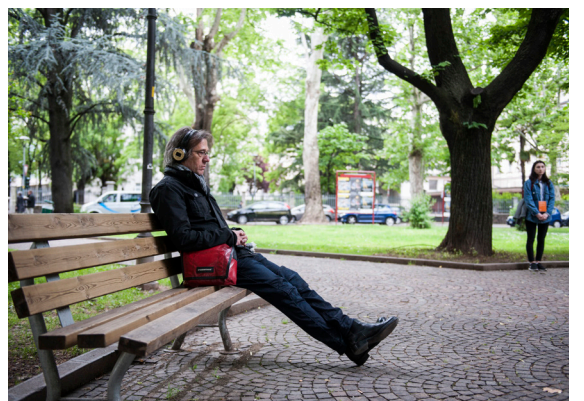


*Bait al Karama*'s kitchen



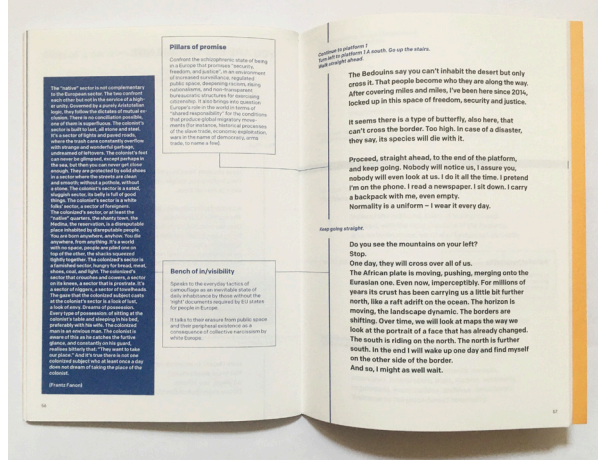
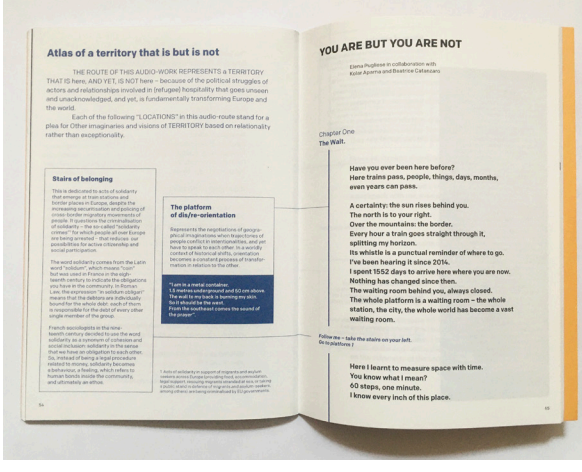
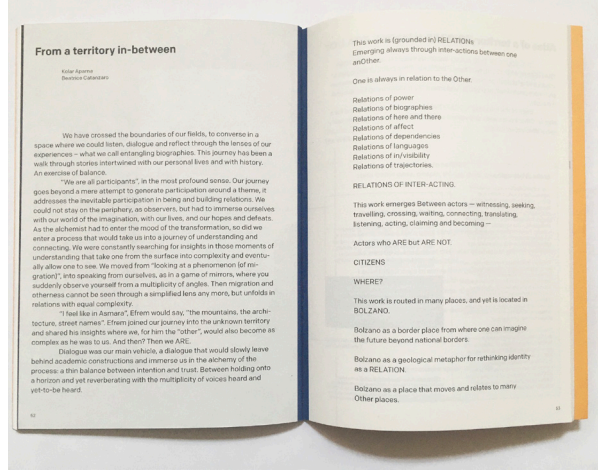
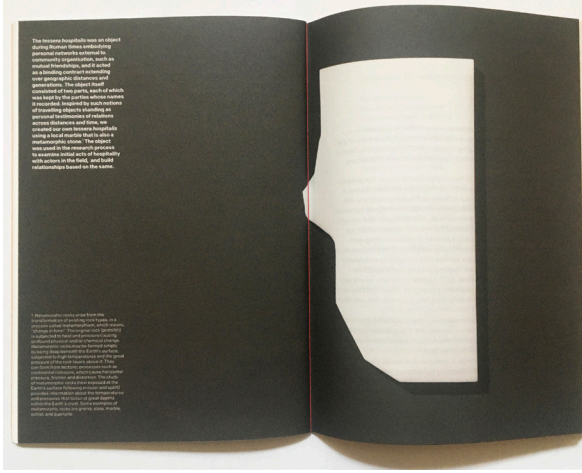
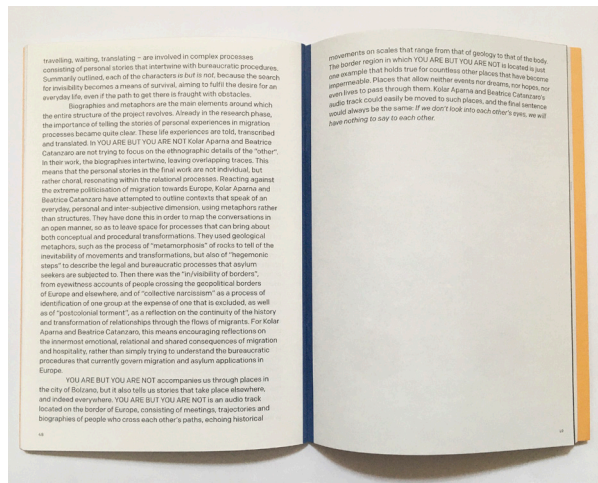
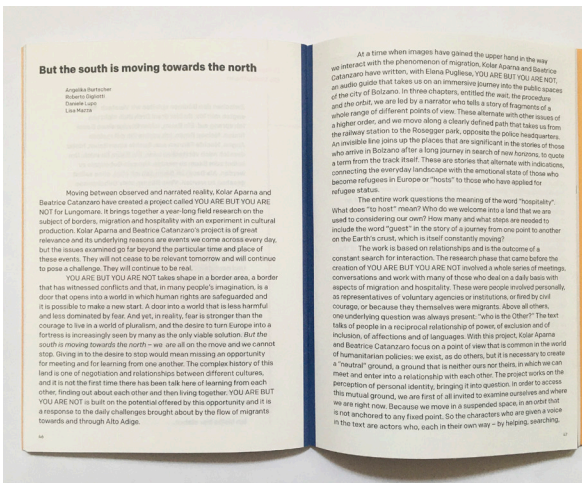
*Bait al Karama*'s beauty saloon

Appendix note 4: Visual documentation of the audio-guide *You Are But You Are Not*



# Appendix note 5:

## Booklet and poster of *You Are But You Are Not*







06.05. — 18.06.2017

Parco della Stazione  
Bolzano

Bahnhofspark  
Bozen

# You are (but you are not)

## INFO-POINT

Da giovedì a domenica dalle 16 alle 20  
Von Donnerstag bis Sonntag von 16 bis  
20 Uhr

- ↳ Prestito gratuito apparecchi audioguida
- ↳ Guida dialogiche su prenotazione
- ↳ Incontri con il pubblico ogni giovedì  
alle ore 18:30

- ↳ Gratis-Verleih der Audiogeräte
- ↳ Dialogische Führungen auf Vormerkung
- ↳ Jeden Donnerstag um 18:30 Uhr  
themenspezifische Veranstaltungen

lungomare.org/youarebutyouarent  
info@lungomare.org  
T +39 333 5209930

Un'audioguida  
sul tema dei confini  
e dell'ospitalità  
per la città di Bolzano  
di Kolar Aparna e  
Beatrice Catanzaro

Ein Audioguide  
zum Thema Grenzen  
und Gastfreundschaft  
für die Stadt Bozen  
von Kolar Aparna und  
Beatrice Catanzaro

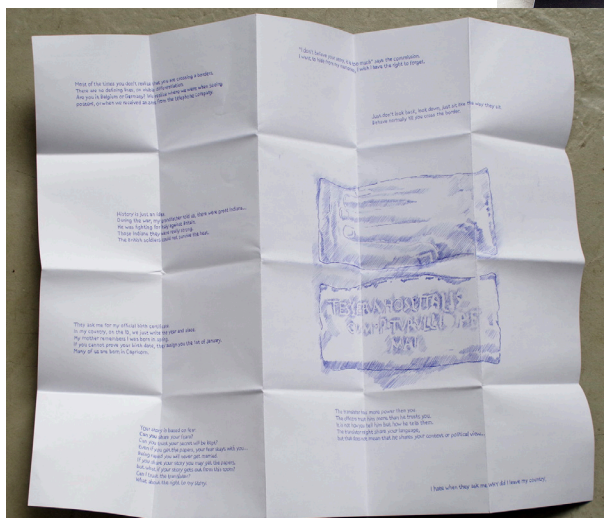
Con il patrocinio, mit der Schirmherrschaft



Con il sostegno, gefördert von



Appendix note 6: Presentation of the practice - tactile, visual and audio material





## Appendix note 7: Glossary and diagram of conceptual propositions

### Glossary

#### **Reflective-arena**

The ‘reflective-arena’ approach consists of enabling participatory settings where collective self-reflective enquiry processes underpin intersubjectivity. The ‘reflective-arena’ approach entails observing and collectively engaging with emotions, assumptions and mindsets related to questions of social injustice. It is an invitation to understand the fabric of the social and cultural assumptions we inhabit through careful self and collective non-judgemental listening.

The ‘reflective-arena approach’ combines dialogical and discursive methods (e.g. the ‘situating-glossary method’) with imaginal language methods (‘image-word method’) to find ways to listen to oneself through the other.

#### **Situating-glossary**

The ‘situating glossary’ method is a collective self-reflective method designed to disengage from generalised and reified terminologies, to re-visit words that have turned into concepts or abstractions, making up the personal and collective landscape of assumptions we inhabit.

Through the ‘situating-glossary’ methods, words are taken in and ‘digested’ through individual embodied experiences, both biographical and imaginal and shared collectively. Hence, the ‘situating glossary’ method is not a practice of direct response to concepts. Instead, it is a self-reflective method to shift back one’s gaze and engage with what personal embodied narratives, emotions and images, spring from the inner individual context when certain concepts such as ‘freedom’, ‘security’, ‘border’ are evoked.

#### **Image-word**

The ‘image-word’ method is inspired by James Hillman’s radical take on the imaginal language. His proposition, building on Carl Jung’s insights, aims at enabling a phenomenological re-inhabiting of conditions otherwise abstracted into psychiatric concepts, and through the language of alchemical transformation, to return the imaginative material to words. Hillman’s work recovers phenomenological conditions back from abstraction and into an embodied reality, searching for what is like instead of fixing assumptions of what is through concepts.

This method consists of identifying guiding-images, which, through their embodied nature, are vivid metaphors for and reminders of lived conditions. Such metaphors enable interrogating and reflecting on what is like inhabiting certain human conditions.

### **Transdisciplinary-companionship**

‘Transdisciplinary companionship’ is an approach to transdisciplinary collaboration. Central to this approach is the willingness to walk together as companions on a journey to unsettle field-related and individual assumptions. It differs from interdisciplinary collaboration because it involves an active commitment to self-reflective processes to unpack and share personal and field-related assumptions. ‘Companionship’ is to evoke a common condition of support on a research journey beyond the safe zone of one’s field into what is yet to be, internally and externally, explored.

### **Terrain of concern**

‘Terrain of concern’ approach re-articulates and expands the notion of context-specific approach in Socially Engaged Art. ‘Terrain of concern’ consists of identifying and working with social concerns without confining them to a specific context or place and recognising how those concerns and injustices, although specific to locations, are produced by a cultural mindset that can be tackled elsewhere. Therefore, the ‘terrain of concern’ approach aims to set in relation and connect distant locations and contexts sharing social and cultural mindset reproducing similar forms of injustice or concern.

**Hegemonic hospitality** is an example of the ‘terrain of concern’ approach in practice. ‘Hegemonic hospitality’ was identified as a ‘terrain of concern’ while researching the theme of border and migration in the border-city of Bolzano (Italy). The term refers to the ‘language’ in which refugees’ hospitality is performed in Europe today: the legal language.

Identifying the terrain of concern with ‘hegemonic hospitality’ highlighted the harsh effects of European reception procedures on refugees’ conditions and how those conditions are simultaneously present in the border city of Bolzano and many other border locations throughout Europe.

### **Activation-process**

The ‘activation-process’ is a strategy designed to integrate the aesthetic element, object or installation with a reflective discursive process. This strategy aims to foster and scale-up occasions for collective self-inquiry processes with a broader public and shift from a self-standing artistic result. The ‘activation process’ is a strategy to develop knowledge exchange based on experiential understanding rather than projections about questions of social injustice, rooted primarily on opinions informed by social media, popular culture, and journalistic representations.

In the ‘activation process’, participants are invited to connect to themes of social injustice, placing them in their biographical narrative, emotions, and images to ‘internally mobilise’ and give voice to the multiple participants’ understandings. ‘Activating’ differs from ‘mediating’, as its scope does not facilitate or mediate between different positions and understandings. Instead, the purpose of ‘activating’ is to trigger and make visible the intimate connections each participant can draw from their life journey.

## Eco-social

Eco-social refers to the holistic attitude required to sustainably engage with the web of interdependent relations among human and more-than-human beings to engender planetary co-existence. This attitude integrates human and more-than-human beings in a non-hierarchical and non-fixed relation. Promoting a non-egotistic perspective that can prevent reinforcing the modern separation between humans and non-human beings. Also, an eco-social perspective focuses on real-life problems shifting our concern from the self to the world.

## Diagram

