Beyond social inclusion, towards educational justice to come: Touching, growing, bonding with/in/around artmaking in early years settings

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ABSTRACT

Educational inequalities are on the rise. A growing body of literature shows that inclusive education driven by social inclusion agenda has been inefficient and, in some cases, even completely unsuccessful in tackling inequalities in education across Europe. Nevertheless, social inclusion is becoming a global phenomenon and has been adopted as a dominant approach to tackling educational inequalities, especially in countries of the global north. The arts have been positioned as a tool central to this effort and an easy-fix solution to deeply engrained societal and educational problems. A reductive and narrow approach to educational justice developed around neoliberal agendas, however, limits the possibilities of the arts and education for educational justice.

The aim of this study is to think differently about social inclusion and exclusion and the role of artmaking in relation to educational justice. The study provides an expanded, anti-anthropocentric inquiry into processes of social inclusion and exclusion around artmaking activities. It develops a ‘response-able’ and affirmative research practice to think together with children, adults, and their material surroundings about what the various encounters in and around artmaking in their settings do beyond inclusion and exclusion. And lastly, it engages posthumanist and new materialist theories and concepts to propose alternative possibilities for building towards fair and just educational futures.

Drawing on six-months of ethnographic fieldwork, this study argues that it is time to stop equating a narrow set of neoliberal targets to educational justice and instead turn towards building quality, responsible and responsive, learning relationships that generate collective, new, and ethical educational practices fundamental to addressing educational injustices. The study is an invitation to imagine what educational settings could be like if processes enacted in and around artmaking activities were understood as collective processes of touching, growing, and bonding during which encounters among children, adults, objects, and place become life-sustaining moments that work towards just educational futures to come.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Like most things in life worthwhile, the making of this thesis took a village. It also took a long time and has therefore been affected by significant socio-ecological changes that impacted strongly on it and on the thinking with/around/about it. The Covid-19 pandemic has by far been the most traumatic, as it not only disrupted lives, but it revealed and exacerbated the already growing inequalities. Like many other PhD researchers in the UK, I was shaken by the instability and precarity of my position within higher education, and as a mother in academia, I strongly felt the impact of persisting gender inequalities in society. Meanwhile, I watched with disappointment and despair as essential children’s services have been ignored, stopped, or faced the threat of elimination, both in the UK and in the Czech Republic. (Home)schooling during the pandemic has been unfair and often unjust, despite schools, teachers, parents, and children doing their best. This had added to the already existing inequalities. The pandemic has brought the best and the worst in people and reinforced my conviction that it is time to do better. It is time to rethink what classrooms to get back to and how to (re)start education towards more just educational futures.

I am most grateful to my village of people, my family, my husband Sergio and my son Mirko, my supervisors, Prof. John Oates, Prof. Teresa Cremin, and Prof. Natalia Kucirkova, my colleagues, Prof. Liz Chamberlain, Dr. Linda Plowright-Pepper, Dr. Carolyn Cooke, Donata Puntil, and Emily Dowdeswell, and The Open University, for helping me navigate these changes, their impact, and the new topologies that are left in their wake.

Most importantly, however, I would like to use this space to acknowledge and thank the many wonderful children, some as young as two, most of them independent and caring siblings, adults, some parents of eight, most of them single mothers, and practitioners, some dedicating large parts of their life to improving the lives of children in their settings, most of them teaching and working despite the impacts of their community’s daily struggle on life in the classrooms. I have learned so much from the encounter between a boy and a red crayon that made the boy, whose family was struggling to find a roof over their heads, smile and feel proud how well he can transfer colour onto a piece of paper, showing others his muscles and strength. I was so inspired by the courage of a parent who eventually entered one of the settings to make art with her children despite her difficulties with the structured format of the class and negative past experiences with schooling. Practitioners taught me that trust
and openness is essential when navigating and inquiring about fair and just educational relations. Children, adults, and their material worlds challenged me and my preconceptions and pushed me to open up to new ways of attending to artmaking encounters. These resilient, kind and very strong people, some Roma, some not, and the material environments shaped this study and co-constructed the thinking within findings presented here.

It is the coming together of this village, a supportive, responsive, responsible, caring, more-than-human community that shapes this thesis. Becoming a part of such a rich collective thinking was an incredible privilege. Thank you.
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1 ENTERING: Introduction

“I got humiliated for being Roma. Once a teacher wrongly accused me of stealing a purse. I can still remember how I ran to my mum’s work and cried and cried because I hadn’t done it. Later, it was found that someone else did it, but I went through hell. They thought I had done it because I was Gypsy. This is how most people still see us. I think this is one of the reasons they exclude us into separate classes and schools: they think we are inferior.”

- student, 15 years old, the Czech Republic (in Fremlová and Ureche, 2011)

1.1 Research rationale

This study builds on the premise that social inclusion, a dominant strategy to improving the life chances of disadvantaged groups in society, is failing (e.g. Domina, Penner, & Penner, 2017). It is failing the diverse communities of the European community. It is in very real ways failing schools. More importantly, however, it is failing children, especially those facing discrimination and experiencing varied forms of disadvantage on a daily basis (for further discussion see 2.1.2. Social inclusion in education). Universal public education is notionally built on the premise of inclusion and has been defined as an inalienable human right of all children as outlined in the World Declaration on Education for All (1990) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). Moreover, social inclusion has been at the heart of not only European and national policies but also global policy agendas and discourse for decades now. Nevertheless, it is becoming increasingly apparent that education for all driven by a social inclusion agenda that focuses mainly on strengthening and widening access, or achievement and outcome, does not equate to educational justice.

A growing body of literature indicates that inclusive education has been inefficient and sometimes even completely unsuccessful in tackling inequalities (Domina et al., 2017; Gustafsson, 2018; Molla & Pham, 2019). Such a failure points to the ways in which social inclusion, and inclusive education specifically, is closely entangled with persistent discrimination and reinforced by a normalised set of institutional, historical, cultural, and interpersonal practices. What is more, however, is that the concept itself aligns with and reinforces a neoliberal mindset grounded in productivity, competitiveness, multi-skilling, differentiation and responsibilisation, and therefore framing educational justice as an individual, entrepreneurial freedom. Such a narrow conceptualization of educational justice may be convenient from a policy perspective (Tervasmäki, Okkolin, & Kauppinen, 2020) but it limits understanding of the various forms of educational injustices and the complex needs
of individuals and communities. Furthermore, the overfocus on market-oriented justice prevents the possibility of developing, extending, and imagining what educational justice is and could become.

Children, and especially children from marginalised communities and low socio-economic backgrounds, suffer the consequences of such a narrow-minded and dysfunctional educational enterprise that often exacerbates rather than eliminates educational inequality (for further discussion see 2.1.3. Social inclusion and ‘Roma’ children). Indeed, in a cross-national comparison of European countries, Schraad-Tischler and Kroll (2014) find that in the European context educational injustices are on the rise again. Children from marginalised communities and low socio-economic backgrounds, and Roma¹ children particularly, are the ones most like to be marginalised in education systems (O’Nions, 2010). In many countries across Europe, Roma children make up the largest group of children from low socio-economic backgrounds and are therefore most likely to encounter not only unequal access to education but also lower quality education which may lead to substantially lower educational attainment. More importantly, however, they are more likely to have negative as opposed to positive experiences. Yet, there is very little discussion and concern for what marginalised children are going through, and Roma children in particular, in educational settings (for Roma children’s opinions and lived experiences of schooling see e.g. Fremlova & Ureche, 2011; Gkofa, 2017; Kaleja & Krpec, 2013).

In the Czech Republic, a segregated schooling system is still a reality. It is an everyday reality of mostly children labelled ‘Roma.’ Despite some successful educational programmes, a large body of research on inclusive education, and programmes such as the Fair School initiative (Liga Lidských Práv, 2006), most schools still struggle to reverse the often-covert segregation in the system. Worse yet, children regarded as ‘Roma’ are still disproportionately sent to special education schools that do not expose children to the full standard curriculum (Liga Lidských Práv, 2005; Němec & Gulová, 2012). The mainstream, public debates on inclusive education concern themselves predominantly with children with disabilities. They

¹ This study employs the term Roma as it is increasingly becoming the most recognized term that refers to people of the various populations of Romani background in Europe. The term reflects the current development in the coming together of Roma activism and European political structures. It has been sanctioned by a variety of Roma organizations (e.g. Roma National Congress) and it has been adopted by the Council of Europe as an official EU terminology (2010). Nevertheless, not all groups (e.g. German Sinti, British Romanichals) accept this term because in Roma language it only refers to plural masculine noun, and it is not an adverb (Hancock, 2002). Some prefer to use the designation Romani people or Romanies. The debate over appropriate terminology is an important and a still-evolving topic as a part of a movement for Roma civic emancipation (for further discussion see Council of Europe, 2012; Hancock, 2002; Marushiakova & Popov, 2020)(for further discussion see Council of Europe, 2012; I. Hancock, 2002; Marushiakova & Popov, 2020).
often disregard children experiencing other forms of disadvantage and the trend in which many parents do not wish their children attending school with children that are perceived as ‘Roma.’ The experiences of Czech children and families regarded as ‘Roma’ with segregated education are unfortunately not unique. Children of Roma background in most countries across Europe have similar experiences, as they often receive lower quality education than the children from the majority population (Andruszkiewicz, 2002).

Instead of doing the hard thing, that is, carefully attending to and challenging normative, hegemonic, educational practices in order to learn how to work towards educational justice together by allowing diverse practices and ways of being together to guide the way, the attention of policy and research has been focused on arguably simple solutions, such as the arts, to solve these complex problems (for further discussion see 2.2.1 Introduction: Beyond the effects of the arts in education). While most would argue that the arts have an integral place in education (Eisner, 2002), and they are also highly valuable methodological and intellectual tools (Leavy, 2020), it is important to consider whether the arts should, or even can, become the solution to deeply engrained societal problems of exclusion, inequality, and discrimination. Due to the reductive and narrow definitions of the function of the arts that focus on development, outcomes, or social cohesion, the possibilities of the arts in education and for educational justice have been limited. What is more, the narrow approach to the arts aligns creative work and creativity with a capitalist mindset, in which creativity becomes yet another outcome to be measured and employed in the name of market-oriented goals, such as production and consumption, rather than societal goals, such as educational justice. Furthermore, such an approach also inevitable politicises the arts. Rather than one-dimensional, however, the arts in education are multidimensional practices that are organised and co-constructed at different scales and by the coming together of the various intensities and multiplicities of more-than-human encounters. They have multiple diverse meanings and functions in the various educational contexts of the diverse learning communities that make up the rich tapestry of the European continent. These various dimensions of the arts are yet to be fully understood, valued, and reflected in educational policy and discourse.

1.2 Focus and aim

The purpose of this ethnographic research study is to attend closely to processes of social inclusion and exclusion in and around artmaking across various early years settings to explore
what else is enacted beyond social inclusion and exclusion and what these other processes do. Specifically, this study is interested in the various processes across different settings in the same community to get a sense of social inclusion and exclusion around artmaking as a complex, relational, and situated process in which more than inclusion or exclusion happen. Moreover, the study is concerned with processes of social inclusion and exclusion around artmaking in a particular community experiencing marginalization because this community has been a target of social inclusion efforts and arts interventions.

The community in this study is significant because of its history which is marked by a strong friction among assimilation policies and social segregation. It is also significant because of its location in a region of the Czech Republic with the highest proportion of inhabitants of Roma background, a group that has been historically marginalised not only in the Czech Republic but across Europe. Despite being very small, the community has three different settings that use the arts for purposes of social inclusion of local children into mainstream education. The study therefore explores and traces the processes of social inclusion and exclusion not only across various artmaking activities but also across the various settings. The aim is to understand the complex, entangled, relational processes of social inclusion and exclusion in and around artmaking activities within a community, as well as to attend to what else is there, what other processes are made and lived that contribute to a broader understanding of educational justice. The following research questions guide the inquiry:

1. What processes are enacted in and around artmaking in the early years settings beyond social inclusion and exclusion and what they do?
2. How can inquiry into what appears impossible reorient thinking about educational justice in and around artmaking in early years settings?
3. What else can thinking diffractively about the web of more-than-human relations across the different early years settings in one community reveal about the intersection of artmaking and educational justice?

The aim of this study is to inquire in what ways educational justice is, or can be, enacted and regarded as more than social inclusion. The goal is to open up inquiry around the arts, education and educational justice beyond the traditional discourse that narrowly focuses on outcomes, impact, and uncritical notions of effects. Furthermore, the aim is to attend carefully to the more-than-human encounters that underlie social inclusion and exclusion and the possibilities they generate in and around the arts beyond social inclusion. As such,
the study aims to expand current understandings of social inclusion, highlight new processes that underlie fair and just educational relations, and reconceptualise the roles of artmaking in early years settings. This study can therefore be of interest to practitioners and researchers exploring the intersection of artmaking and educational justice as well as those interested in the issues of social inclusion and in moving beyond this narrow framework in their work. The objectives of the study are to:

1. Map the various processes that are enacted in and around artmaking in early years settings beyond social inclusion and exclusion in order to develop a richer and more complex understanding of what happens in and around artmaking in inclusive early years settings.
2. Broaden classroom observations from focusing on human interactions to paying attention to other-than-human, or more-than-human\(^2\), encounters and what they do and co-produce in and around artmaking.
3. Reframe the subject of social inclusion by engaging more-than-human ontologies in order to reorient thinking about and at the intersection of artmaking and educational justice.
4. Challenge traditional academic frameworks and develop new ways of inquiring ethically by drawing on posthumanist and new materialist theories and commitments.

The purpose of the study is to offer new directions for arts education and educational justice research. Developing new, ethical ways of inquiring about the arts in education and educational justice in early years settings in disadvantaged communities, this study aims to challenge the ways how research about the arts and arts education is conducted in such settings. This study can therefore be of interest to practitioners and researchers exploring the intersection of artmaking and educational justice as well as those interested in the issues of social inclusion and those wanting to move beyond this narrow framework in their work.

Ultimately, the aim of this study is to develop an in-depth, ethical, and relational inquiry of situated, more-than-human encounters that underlie fair and just educational processes and practices around artmaking to think beyond social inclusion and exclusion and draw

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\(^2\) The expression ‘more-than-human’ here refers to anything other than human, that is, to the non-human or other-than-human, e.g. animals, plants, microbes, objects, buildings, place, and other such.
attention to alternative possibilities of being, doing and becoming together towards educational justice-to-come.

1.3 Thesis outline

This thesis consists of 12 chapters: Introduction (1), Literature Review (2), Theoretical framework (3), Methodology (4), Place (5), Ethics (6), Methods (7), Analytical Framework (8), 3 Findings & Discussion chapters (9, 10, 11), and Conclusion (12). Each chapter reflects the aim of the study to engage traditional humanist inquiry by challenging and highlighting its limits in an attempt to move towards the possibility of developing an ethical, affirmative inquiry that draws on critical posthumanist and new materialist commitments. It is thinking with Barad (2010) who makes the argument that “Every concept is haunted by its mutually constituted excluded other.” Each chapter is therefore signposted and structured in a way that points to the entanglement, the complex interconnections, between a traditional, humanist study and posthumanist inquiry. As such, this study responds to St. Pierre (2014) and Badmington (2003) who argue that it is impossible to make an absolute break and escape the unitary and hegemonic ideals of humanist methodologies. The argument builds on Derrida (1982) who claims that posthumanism will always be imbued with traces of humanism and who therefore proposes that new research and writing “must weave and interlace the two motifs;” such a writing must “speak several languages and produce several texts at once” (1982, 135). Thus, this thesis, using a quote from Badmington (2001) is “as much posthumanist as it is posthumanist” (13). Its content and structure are therefore the coming together of a traditional, humanist, approach to an academic study and a posthumanist, new materialist interest in challenging conventional, ritualistic, and normalised ways of working and thinking in academia.

The specific (in)tensions, that is, the intentions as well as the tensions, of bringing humanist and posthumanist inquiry together demonstrate not only the thinking with the various approaches to writing, doing, and being with an academic thesis that these two theoretical fields encompass but also the inner tensions, the “quivering unease of doing research differently,” as Springgay and Truman write (2018, p. 204). The (in)tensions are brought forward throughout the thesis, in the structure (e.g. headings, text) and logic (e.g. methodology, analysis), to explicate that in this study posthumanist theorizing is always in

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3 This study engages Derridean notion of justice that is never complete or finished and instead it is always open to transformation and reformulation, it is to-come, it “remains, is yet, to come” (Derrida, 2002, p. 256)
the process of becoming through ongoing questioning and affirmative reinvention. As such, this study sets out to try to think differently by following St. Pierre (2011), who, drawing on Foucault, writes that to think differently one must prefer “what is positive and multiple, difference over uniformity, flows over unities, mobile arrangements over systems” (Foucault in St. Pierre, 2011). In short, this study is framed as an ethnography that engages with posthumanist/new materialist theories and employs ecological, relational, more-than-human ontologies to think beyond processes of social inclusion and exclusion around artmaking in early years settings.

The first chapter, Introduction, provides a background that contextualises the study, explains its focus and outlines the thesis. The Introduction presents research questions and specifies in detail the aims of the study. It also frames and emphasises the role of the study in contemporary arts education and educational justice discourse. The introduction also includes a discussion of the conceptualization of writing as place-making which frames this study as a nomadic and mobile practice, i.e. moving, changing, shifting, and entangling, that is, in a constant state of becoming. Such a writing challenges established academic norms. Moreover, it demonstrates how the particular entanglements in the study reframe and potentially change how inquiry is not only designed but most importantly lived. Specifically, writing as place-making frames inquiry here as a situated, ethical, and relational encounter embedded in a particular set of ethical, ontological, and epistemological commitments.

The second chapter, Literature Review, examines the relevant research that has been published around issues of social inclusion and the arts in education. The first section of the chapter focuses on the history and conceptualization of social inclusion and exclusion and how education became central to the inclusion project, specifically in the UK and the Czech Republic. It also outlines failures of inclusive education and its negative impacts on children, mostly on those of low socio-economic background, many of whom, though not all, in Europe are from Roma communities. The first section then concludes that equality of access or equality in educational attainment do not lead to nor should equate to educational justice and proposes that new work that rethinks the core values of education and educational justice must open the concepts up by inquiring closely about educational relations among children, adults, and their environments. The second part of the chapter briefly summarises perspectives on the role of arts in inclusive education and then discusses developmental and post-developmental approaches to the arts in education as a tool for social inclusion. It concludes that moving beyond universalizing and essentializing discourse and attending to contextualised as well as more-than-human encounters around the arts,
and artmaking specifically, is fundamental to broadening inquiry that focuses on the intersection between the arts and educational justice. To this end, the last part provides an overview of most recent posthumanist and new materialist studies of the arts in education, as they lay a new ground for rethinking the relationship between the arts and education. As such, they challenge and move beyond dominant discourses and framings of the arts for educational justice.

The **Theoretical framework** chapter of this study discusses how a new materialist framing shapes the research practice and methods as developed through situated encounters in a particular community, with specific settings and their participants, both human and more-than-human. The chapter then also carefully discusses the conceptualizations and enactments of ethical commitments that thread through the study, its research design, methodology, data analysis, findings, and conclusion. The chapter first provides a brief background to new materialist theories and highlights the work of those scholars most relevant to this study. The ontological, epistemological, and ethical commitments are then set out and clarified, as they have significant consequences for the methodology and methods developed here. The chapter further discusses the nature of the connection with and shift from humanist qualitative methodology to posthumanist/new materialist methodology in the study. It highlights the difficulty of that endeavour and the need to acknowledge the fundamental interconnectedness of these two worldviews. Furthermore, that section offers insight into the study's interest in developing affirmative and positive ways of doing research and becoming a part of more-than-human research assemblages in order to generate new ways of being, thinking, and inquiring with others.

The **Methodology** chapter develops a different conceptualization of new materialist ethnography and discusses the need for thinking creatively about the research practice, methodologies, and methods it employs. It asserts the importance of place for such an endeavour by recognizing the fundamental role of place and situated encounters in challenging conventional ways of thinking and working by introducing unpredictability, uncertainty, and messiness of life to an academic inquiry. The town, the community, and the early years settings together with their participants, art programmes, materials, and physical spaces are carefully introduced in the **Place(s)** chapter. Descriptions, which provide a sense of the places that helped develop this work, are carefully detailed. The **Ethics** chapter outlines the ethical code and procedure that underpin this study and offers a further discussion of the ethical approach as developed with and through thinking with ethics of care. Specifically, the inquiry in this study is shaped by the becoming of the research
assemblage in this study in relation to a particular place, that is, the coming together of children, adults, settings, and objects in a specific ecological environment. Finally, the Methods chapter, introduces the various methods developed and employed to start making sense of instances of phenomena in the field. The chapter discusses how participant observation became conceptualised as a process of becoming-with, it examines the challenges and benefits of 360-degree video cameras for recording artmaking in early years settings and proposes a new formulation of interview as (inter)view.

The chapter eight, Analytical Framework, outlines how analysis was conducted in this study. It shows how research questions were formulated and how they were operationalised. It provides a conceptual framework, defines the subject of inquiry, the unit of analysis, and the pattern attended to in this study. The organization and translation of the various data are carefully introduced, and the various approaches to data analysis, the sensing of boundaries, the (wonder)ing-with data and diffraction, are discussed. The section shows how the analysis was developed and how data, conceptualised as instances of phenomena, are examined in different steps through different approaches in order to respond differently, avoid a repetition of the same, and depart from the pre-given, formalised, traditional approaches to analysis. An experiment that would lead to new forms of inquiry is at the heart of this chapter.

The Findings and Discussion chapters are brought together as a process of ‘thinking-with’ (for discussion see 6.2 Ethical Code <- Ethics of Care) data, children, adults, places, the more-than-human encounters in and around the study, and different concepts relevant to the findings. The chapters are structured according to the three research questions which they then set out to think-with rather than merely answer, which involves staying with and repeatedly coming back to the same observations and narratives, thinking beyond representation, and attending to how various processes are come to be and what they do beyond inclusion and exclusion in and around artmaking. An in-depth discussion follows each findings section and explores the relevance, significance, and meaning of findings. They offer new understandings of the processes at the intersection of artmaking and educational justice and propose new conceptualizations of important processes that deterritorialise habitual approaches to educational justice and ways of being and doing together around artmaking in early years settings. The chapters reorient thinking around processes of social inclusion and exclusion, provide new conceptualizations of the fundamental elements of encounters building towards fair and just educational futures, and offer new directions for future arts and educational justice research. The thinking and writing in these chapters are unsettled by
sections titled ‘Cuts’ that (dis)entangle, both entangle and disentangle, the inquiry and assist in exposing frictions and new possibilities around the findings of this study.

The final chapter, In/conclusion, is framed as a proposition rather than an outcome or representation of objective ‘truths’ which close and constrain inquiry. As a proposition, the final chapter not only summarises the body of the thesis, but it also sets out a series of points for further discussion. It offers new openings to the intersection between the arts and educational justice and to new ways of becoming with others in and around artmaking in early years settings. The chapter proposes, imagines, suggests, and engages in further thinking. It asks further questions about the more-than-human encounters that, as this study argues, are fundamental to building toward just and fair ways of becoming together in/around/with the arts.

1.4 Place-making

The doing of the thesis is conceptualised here as a particular ‘place-making’ process. Indeed, doing a thesis is not merely thinking and writing, a communicative exercise, it is also a physical one, or as Braidotti (1997) writes “it is a connection between thought and life” (p.60). Many real-life experiences, the long hours at a computer screen that makes the eyes grow tired, the sound of chatter of neighbours isolated during a pandemic, the concrete floor that brought the researcher and young children together as they waited for artmaking session to start, the virtual and personal connections made with communities of scholars, or the feeling of a dry chalk staining fingertips of children and adults letting their presence known, all come together in the becoming of a thesis. A PhD study is an embodied practice in which a variety of lived encounters during the PhD journey all fundamentally contribute to creating a particular place. Such a place is not stable nor bounded. Instead, it is the coming together, as Ingold (2008) writes, “of interwoven lines of growth and movement” (p.1796). Drawing on Ingold (2008), a thesis then becomes a ‘zone of entanglement’ that participates “in weaving the textures of the land” (p.1796). The doing of a thesis is more than writing, it is a place-making practice that engages an array of actors, senses, and processes. Framing the journey towards a written thesis as a place in movement proposes that making of the thesis, the inquiring, sense-making, and writing is more than a passive intellectual exercise. Instead, thinking with Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010), and Braidotti (2011), the making of the thesis in this study is a nomadic practice that disrupts and therefore extends traditional
fields and territories, it refuses to be tied down by conventions, and looks to what is not yet there. To use St. Pierre’s (2011a) words:

“[N]omads deterritorialize space that has been territorialized, charted, ordered, and then shut down. Nomads search for mobile arrangements of space where thought can settle for a time and then multiply and recombine, always displacing the sedentary and unified” (p.9)
2 GATHERING: Literature review

"[A]lthough the arts don’t do anything, a lot is done in and through the name of ‘the arts.’"
- Gaztambide-Fernández (2013)

The Literature Review that follows identifies, evaluates, and provides a critical analysis of relevant literature of current debates on the role of social inclusion and exclusion and the arts in education. It further considers the intersection of social inclusion, the arts, and education in relation to educational justice in the 21st century. Through a focused review of literature published in the UK and in the Czech Republic between 2000-2021, the study highlights specific themes, debates as well as gaps that set the stage for this study’s inquiry. The literature reviewed also includes important scholarly work of Roma and non-Roma researchers from the Czech Republic acquired from the archive of the Central Library of Charles University in Prague. It highlights their important contribution to the subject by including their older body of work published between 1990-2020.

The first part of the chapter introduces the development of the concept of social inclusion and how it is employed today in Europe and European discourse. It turns to the fundamental role of education in social inclusion but reveals that despite the culture of social inclusion within European educational system, schools are still nevertheless found to produce or perpetuate injustice and exclusions. The first part of the chapter is then concluded by discussing the problematic alignment of inclusive education and neoliberal, market-oriented notions of justice, and how such practices negatively and disproportionately impact on those who are normally considered excluded, who are, in the context of the Czech Republic specifically, children from low socio-economic backgrounds, most of whom are of Roma background.

The second part of the chapter discusses the role of the arts in inclusive education and how various research approaches to education understand the function of the arts in education differently and therefore propose different ways the arts are to be employed towards educational justice. It offers an overview of the arguments set out by developmental and post-developmental approaches to the arts in education but proposes that these do neither efficiently nor sufficiently tackle the complex issues of educational justice because they often position the arts as a ‘problem-solver.’ The chapter is then concluded by turning to the posthumanist and new materialist scholarship and arguing that thinking with posthumanist and new materialist theories and employing their commitments, opens up new possibilities and ethical ways of attending to the complex, more-than-human, situated
and relational processes of being and doing together around the arts in education. Moreover, it reorients thinking and reconsiders the role of the arts in educational justice by asking different questions about the nature of interactions around artmaking and by imagining alternatives.

2.1 Social inclusion and exclusion

2.1.1 Introduction: Conceptions of ‘social inclusion’ in Europe

Many have argued that social inclusion is a contested term. Indeed, the precise definition of social inclusion is not agreed upon (Bundschuh, Freitas, Bartrolí, & Žganec, 2021; Klasen, 2001; Paraschiv, Manea, Țițan, & Mihai, 2021). More recently, however, the term social inclusion has been rather ‘fluid,’ as there are multiple definitions that reflect the many different forms of inclusion that are being enacted by different settings and people in diverse communities (Bundschuh et al., 2021; Nind, Rix, Sheehy, & Simmons, 2004). The various understandings of social inclusion have arisen directly from a European concept of social exclusion that originated in France where it was used to describe people who slipped through the national social security system (Madanipour, Shucksmith, & Talbot, 2015). Social exclusion therefore sometimes refers directly to poverty, and the two are commonly used interchangeable, as it has been employed to study the processes of becoming poor (Bradshaw, 2004). Later, the conceptualization of social inclusion became extended toward the relationship between socially excluded individuals and mainstream society and focuses specifically on the processes that underlie this relationship. A major study conducted by Levitas et al. (2007) highlights the complex and multidimensional nature of social inclusion, and some studies expand the notion of social inclusion as a moral imperative related to notions of kinship, solidarity, and belonging (Connolly, Marino, & Martínez, 2019; Scorgie & Forlin, 2019). Hills, Le Grand, and Pichaud’s (2002) definition of social exclusion as the lack of effective participation in significant social activities or societal benefits such as consumption, production, political engagement and social interaction, has however become the most common understanding employed until now. Indeed, according to Madanipour (2011), exclusion is “an institutionalized form of controlling access: to places, to activities, to resources and information” (p.189). In most policy and research in the early 21st century, social inclusion is therefore seen as a process of strengthening and widening access and providing all citizens the opportunities to participate in all aspects of public and social life at all levels (Bundschuh et al., 2021; Grum, 2012; Lindgren, 2010; Pearson, 2015).
Social inclusion has gained a prominent place in a wider social agenda across the global north and has become underpinned by national and international social policy discourse and local reforms (Keep, Montanari, & Greenlee, 2021). The UN General Assembly refers to and insists on inclusion as a core process in reducing inequality and improving the quality of life for everyone, proposing that social inclusion will help to “achieve a better and more sustainable future for all” (“Sustainable Development Goals,” 2015). The European Union (EU) ratified social inclusion as a common EU objective in 2000 in a push to integrate ‘excluded’ groups into a labour market (Armstrong, 2010; Madanipour et al., 2015). In the UK, social inclusion and exclusion became significant concepts of welfare policies in the 90’s culminating in the establishment of Social Exclusion Unit, later reframed as the Social Exclusion Task Force, with a goal of eradicating poverty and disadvantage (Bradshaw, 2004). In the Czech Republic, social inclusion debates have focused mainly on education, partially due to a now famous legal action taken against the Czech government by pupils and their parents from the city of Ostrava at the European Court of Human Rights which resulted in a call for desegregation of the education system in the Czech Republic (D.H. and Others v. The Czech Republic Judgment, 2007).

The different ways social inclusion seems to be discussed and implemented in each country in Europe is nevertheless firmly rooted in very specific EU discourses. Social inclusion is therefore not only a pan-European social policy agenda it also rests on a common conceptualizations of social exclusion and poverty discourse (Madanipour et al., 2015). There is almost no conceptual difference between the different European states, as argued by David (2005) who further shows that common concepts, methods, and indicators are being promoted on the international level through various joint monitoring activities and organizations. The European Union is an economic union and its conception of social inclusion is therefore closely related to economic competitiveness and social cohesion (Armstrong, 2010; Madanipour et al., 2015). Blížkovský (1995, 2006) points out this homogenizing discourse and stresses the lack of reciprocity in Czech-EU relations while criticizing the Czech Republic for conforming to that discourse. Blížkovský (2006) writes that Czech discourse lacks criticality as well as a concrete value system that would challenge the one-sided neoliberal approach of the EU. He stresses that local understandings are important as they contributing to developing “balanced, common civic, regional, national, and international concepts” (Blížkovský, 1995, p. 4). This claim is confirmed by more than 270 Czech teachers interviewed by Straková et al. (2014) who assert that “there is no common vision of what quality education is or should look like in Czech society” (p.57).
Today, in the early 21st century, specific initiatives (e.g. the Decade of Roma Inclusion and the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020) define and conceptualise social inclusion in particular ways in which certain groups of people, in this case described as ‘Roma,’ are positioned as excluded, while others are not (Marjanovic, 2012; Martinelli et al., 2017; Sibley, 1998; Surdu & Kovats, 2015). They also adopt specific measures, such as education, and position them as central to inclusive efforts (Brüggemann & Friedman, 2017; Harding, 2014; Razer, Friedman, & Warshofsky, 2013; The World Bank, 2012). The concept of social inclusion is influencing how social policy is not only conceived, researched, and discussed, but also how it is addressed in the European context (Saunders, 2008). This can be problematic, as the narrow or loosely defined conceptions of social inclusion/exclusion are exposed to political and ideological bias. These can limit the understanding of the processes that bring about inequality and may prevent inequalities from being fully addressed.

2.1.2 Social inclusion in education

Education, and inclusive education in particular, is central to social inclusion efforts. Education is not only recognised to be a fundamental human right, as proclaimed by the 1990 World Declaration on Education for All (Pearson, 2015), but also because it has been recognised as an important participatory process that plays a significant role in children’s life (Hedtke & Zimenkova, 2012). Social inclusion lies at the core of public education (another contested and varied concept), as Klasen (2001) writes:

“[E]arly calls for mass education in the 18th and 19th centuries viewed the inclusionary nature of the education process, and the fostering of citizenship through education, as more important than the skills one may acquire through education” (p.423).

Education in a European context can therefore be understood as a socially driven project with equity inherent to its agenda which is premised on the right of all children to fully participate in mainstream education. Education for all is indeed a central tenet of education systems across Europe, including both the UK and the Czech Republic (European Economic and Social Commitee, 2017; MŠMT, 2010; Pearson, 2015).

Moreover, inclusive education has become seen as a tool for alleviating social exclusion and inequality by means of empowering pupils and increasing their employability (Hughes, 2010; Razer et al., 2013). Brüggemann and Friedman (2017) write:
“Educational policies and interventions are not only supposed to reduce educational inequalities [...] but are also meant to improve health, employment, political participation, and other social outcomes” (p.1).

In the UK, the Social Exclusion Unit task force set out to alleviate poverty by improving educational outcomes through quality early years education and the Sure Start programme (Eisenstadt, 2011). Sure Start, a programme that delivers a variety of services, including early years education, was developed to break the cycle of disadvantage by improving the outcomes of children from poor backgrounds, and thus increasing their chances for employment (Moss, 2004). Similarly, in the Czech Republic, early years education has been found to be one of the most effective interventions that demonstrates positive influence on children in disadvantaged localities (Ivatts, Čada, Felcmanová, Greger, & Straková, 2015; MŠMT, 2010; Šojdrová, Bařinková, Borkovcová, & Dlouhý, 2014). Consequently, many early years inclusive programmes and projects have been initiated in the Czech Republic to engage children from socially excluded communities early in their lives (Gulová & Střelec, 2016; Morávek, Obrovská, Kusá, & Šerek, 2009). Despite new findings that challenge the popular belief that poor outcomes lead to inequality and instead indicate that in reality inequality itself results in poor outcomes (Dorling, 2015; Labonte, 2004; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010), it is still often argued that “one of the principal reasons” for social exclusion of disadvantaged groups “is their low educational attainment” (Gulová & Střelec, 2016, p. 126).

Nevertheless, inclusive education systems are only slowly taking shape in countries across Europe. In the UK, the Sure Start programme has been substantially cut back by severe funding cuts (Department for Education, 2018), and in the Czech Republic the inclusive agenda, as conceived and promoted by the government, is poorly understood by teachers because it lacks a conceptual and methodological framework based on common values and goals (Straková et al., 2014). The study of Straková et al. (2014), in which 553 teachers from 128 schools were interviewed, finds that most of the teachers do not seem to be clear whether inclusive education is good for children or not; they write that teachers’ comments “convey certain helplessness and are often contradictory” (p.56). Inclusive education, according to the official definition of the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport in the Czech Republic is an education that “develops the school culture towards social cohesion, fosters equal opportunity practices and offers adequate support to all children regardless of their individual differences with the aim of developing each child to their full potential” (MŠMT, 2010, p. 1). Such a statement is, however, very broad and lends itself to
a wide array of interpretations. Indeed, in the Czech context, it is widely believed that inclusive education concerns mostly the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream schools. It is seldom discussed that inclusion efforts concern also children from low socio-economic backgrounds and historically disadvantaged groups.

Moreover, an increasing body of literature shows that education systems and schools themselves have historically disadvantaged certain groups of children over others, and despite reforms and various inclusive practices bringing some improvement, this is still the case today in the early 21st century (Franklin-Phipps & Rath, 2018; Gustafsson, 2018; Lewish & Diamond, 2015; Molla & Pham, 2019; New & Merry, 2014). Domina, Penner and Penner (2017) write:

“Despite their egalitarian ethos, schools are social sorting machines, creating categories that serve as the foundation of later life inequalities” (p.311).

Lewish and Diamond (2015) suggest that not only everyday practices but also policy and racism frame how inequality is produced by schools. Indeed, Indigenous scholars have long questioned whether the inclusive agenda can decolonise schooling, or whether schooling can be decolonised at all (Martin et al., 2020; Tuck & Wayne Yang, 2012). Despite its founding principle and the inclusive project, education is far from ‘for all’ and similar claims have been made about arts education also (Gaztambide-Fernández & Parekh, 2017; Kallio & Länsman, 2018; Wolff, 1990). Social inclusion, and inclusive education in particular, is therefore failing, but more importantly it is failing children, more so those already experiencing various forms of disadvantage.

### 2.1.3 Social inclusion and ‘Roma’ children

Children generally labelled ‘Roma’⁴ make up the single largest group of children from low socio-economic backgrounds in the Czech Republic and are therefore most likely to

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⁴ The designation Roma is a contested one. It is not only a self-designator with important historical, cultural, political, and social implications that plays a critical role in the daily lives of many people. It is also a label with a homogenizing effect. The term Roma encompasses a wide range of disparate groups with unique characteristics. Moreover, in the context of the Czech Republic specifically, the label Roma is often assigned to people with disregard for their actual self-designation. Rather than a marker of difference, this study therefore recognizes the designation ‘Roma’ as a marker of diversity and aims to encourage a critical debate. In this thesis the term ‘Roma’ in single quotation marks is therefore used as a reference to a particular discourse and practice rather than particular group of people. The study therefore does not assign nor focus on ethnicity as it may lead to disregarding individual experiences and to affixing characteristics as if they were inherent to a whole
experience an unequal access to education. Similarly, to the Czech Republic, in many other countries across Europe, the quality of education Roma pupils receive is inferior to mainstream education (Andruszkiewicz, 2002; Foster & Norton, 2013; Martinelli et al., 2017). In the UK, Roma together with Gypsy and Travellers of Irish Heritage communities, as Foster and Norton (Foster & Norton, 2013) state, “surpassed all other ethnic groups, ‘free school meals eligible’ pupils and even ‘looked after children’ in levels of absence, exclusion, ‘special educational needs’ (SEN) and secondary school dropout” (pp. 90-92). Drawing on the findings of the Czech School Inspection, Ivatts et al. (2015) report that in 2010 around 32% of Roma children, compared to 2% of their non-Roma peers, were systematically removed from mainstream schools and placed in so-called ‘special schools’ established primarily for children with mental disabilities. The placement of Roma children into ‘special schools’ with substandard curriculum has rightly been criticised and recognised as a form of segregation (European Roma Rights Centre, 2009). Social inclusion in the Czech context is thus most often discussed in relation to educational inequalities deeply embedded in its segregationist educational policies (The World Bank, 2012). On a national level, there is a wealth of research studies that investigate the range of macro and micro factors, from socio-cultural and moral obstacles to successful inclusion and academic performance of Roma pupils in mainstream education (Balabánová, 1995; Balvín, 1996; Bittnerová, 2010; Čížková, 1999; Polechová, 2005; Poledňová & Zobačová, 2006; Smékal, 2003). Nevertheless, Hurle et. al (2012), in their report for the Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation, highlight that Roma children continue to be placed disproportionately in former ‘special schools.’ Little progress has therefore been made towards educational equity in the context of the Czech Republic to date (Brüggemann & Friedman, 2017; Jovanovic, 2015; Kašparová & Souralová, 2014).

Social inclusion efforts, emphasising access and outcome, have led neither to inclusion nor greater equality because they seek to integrate diverse communities, including the Roma, into a neo-liberal, capitalist system, instead of protecting plurality, and the many different modes of thinking, doing, and living enacted daily in Europe. “The ‘bringing in’ of inclusion can mask the fact that the Other is already among us, despite her unimagined presence,” argues Campbell (2010, p. 83). Moreover, the processes of bringing the ‘Other’

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5 The term ‘special school’ is in the Czech Republic the most recognized name for primary schools where students are educated according to the national Supplement to the Comprehensive Educational Program Concerning Children with Mild Mental Retardation. Special schools are now officially called ‘practical schools’ but their curriculum has not changed.
in, Campbell adds, requires “a purging of difference and a submission to a hegemonic ethos” (p.83). Such a concept of inclusion is therefore closely linked to universalizing discourses that position the majority as on the ‘inside’ and the others as on the ‘outside’. Indeed, social inclusion devoted merely to issues of access and increase of participation, that is, physical inclusion, as Brown et al. (1999) show in their eco-behavioural study of early years settings, does not necessarily result in social inclusion. This is evidenced in the research of Kašparová and Souralová (2014) who show how four primary schools, two predominately ‘non-Roma’ and two predominately ‘Roma’, upon integration into two schools as a move towards desegregation, quite quickly became segregated again. Despite the different approaches and a significant effort the two newly integrated schools and its staff employed, the decisions both ‘Roma’ and ‘non-Roma’ parents took in reaction to the integration eventually led again to classroom homogenization and the re-structuring of exclusion in both schools. Indeed, practices dedicated to the education of all, as Harding (2014) observed in the UK, are based on the principles and values of the majority which lead to social exclusion of pupils from marginalised groups such as those of Roma background (p.25).

There is also a significant concern with the homogenizing label ‘Roma,’ as Roma communities are far from homogenous, but rather the Roma are a set of diverse groups of people. The diversity even among Roma in one community is exemplified by Bittnerová, Doubek, and Levinská’s (2014) study of multiple disadvantaged communities in the Czech Republic during which they learned that neither language, physical appearance, family relations, nor any other criteria can unequivocally describe those who identify or are labelled as ‘Roma’ (p.26) in the Czech Republic. Surdu and Kovats (2015) argue that ‘Roma’ is an “identity constructed at the intersection of political and expert knowledge” that reinforces an exclusion of those included in the ‘Roma’ group and accentuates the stigmatization of people who “are not bounded by a common language, religion, cultural practice, geographic location, occupation, physical appearance or lifestyle” (p.5). A concept of super-diversity (Vertovec, 2007) has been useful to move ‘Roma’ discourse beyond ethnicity towards super-diversity which has the potential to expand understanding of the dynamics of social inclusion and exclusion and “engage more deeply with the diverse life experiences and structural positioning of people [emphasis added]” (Tremlett, 2014, p. 4).

A growing body of research argues that social inclusion efforts that target Roma communities are in reality exploitative (Marjanovic, 2012), stigmatise Roma groups, and lead to toxic relationships among people (Jovanovic, 2015; Surdu & Kovats, 2015). Social inclusion is therefore inefficient and unsuccessful in tackling inequalities as it is grounded in societal
racism reinforced by a normalised set of institutional, historical, cultural, and interpersonal practices. Marjanovic (2012) argues that the drive behind the European Decade of Roma Inclusion project was to end migration of Roma communities rather than empowering them and eliminating poverty and inequality. Moreover, Surdu and Kovats (2015) show how Roma policy initiatives result in Roma being viewed as “different and unequal” (p.14). In the Czech Republic, inclusive education, and inclusion of Roma children in education are underlaid by range of policies and national legislation (Principles of long-term approach to Roma integration until 2025, 2006; Strategy of Roma integration until 2020, 2015; National Action Plan for Inclusive Education 2016-2018, 2015; SI2017/270; and more). Nevertheless, as an independent study shows (Kartous, 2017), only 35% of more than 1000 respondents believed that ‘Roma’ children have the right to be included in mainstream education, while 57% of people from the same group supported inclusion of children from disadvantaged backgrounds because they recognised that these children have the right to be included in mainstream education (p.4). Such statistics demonstrate the negative attitude of the majority towards ‘Roma’ people in the Czech Republic which significantly impacts how policies are implemented and carried out in school settings. Social inclusion policies and practices are thus failing not only because of their inherent bias, but also because they are closely linked to poor social cohesion.

Research on school practices shows that inclusive schools, or schools with an inclusive ethos, may also act as agents of social exclusion if inclusive relationships are not nurtured there (Booth, 2011; Meo & Parker, 2004; Razer et al., 2013). The importance of inclusive relationships is highlighted in the work of Razer, Freeman and Warshofsky (2013) who conclude that:

> “Since social exclusion is essentially a relationship and the process through which this relationship takes shape, interrupting the cycle of exclusion must focus on changing relationships that give concrete expression to respect, solidarity, and involvement [emphasis added]” (p.1164).

There are significant social barriers to relationships between teachers, parents, and children in disadvantaged communities in the Czech Republic. These barriers are amplified by breakdowns in communication between individuals and between individuals and institutions, as Burkovičová’s study (2015) of various in-and-out-of-school interactions shows. In a newspaper interview (Mačí, 2019), a Czech primary school headteacher from a small town in the northern part of the Czech Republic discusses how over 100 pupils and
their parents from the school’s catchment area choose to travel daily to a neighbouring town. Rather than study in their local, newly refurbished primary school that has a large proportion of pupils labelled ‘Roma,’ many families commute, which leaves the headteacher with a half empty, segregated school:

“No one wants to say it out loud, but the main reason [for families bringing their children elsewhere] is the social composition of the school” (Primary school headteacher in Mačí, 2019).

Social inclusion that seeks either equality or equity has not eliminated the burdens of disadvantage and inequality among individuals and communities (Labonte, 2004). Instead of closing the gap between historically disadvantaged groups, such as the Roma, and the rest of the society, the excessive focus on one group over the other that social inclusion introduces, often results in more hatred and violence among people (Jovanovic, 2015; Surdu & Kovats, 2015) and greater social division (France, Harvey, & Sutton, 2010). The findings of the persisting gap are not dissimilar to those of Hills, Sefton, and Stewart (2009) assess Britain’s New Labour’s decade of policies that aimed to reduce inequality and disadvantage by focusing on improving access to early years education (Sure Start) as well as school achievement. Their study shows that Roma/Gypsy groups fell “well behind others” and there was still a large gap between them and the white majority population, across education, employment, and income (Hills et al., 2009, p. 347). Moreover, while the British government’s equalitarian policies in the 90’s and 00’s reflected the public’s general understanding that inequalities are too great, the support for redistributive policies slowly declined because “people wanted a small degree of redistribution and a limited amount of extra ‘tax and spend,’” highlighting the majority’s lack of interest in actually achieving equality (Hills et al., 2009, p. 357).

2.1.4 Conclusion: Educational justice

This study posits that equality of access or equality in educational attainment does not lead to nor should equate to educational justice. It is therefore essential to move beyond the mantra of Education for all based on the concept of social inclusion, and instead rethink the core values of education and educational justice by opening the concept up and attending closely to educational relations. Indeed, concepts, such as social inclusion, that uphold the social justice mission can and should be understood as ‘evolving’ and ‘boundary crossing,’ as argued by Hatton (2015, p. 1). Clark (2019), for example, reconceptualises inclusive practice
as an enactment of gathering in order to rethink inclusive practice as a way of relating differently to people, place, and theory in educational settings. Inclusion should move beyond specific strategies and practices, and as Engel, Holford, and Pimlott-Wilson (2010) suggest, “permeate” schools and “infect” communities in order to really tackle the pervasive problems of educational inequality and exclusion (p.153). Engel, Holford, and Pimlott-Wilson’s particular vision of inclusion then inspires a specific line of inquiry in this study: What does educational justice that flows through bodies and is present in every part of a body look like? Can tracing educational justice through/with affective, close educational relationships aid in imagining what comes next?

Although, or perhaps because, educational justice continues to be difficult to achieve, new alternatives must be imagined. Frances and Mills (2012) quote Gandin and Apple (2012) to emphasise the opportunity that imagination offers:

“True utopia emerges when there are no ways to resolve the situation within the coordinates of the possible and, out of the pure urge to survive, you have to invent a new space. Utopia is not a free imagination; utopia is a matter of innermost urgency; you are forced to imagine something else as the only way out” (p.577).

A new body of research is emerging that attempts to re-imagine educational justice in a direction away from the Freirean (1994) model of pedagogy that provides/helps/enables/gives voice to the oppressed towards a more relational understanding of educational justice. Reay (2012), for example, observes that more socially just educational systems are those where there is less ‘social distance’ between individuals from different socio-economic backgrounds (p.597). Educational justice is similarly discussed by Hodge (2017) who offers the notion of co-presence and argues that just education is “not about autonomy and independence but about community: interdependence, connectedness, unity and working collectively” (p.4). Kruger and La Roux (2017) then call for a “collective development” (p. 57). Others, such as New and Merry (2014), however, question co-presence, inclusion, and diversification of schools arguing that bringing people together does not reduce conflict and prejudice, nor does it lead to educational justice. The research presented in this thesis moves beyond the harmful binaries of the ‘oppressor’ and ‘oppressed’ towards the relationships that connects the two, namely mutual understandings and shared responsibility. This study thus contributes and builds on educational research that investigates how educational justice is or can be enacted differently.
To inquire about fair and just relations around artmaking differently and to imagine what just education may be, this study looks to the entanglement, that is, the mutual interdependencies, of human and non-human relationships (Barad, 2007) and new ways of being and doing together in and around artmaking in early years settings. Drawing on Hickey-Moody and Crowley (2010), it argues that to tackle inequality in education, it is important to attend to the micro-political relations within situated encounters in which inclusion and exclusion are co-produced by the coming-together of humans and more-than-humans as they “constitute the beginning of social change” (p.401). Barad (2007) writes that entanglements, the human and more-than-human intra-actions (meaning the more-than-human interactions in which entities are constantly exchanging, diffracting, influencing, and working inseparably), are inherently ethical. Entanglements allow thinking beyond identity as fixed and determined. Attending to entanglements stimulates thinking in terms of all of ‘us,’ both the oppressor and the oppressed, as opposed to just ‘them,’ that is, the oppressed, a binary deeply entrenched in inclusive discourse.

Moreover, this study also aligns with the argument that there is no relation without difference (Bakhtin, 1986), and that difference is irreducible which suggests that local knowledge is radically multiple and relational (Haraway, 1988). Introducing the notion of relational difference into the field of social inclusion and exclusion is crucial because it proposes that it is only by attending to the effects of differences new ways of being and becoming are imaginable. Moreover, it suggests that matter is interdependent, and thus one cannot act and produce a change without affecting another. Tynell (2016) argues, drawing on the work of Biesta and Arendt, that the contemporary notion of inclusion within educational research and practice through a posthumanist perspective lies “in the ability to together move and be moved by the other” (p.47). Tynell uses Biesta’s (2013) notion of democratic education as a place where a specific kind of plurality is enacted through radical difference to show that it is through differences brought about by interactions that changes, or conditions of possibility, occur. Suggesting that dependent relation, or the coming together of differences, is the smallest unit of being and of inquiry (Haraway, 2007) is to attend to the practice of social inclusion and exclusion as an ongoing, relational, and performative doing rather than individual, fixed and predetermined.
2.2 The Arts, education, and social inclusion

2.2.1 Introduction: Beyond the effects of the arts in education

The role of the arts in education has always been surrounded by uncertainty in the context of countries of the global north despite traditionally holding an integral place in early years education (McArdle & Wong, 2010) and being highly valued as a methodological and intellectual tool for developing socially just pedagogies (McArdle, Knight, & Stratigos, 2013; Powell & Serriere, 2013). Such a position of precarity is closely connected to “a high level of both interest and confusion about the nature and the importance of the arts and their relationship to education,” Fleming, Bresler, and O’Toole (2015, p. 1) write. This is evidenced in both local and global political activities and decision-making (Bresler, 2007). To legitimise and strengthen the place of the arts in education, researchers and practitioners from across the global north contexts have been developing a body of research that helps the discipline, as Bresler (2007) notes, “to articulate rationales in order to justify [its] existence” in curriculum (p. XVII). A large body of research is therefore been put forth that attempts to demonstrate various positive social and educational outcomes of the arts (Kinder & Harland, 2004), i.e. cognitive benefits (Hancock & Wright, 2018; Kisida, Bowen, & Greene, 2016), social cohesion (Bailey & Davidson, 2005; Matarasso, 1997; Ritók & Alapítván, 2012), and empowerment of marginalised groups (Wallace-DiGarbo & Hill, 2006; Weltsek, 2019). As a result of this growing yet tentative discourse on positive effects, it can be argued, that the arts became a fundamental tool for tackling social exclusion and alleviating its effects on disadvantaged communities, particularly in education (Belfiore, 2002; Guetzkow, 2002; Kinder & Harland, 2004; Matarasso, 1997; Rix, 2003).

The discourse on the effects of the arts has nevertheless been criticised for embodying a particular set of implicit values and assumptions about the arts and for adhering to a particular ideological bias. Such an approach also fails to account for the variety of practices and processes in and around the arts and limits the arts and arts education discourses and practices. Harland (2014) argues that researchers in this field have had a “tendency to partisanship” which “seriously impaired the efficacy of the studies undertaken” so far (p.328). Harland believes that the problem is the direct result of the precarious position of the arts in education:

“For me and many of my colleagues, the problem seemed to stem from perceptions that the arts were under threat in school curricula and evidence was required to defend their existence there or that, like organic
foods, the arts, and therefore arts education, were seen as implicitly good for people and it was the function of research to document this by way of convincing the powers that be of their great value” (Harland, 2014, p. 328).

Indeed, when Gaztambide-Fernández (2013) controversially exclaims that “the arts don’t do anything,” he attempts to challenge what he describes as the rhetoric of effect. Such a rhetoric, he argues, “masks the complexity of those practices and processes associated with the arts, limiting the possibilities for productively employing such practices in education” (p.220). Whether inherently good or not, the arts in education are firmly situated in specific institutional, normative frameworks that perpetuate hegemonic practices (Desai, 2020; Millett, 2019). Similarly to arguments around education more broadly, the arts in education in the early 21st century are closely linked to neoliberal educational discourse and creative economy, and thus are often absorbed into the capitalist logic of individualism and production (Kalin, 2014). Moreover, a growing body of research documents the pervasive injustices in and around the arts in education (Gaztambide-Fernández & Parekh, 2017; Hatton, 2019; Kallio & Länsman, 2018; Suominen, Pusa, Raudaskoski, & Haggren, 2020; Wexler, 2018). The intersection of the arts, education, and educational (in)justice is therefore a rich site for an exploration of wider issues of social inclusion as well as re-thinking the potential of the arts in education for educational justice (Hatton, 2019). Indeed, in order to start imagining the possibilities of educational justice and what both the arts and education are capable of, “[w]e need to think through art and education together” (Kalin, 2014, p. 197).

2.2.2 The arts in education as a developmental tool

A child-centred, developmental approach has been central to much of the research concerned with the arts in education. The early research paid a little to no attention to the presence of others and the interactions that happen in and around the arts, and the art product was favoured as the sole source of data that provides a window into a child’s development (Brooks, 2005; Thompson, 2012). Much research in this area is based on the argument that the arts are an integral part of human nature and human development (Dissanayake, 2008). Moreover, such studies claim that the arts have a positive effect not only on cognitive but also social and behavioural outcomes of children and young people (Elpus, 2013; Van Steenis, 2020). The arts are then positioned as critical for children’s development and different ways of thinking (Eisner, 2002), and thus an important part of education. Indeed, to claim a space for the arts in early years education in the UK, Nutbrown
(2013) writes that “human beings need the arts for holistic development” (p.239). She argues, drawing on Clough (2002), that human beings employ ‘aesthetic attending,’ or sensory experiencing of the world, and therefore have an innate need for aesthetics and the arts (p.241).

Because of their commonly low educational attainment, children from marginalised communities and low socio-economic backgrounds became a target group of arts interventions meant to improve their educational outcomes. It has been argued that arts interventions can help such children not only with their cognitive and social but also emotional and behavioural difficulties (Kinder & Harland, 2004; Wallace-DiGarbo & Hill, 2006). Brown (2020) writes:

“[Ar]ts integrated learning may hold the potential to address key challenges facing our nation’s youngest learners, especially those with developmental delays and emotional challenges and those from diverse cultures and backgrounds” (p.15).

The arts, and visual arts specifically, have therefore become an important educational tool that is seen as capable of filling in the learning and behavioural ‘gaps’ of disadvantaged children, and thus increasing their attainment and promoting their inclusion in mainstream education as well as the labour market (Brown, Benedett, & Armistead, 2010; Ramsden et al., 2011).

Research on the arts in education that focuses on the effects of the arts on children’s development in relation to educational justice has nevertheless been viewed as problematic (Koopman, 2005). Guetzkow (2002), for example, points to the absence of adequate data. He suggests that most studies in this field are lacking longitudinal data, their sample sizes are small, and they often focus on the effects of the arts on mainly at-risk children while there is very little attention paid to what the arts do for children from other socio-economic backgrounds. Reflecting on Theatre for Development projects, Kandil and te Bokkel (2019) write that when the arts focus on passing on skills and imparting change they do not always address the needs of disadvantaged groups, limit collaboration, and “entrench marginalised populations in their status of victimhood” (p. 377). Such victimization is evident, for example, in the study of Yildiz Çiçekler and Aral (2020) who base their research on the premise that disadvantaged Roma children in their locality are not creative enough and learning through the arts can increase their creativity (p.524). Such studies then not only victimise children from disadvantaged communities, but also perpetuate a particularly harmful deficit
discourse. Kallio and Länsman (2018), for example, show that by insisting on egalitarianism, arts education in Finland perpetuates inequality of Indigenous learners by homogenizing and therefore negating the diversity that is a part of Finnish school culture. Finally, aligning the arts in education with neoliberal knowledge economy also generates inequality of access because the arts, not deemed quite as important as science subjects, have slowly been downgraded or eliminated from the school curricula in many Western countries. This turn is again felt most by children in marginalised communities, as Wexler (2018) explains. Wexler highlights how the arts in the US context have become a cultural privilege that predominantly White, middle-class children in schools with high test scores can enjoy. On the other hand, Black and Latinx children from low socio-economic backgrounds in low performing schools are made to focus on improving their attainment through traditional means instead.

Employing the arts as a developmental tool may be a useful pedagogic approach, but it needs to be more researched in order to be better understood and employed. In so far, it is not the most efficient tool for tackling either social inclusion or educational justice. The developmental approach to the arts in education aligns too closely to neoliberal conceptions of education as in service to market-oriented goals rather than in service of social and educational justice. As such, neoliberal education, including arts education, is very “unidimensional” (Dale cited in Aróstegui, 2020) and has led to “homogenizing individuality and standardizing thinking” (Zhao & Gearin, 2016). Moreover, it has stigmatised and excluded marginalised children in the process (Millett, 2019; Sakr & Osgood, 2019). Research championing the developmental approach to the arts in education is also narrow. It lacks interest in a deep analysis of children and young people’s everyday experiences and interactions around the arts, as Gaztambide-Fernández (2013) points out. Indeed, Thompson (2012) notes that accounts of children’s interactions in and around arts activities in the social space of early childhood classrooms are still relatively rare. More in-depth studies that focus on contextualised interactions around the arts are therefore necessary, not only to understand what actually happens around the arts but also to counter the universalizing and essentializing understandings of the developmental approach (Sakr & Osgood, 2019). There is a pressing need for new research that would open new possibilities and understanding of the intersection between the arts, education, and educational justice.

2.2.3 The arts in education as a socialization tool

New research on the arts in education tends to turn to the socio-cultural dimension of arts activities and engage with contexts to understand children’s situated engagements with the
arts. Bresler and Thompson (2002) maintain that “[t]he meaning of any form of art or arts instruction is inseparable from the contexts and conditions under which it is generated and experienced” (p.9). Moreover, as Atkinson (2002) suggests, the arts, and artmaking specifically, in a classroom setting can hardly be viewed as a personal practice when framed by a specific programme and a curriculum. In such a context the arts are a result of a particular culture and educational policies that inevitably influence what children make and why. To expand on the developmental research that positions the arts as a natural kind of activity necessary for children’s development, post-developmental research attends to the arts as one possible, practical element of social existence (Pearson, 2001).

A social semiotics approach to the arts has opened up the possibility to study the various processes in the arts as meaning-making activities in which children make signs in response to their social environment (Hopperstad, 2008; Kress, 1997; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Children’s artworks, for example, are viewed as a system of signs and symbols that represent an important element of children’s communicative behaviour. Within this approach, engaging with the arts is still a child-centred practice that is however deeply embedded in social and institutional contexts. Artmaking, for example, is then analysed as one of the many different modes people use to communicate to each other (Brooks, 2005; M. J. Narey, 2017; Richards, 2018; Theodotou, 2017). Employing Vygotsky’s socio-cultural lens, Brooks (2005) shows how drawing can help children to talk about, share, and revisit their drawings, and therefore intellectually engage with specific subjects in meaningful and complex ways. Richards (2017) offers insight into the ways ESL learners may use drawing to communicate and develop a sense of belonging in an English-speaking classroom. The social semiotics approach thus highlights that engaging with the arts is not only an important learning process that extends children’s thinking and underlies their ability to make and interpret meaning (Narey, 2007), it also shows that it is an important social process that creates new opportunities for participants to come and work together.

A post-developmental framing of the arts reorients thinking around the purpose of the arts by drawing attention to its socialization function. Theodotou (2017), for example, observes that the arts can promote positive and meaningful social interactions that further support literacy development in early years classrooms. Similarly, Hall (2010) argues that the arts can help people with intellectual disabilities develop feelings of attachment and belonging within a community. Moreover, Knight (2008) shows that, for example, collaborative drawing in early years classroom can improve communication and understandings between adults and children. Such studies then help build a case for the
social benefits of the arts in education and their positive impact on social cohesion and appreciation of diversity which lead to the strengthening of communities.

While employing the arts as a socialization tool may be helpful and useful in certain situations, it is nevertheless reductive in respect to educational justice. It limits the different roles the arts can play in society, and the myriad of creative practices and ways through which individuals and communities engage with the arts. More importantly, however, it provides simplistic solutions to complex issues of educational justice. Analysing the role of the arts in the regeneration of inner-cities, and the use of the arts as a tool to combat social exclusion, Lees and Melhuish (2015) point out how problematic it is to employ arts programmes developed under an umbrella of urban regeneration. Such programmes, they write, predefine the social output that needs to follow and, more often than not, ignore the needs of local communities. Matarasso (2009), for example, reports the frustration of arts practitioners, evaluators, and even commissioners with the evaluation practices of arts programmes, the constraining methods, and limited focus that often disregard local circumstances and do not meet the needs of its participants. The exasperation with the limited interest in the actual role that the arts and arts programmes play in communities is expressed by one of the practitioners in the study:

“Is that all you’ve got to say about this project we’ve sweated blood and tears for?” (Practitioner cited in Matarasso, 2009, p. 34)

Arts practitioners in Matarasso’s (2009) study are instead interested to attend to the nuances of their practice and issues that are pertinent to their contexts. Most importantly, however, they want to share new knowledge. This demonstrates the need, in the arts and arts education fields, for an expanded inquiry into the arts in education focused not only on predetermined outcomes, but on what else is there beyond outcomes and effects. Indeed, Merli (2002) criticises researchers and policy makers employing the arts towards mitigating social exclusion for their “soft approach” that diverts attention from the real causes of exclusion rather than backing tough solutions. Merli writes:

“Social deprivation and exclusion arguably can be removed only by fighting the structural conditions which cause them. Such conditions will not be removed by benevolent arts programmes” (Merli, 2002, p. 113).

Also Miles (2005) argues that the arts should not be a “problem-solver” of socio-economic problems caused by global capitalism, because by assuming that role it becomes complicit in
its destructiveness and abuse (p.897). Instead, Miles proposes to attend to the arts as a space of resistance and a radical practice that arises out of situated co-production and relationships between arts practitioners and arts participants as “one of the basic freedoms is to be able to define our own basic needs” (UNESCO cited in Miles, 2005, p. 906). Similarly, Sellman (2015) points to the necessity to better understand the spaces in and around the arts developed by practitioners and participants because they provide alternatives to traditional educational contexts. Therefore, in order to get new insights into the role of the arts in education, and for educational justice in particular, new research must move beyond the effects and the outcomes of the arts, and instead attend carefully to arts spaces occupied, shaped, and re-shaped by participants in the process of creating alternative possibilities and fair and just ways of being and working together.

2.2.4 The arts in education as an assemblage

Post-developmental approaches to the arts in education expand understanding of the arts as a socio-cultural activity, yet they still very much focus on the effects of the arts, similarly to the developmental approach. Also, post-developmental research continues to favour human-centred readings of interactions in which the engaging with the arts, though a social and no longer a merely object-driven process, is still a human-centred process that disregards the interconnectedness and mutual interdependencies between humans and their more-than-human environments. In the context of the post-developmental studies, art objects (i.e. drawings, paintings) are viewed as objects that enable children and adults to express themselves, their complex ideas, feelings, and experiences, and help them better navigate their social environments. The arts, in this line of research, are regarded as a rich space shaped by the complex interactions among people and objects. Nevertheless, an analysis of these interactions remains human-centred. In contrast, posthumanist and new materialist approaches due to their particular onto-ethico-epistemological commitments provide new perspectives on interactions in and around the arts. They conceptualise interactions as affective, mundane, relational and unexpected encounters in which the environment, place and objects, that is the non-human entities, play a fundamental part in co-constructing classroom practices (Bennett, 2010; Pacini-Ketchabaw, Kind, & Kocher, 2016; Rotas, 2015).

Arts equipment, furniture and other artefacts are more than mediating tools or signifiers of children’s communicative behaviour. Woywood (2015) observes, for example, that “Art classroom ‘environments’ are often inseparable from the people who interact
Entangled encounters between humans and more-than-humans are therefore at the heart of posthuman and new materialist studies because that is precisely where shifting meanings and new possibilities are located (Wohlwend & Johnson Thiel, 2018). This study therefore aligns with Hellman and Lind (2017) who propose that arts education, and visual art education in particular, should be re-thought as an assemblage in which the subject is no longer the human. Instead, the central focus of a study attending to artmaking assemblages becomes the encounter between humans and other-than-humans, their actions, and complex, intensive forces, like affect, that intersect and connect with others in varied ways (Braidotti, 2006; Buchanan, 2015). The encounters among place, people and objects in and around the arts can thus be viewed as a type of relational activity in which humans and other-than-humans are considered to be agents or agentic (Bennett, 2010; Kipnis, 2015; Latour, 2005; Mazzei & Jackson, 2017). Humans and more-than-humans then shapes the discourses and structures of knowledge concerning educational practices in and around the arts together (Williams & Bendelow, 1998) (for more discussion of posthuman conception of agency see Findings chapter 9.2.3. Cut: Agency).

Posthumanist and new materialist studies pay close attention to the ways people, places, and objects in and around the arts come together in productive relationships of affect. Hickey-Moody (2020) investigates the agency of matter in and around artmaking to show that matter, contexts, and people co-create knowledges in processes of art-making. She argues that art is a process of crafting new affective relationships. Posthumanist and new materialist studies, as Hood and Kraehe (2017) write, are “starting points for rethinking the basis for how we understand and relate to art materials and objects” (p.37). Mustola (2018) argues that objects are rarely analysed as a fundamental part of children’s social interactions with others as she develops a close analysis of the agency of various arts objects in children’s play and arts practice. Fabric-child-cape-flying-playground is, for example, the central focus of Johnson Thiel’s (2015) study in which she suggests that creative encounters with fabric can be understood also as a literacy practice when children and fabric work together to co-construct stories, a finding which broadens “the scope of recognized and accepted expressive practices used in the typical classroom” (p.127). Interacting with young children, glitter, and squashed blueberries in a community setting, Hackett, Pahl, and Pool (2017) also discuss that engaging with the arts differently, through an embodied, relational, and affective sensibility, opens up new possibilities and critical ways to understand children’s classroom practices. The interest in relationality and a focus on more-than-human encounters exemplifies the posthumanist and new materialist studies’ central concern, using
Trafí-Prats (2017) words, with “processes of teaching and learning art in common worlds and through multispecies [i.e. human and more-than-human] encounters” (p.333).

Studies in the arts and arts education that engage with posthumanist and new materialist theories are therefore not only re-framing the subject of their inquiry, but they are also asking different questions about the nature of interactions around the arts. Their aim is to develop new and ethical ways of thinking about the role of the arts in a daily life, both inside and outside of educational settings. Johnson Thiel (2018) engages relational ontology of new materialist theories that place relationality before subjectivity to challenge her own practice in order to find new ways of responding and nurturing productive multiplicity and possibilities around art-making activities in an informal community setting. Bell and Vachhani (2019) then employ new materialist theories to reconceptualise craft work as an embodied practice in which the ethics of encounters come to matter. Similarly, Rech (2018) analyses drawing as an important event, a back and forth of ideas, exchanges, transformations, negotiations, and co-constructions that reveal the joyfulness and agency “between children, drawing, things, and culture” (p.45). The arts act on its participants, as Hickey-Moody and Page (2016) suggest, and through this process participants are becoming different. They propose that arts spaces and materials have a pedagogic nature and engaging with these spaces and materials can disrupt dominant, hegemonic, human-centred discourses. Posthumanist and new materialist studies attempt to reconsider the role of the arts in education “in order to redefine – and speak back to – dominant discourses” (Hickey-Moody, 2010, p. 213). As such, they provide a new ground for rethinking the relationship between the arts, education, and educational justice, and challenge the current, problematic discourses that insist on quantifying the effects of the arts, focus mostly on outcomes and provide simple solutions to complex issues of educational justice.

2.2.5 Conclusion: Artmaking, a situated, relational, and more-than-human event

This study engages relational ontologies in order to think differently about social inclusion and exclusion and the role of the arts, and artmaking in particular, in early years settings in relation to educational justice. Such a line of inquiry attends to the affective nature of the collaborative and co-creative encounters in and around artmaking (Hultman & Lenz Taguchi, 2010). Attending to more-than-human relational encounters that shape classroom practices can provide new and unexplored topographies at the intersection of art and educational justice. An artmaking context here is therefore understood as more than a mere surrounding or a space, instead it is a particular place that is further conceptualised, following Massey
(2006), as an event, “a meeting place,” shaped by more-than-human encounters. The artmaking place is never static but always dynamic (Hickey-Moody & Page, 2016). Artmaking can be understood as a behaviour setting (Barker, 1978), meaning a particular ecological environment entangled with specific patterns of relational encounters, constructed by the coming together of various human and more-than-human actors that are all directly and indirectly connected to each other. Studying artmaking as a behaviour setting, is to bring together eco-behavioural theories and assemblage theories to think through the nuanced notion of assemblage, the coming and becoming together of humans and more-than-humans. This approach also allows the inquiry to attend to specific properties of a whole that emerge as a result of the affective (be)coming of various entities. Attending to artmaking through eco-behavioural and assemblage theories has the potential to challenge the dominant discourses on social inclusion and exclusion, because it adopts a complex view of causality in which relations within the assemblage are relations that do not constitute identity and instead are co-constitutive of difference (DeLanda, 2011). Such a line of reasoning also opens up new possibilities for inquiring about the intersection of the arts, education, and educational justice differently.

Human-centred understanding of artmaking activities over-simplifies what happens in and around artmaking and diverts attention from the various human and more-than-human actors and affective forces that are implicated in the micro-politics of artmaking that further shape relationships and communities. Indeed, traditional approaches to studying the arts in education no longer reflect the need of the field, Thompson argues:

“There is a clear consensus in this large and loosely organized field that traditional answers no longer tell us much about contemporary childhood; that art itself has changed in ways that must be reflected, even in the preschool classroom. There is a need for increasingly situated studies of children making art and interpreting visual images in the company of other children and adults, in the contexts where significant learning about art occurs, in classrooms and community-based programs, families, and neighbourhoods” (Thompson, 2012, p. 20).

Thinking with ecological, relational theories and more-than-human ontologies to inquire about the complex, daily socio-material classroom encounters in and around artmaking, provides new ways of inquiring about fair and just classroom processes beyond social inclusion and exclusion. It also aids in gaining a more profound relational and ethical
awareness that is necessary when working towards educational justice in and around the arts in education. Indeed, entangling with Barad’s (2007) proposition, that artmaking, the assemblage of diverse and dynamic materialities bound in “mutual entailment” (Barad cited in de Freitas & Sinclair, 2013, p. 457), can materialise both different ways of thinking and doing, it becomes possible to begin imagining new directions towards educational justice in and around artmaking, and the arts more broadly. Moreover, it makes it possible to start co-producing such practices together and take up the “ethical challenge of learning how to live well together and to flourish with difference,” as Taylor and Giugni propose (2012, p. 109). The challenge is to look beyond differences as merely socially and culturally constructed (Braidotti, 2013). Thus, the focus of this work is on the coming together of differences as a productive endeavour in which situated relations help carve and imagine new, ethical ways of being and doing together in and around artmaking in early years settings.
3 THINKING-WITH: Theoretical framework

“At some point, we have to ask whether we have become so attached to our invention – qualitative research – that we have come to think it is real. Have we forgotten that we made it up? Could we just leave it behind and do/live something else? [...] The ethical charge of our work as inquirers is surely to question our attachments that keep us from thinking and living differently [...].”

- Lather and St. Pierre (2013)

3.1 Affirmative research practice

This study is less interested in a critique of traditional research methodologies and practices and more engaged with affirmative and positive ways of becoming a part of more-than-human research assemblage in which productive differences and new connections are constantly made and remade. It aligns with a type of practice, describe as ‘nomadic inquiry’ (Braidotti, 2011; St. Pierre, 2011a) that allows for a redefinition of the process of thinking and encourages structuring theoretical practice differently away from linearity, repetition, and convention towards “change, transformation, and living transitions” (Braidotti, 1993). According to St.Pierre (2011a), nomads “deterritorialize space that has been territorialized, charted, ordered, and then shut down” and “search for mobile arrangements of space where thought can settle for a time and then multiply and recombine, always displacing the sedentary and unified” (p.9). A researcher who practices nomadic inquiry is constantly on the move rather than comfortably positioned in their field because the field itself is constantly shifting and therefore cannot be fully known or represented.

Nomadic research is multidirectional and always on the move and therefore calls for transitions that do not start from a singular thought, but rather from disjunctions. This study is therefore framed as a creative research practice that is co-constituted by movements, which Braidotti (1993) calls ‘living transitions’ (p.3)(Braidotti, 1993), between traditional approaches to social inquiry and posthumanist nomadic inquiry. Such a thinking then troubles and intra-acts with concepts and ideas in order to open up a possibility for different kind of inquiry to happen (St. Pierre, 2011a). As such, the study does not pose itself as a beginning of a thought or a beginning of an idea that originates in one particular point or a body. Rather, it recognises its existence as a part of an assemblage of matter, thoughts, actions and affects (St. Pierre, 2014). Its insights are situated among many other ‘lines of flight,’ a concept that Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) use to refer to the multiplicity of material ways of becoming that constitute the entangled, and thus complex relationship between the
researcher and the studied phenomenon. The study explores a complex terrain of forces materialised through the coming-together of particular concepts, theories, stories, objects, and places. Some of these converge and dominate the space, others wander away from the central line of thinking in this thesis and create new possibilities and directions for exploration.

This study therefore sets out its own place of enunciation, following Braidotti (1997), in which connection between differing thoughts, concepts, or fields of inquiry is “not dualistic or oppositional way of thinking, but rather one that views discourse as a positive, multilayered network of power relations” (p.60). This study therefore engages traditional, humanist approaches to inquiry (e.g., Ethnography, Reflexivity, Ethics), and posthumanist and new materialist theorizing to highlight the limits as well as the productive intersections of the two approaches. It points to the way posthumanist and new materialist scholarship not only disrupt traditional ways of thinking, but also produce a significant shift in the order of things. By doing so, the study acknowledges the difficulty in escaping unitary and hegemonic framings of humanist inquiry driven by the notion of Cartesian dualism that produces binaries and hierarchies (e.g. mind/body, subject/object) (St. Pierre, 2014).

It is argued here, thinking with Derrida (1997), that it is difficult to make a clean break from humanism because current academic institutions and education in the UK context are still fundamentally humanist and therefore even the most ambitious research projects and knowledge production still carry some traces of that tradition. Barad (2010), building on Derrida, argues that “[e]very concept is haunted by its mutually constituted excluded other” (p.253). Humanism and posthumanism are therefore in a particular ‘hauntological relation of inheritance’ (Barad, 2010) because, as Derrida (1997) writes:

The movements of deconstruction do not destroy structures from the outside. They are not possible and effective, nor can they take accurate aim, except by inhabiting those structures. Inhabiting them in certain way, because one always inhabits, and the more when one does not suspect it (p.24).

Moreover, Badmington (2000) argues that “[t]o oppose humanism by claiming to have left it behind is to overlook the very way that opposition is articulated.” (p.9) Therefore, by attempting to explicate the entanglements and the ‘hauntings’ of internal frictions and disjunctures between humanist and posthumanist inquiry, the study does not aim to produce a coherent or convenient synthesis. It takes up the challenge of unsettling unitary thinking and normative patterns of association in order to formulate new possibilities for ecological and relational inquiry in the 21st century.
3.2 Humanism <-- Posthumanism

While engaging in thinking with posthumanist and new materialist theories driven towards engaging and ‘complexifying’ materiality, the study retains its connection to humanism (Braidotti, 2013; Calvert-Minor, 2014; Moore & Moran, 2016) in the way that it acknowledges the role of humans in the purpose of the study and the connection of the study to the humanist research tradition. It aligns with the ‘world-with-us’ line of enquiry, to use a phrase coined by Bennett (2010). After all the research is conducted in a human-made and human-centred environment of a preschool classroom and is concerned with a human-centred topic of social inclusion in early childhood education. To acknowledge the role of the human is not to elevate the human above all, it is merely to acknowledge that humans are a part of inter- and intra-connected networks of more-than-human relations (Murris & Osgood, 2020). Braidotti (2006) argues against those posthumanist approaches that abandoned the human embodied self to create what she believes to be a “cult of the inorganic” (p.1). Braidotti suggests that instead of replacing one subject laden with master narratives with another, and thus merely producing a quantitative multiplicity, it is more useful to engage in a qualitative shift in which the subject “is composed of external forces, of the non-human, inorganic or technological kind. It is territorially based, and thus environmentally bound” (p.21).

A posthumanist subject is more than an anthropocentric humanistic subject. It is located in the “fields of composition of forces and becomings” (Braidotti, 2006, p. 21). Braidotti’s (2006) critical posthumanism introduces a subject that is no longer defined by the traditional humanist binary subject-object relation, instead it is a constantly transforming and interconnecting assemblage, as Braidotti describes it, of organic and inorganic matter related in dynamic and unexpected ways. Aligning with Braidotti’s (2011) more complex understanding of subject as assemblage, this study commits to developing thinking around social inclusion and exclusion that is relational and provides a more complex view which positions humans as an interconnected and fundamental part of classroom encounters.

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The symbol <-- of two opposite facing arrows in this study designates a hauntological relation between two or more concepts, positions, ideas, or theories. It demarcates the becoming together of different worldviews, approaches, practices, and ways of thinking, which are often positioned as ‘binary,’ into a relationship of response.
3.3 ‘New’ materialism(s)

Posthumanist and new materialist theories are wide-ranging. They vary in their emphases in their frameworks, nevertheless they share the same ontological, epistemological and ethical commitments because they draw on relational ontologies, critique dualisms, and decentre humans from inquiry as they turn toward the affective capacities of the more-than-humans (V Bozalek & Zembylas, 2016). Fox and Alldred (2018b) write that the umbrella term ‘new’ materialism(s) indeed denotes multiplicity (Fox & Alldred, 2018a) as it embraces many distinct perspectives such as the actor-network theory (Latour, 2005), critical posthumanism (Braidotti, 2011), non-representational theory (Thrift, 2008), agential realism (Barad, 2007), cyborg feminism (Haraway, 1991), assemblage theory (Delanda, 2006), and others. Moreover, the prefix ‘new’ positions current materialism(s) in a particular entanglement with historical materialisms of Spinoza, Hobbs, and Marx (Devellennes & Dillet, 2018). Historical materialisms are therefore intimately connected to the ‘new’ materialisms in their implication, yet there is also a significant break of the new from the old (Dolphins & Van der Tuin, 2012). ‘New’ materialist theories push for a more radical approach to material in which the material is no longer a distinctly separate object to be acted upon by humans. Instead, it is a co-constitutive force of material-discursive practices, which signifies an ontological shift, and thus necessitates the prefix ‘new’ (St. Pierre, Jackson, & Mazzei, 2016). Posthumanist and new materialist theorizing and research has also developed from, has a connection with, and continues to concern itself with feminist theory (Landi & Safron, 2020; Lenz Taguchi, 2016). This emerging field therefore not only reinvigorates the possibilities of matter, but also re-imagines feminist capacities and possibilities of research in the 21st century.

Cutting across disciplines, theories, and ideas is then fundamental to posthumanist and new materialist thinking, as Dolphins and Van der Tuin (2012) write, because it expands rather than reduces understanding. Takes on posthumanism and new materialism are therefore not “pre-existing or generated” positions, as Dolphins and Van der Tuin (2012) argue; rather, they are “generative and, consequently [...] intra-acting” (p.59). This study then draws on diverse scholars who build on the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1988) and Derrida (1978, 1997). This includes critical posthumanist scholars, feminist new materialist scholars, and social scientists who may or may not fall under the posthumanist/new materialist umbrella, but whose work is fundamentally related to it in terms of ontological or epistemological commitments. Specifically, this study engages with Braidotti’s (2016b) nomadic theory, DeLanda’s (2006) assemblage theory, and Thrift’s (2008) non-representational theories. It also connects with Barad’s quantum theories (2007) and
Haraway’s (2007b) conceptualizations of ethics. Finally, it also draws in and entangles with Barker’s (1978) eco-behaviour theories. In bringing these theories together, the study attempts to develop an anti-anthropocentric scholarship that advances ecologically framed justice, specifically as it pertains to education in early-years settings. This is in order to develop new directions in and understandings of educational justice and arts education discourse.

3.4 Ontology-epistemology-ethics

This study is located within a distinct space of specific inter and intra-acting theories and perspectives that explicate the ontological, epistemological, and ethical commitments of this research practice. The ontological orientation here is more-than-human as it decentres humans and instead treats encounters among humans and non-humans as central referents of material-discursive phenomena (Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2013). Epistemological commitments then align with the ontological ones as knowing and being are inherently intertwined (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014). Knowledge production is therefore understood as a practice, a material-discursive practice of “knowing in being” (Barad, 2007, p. 185) rather than a product of individual, rational beings. Such an ethical practice both enacts and accounts for its commitments to a non-essentialist ontology (Mauthner, 2018). New materialist ethical commitment is similarly discussed by Davies (2018):

“Ethical practice requires thinking beyond the already known, being open in the moment of the encounter, pausing at thresholds and crossing over [...] It is a matter of questioning what is being made to matter and how that mattering affects what it is possible to do and to think” (p.121).

Barad’s (2007) concept of onto-ethico-epistemology thus presents being/knowing/doing as fundamentally interdependent. Articulating one’s own commitment to that particular way of being/knowing/doing, writes St. Pierre (2016), suggests methodological rigour. Moreover, commitment to onto-ethico-epistemology “secures ‘objectivity’” in agential realist terms, according to Mauthner (2015, p. 331). Rather than concerning the positivist quest for human-centred truth, agential realist objectivity is about accountability to specific materializations, to what gets included and what gets excluded in the process of inquiry, that the researcher is always fundamentally entangled with (Barad, 2007).
This study’s commitment to posthumanist/new materialist onto-ethico-epistemology is reflected in its multiple orientations. First, the study adopts a particular ecological and relational orientation towards processes of inclusion and exclusion that the material world is inherently a part of (Barad, 2007). Second, drawing on Briassoulis (2017) the approach to inquiry employed here situates the researcher in a particular *research assemblage* which is place- and time-specific as well as geographically and historically unique. Finally, the ethical commitments of this study to matters of care (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017) and response-ability (Haraway, 2007) activate the consideration and enactment of non-essentialist ontology (for more discussion see 6 CARING: Ethics).

To exteriorise such metaphysical commitments is not to reject traditional ways of thinking. Lather and St. Pierre (2013) write that “it is very difficult to think outside our training, which, in spite of our best efforts, normalizes our thinking and doing” (p.630). Forefronting particular commitments problematises what matters in research, how what matters is materialised, and how one’s own entanglement with various research traditions and concepts co-constructs a particular approach to a research study. By explicating the ontological, epistemological, and ethical perspective, the aim is to organise ideas and provide an insight into the different thought processes that underlie this study. Thus, the particular ontological, epistemological, and ethical commitments as a backbone of this study help to shape not only the research questions, research design, and inquiry but also a particular set of assumptions about reality and knowledge as well as ethics. They provide a particular focal point in which some things are included, and others are not.
4 IMMERSING: Methodology

“If more than one ethnography is possible, then there can’t be any single real ethnography. They will be different because of different combinations of ethnographer and community, different ways that a study moves, different choices and different contingencies along the way, different events in the world around the study—any or all of these can change the trajectory of a study over time. More than one path is possible. [23]”
- Agar (2006)

4.1 Ethnography in the Anthropocene

Engaging and thinking with posthumanist and new materialist onto-ethico-epistemological commitments, this study not only sets out to inquire about processes of social inclusion and exclusion through an affirmative framing but also to think affirmatively and creatively about the research practice and methods it employs and the methodologies that define them. Bringing traditional and new materialist approaches to ethnography together, this study attempts to develop methodology that is embodied and relational, defined by ‘close proximity’ and ‘relationships of affect,’ as Mellander and Wiszmeg (2016, p. 23) propose. Such an approach also exposes ethnographic practice as well as its concepts to disruption and interference to allow for different ethnographic practice to be enacted (Mellander & Wiszmeg, 2016). Indeed, it has been argued, that thinking about classroom interactions as situated and more-than-human requires new, vital, inventive approaches to research to be developed (Coleman & Ringrose, 2013; Maclure, 2013). These approaches, as Hickey-Moody and Page (2016) suggest, must embrace an “embodied, affective, relational understanding of research process” (p.57). The ethnography developed here is therefore more than thinking about others, it is, first and foremost, being intimately entangled with others, in which knowledge is considered as mutually constituted.

Re-configuring ethnography in this study is a response to a call for developing ethnographies that attend to the complexity of the socio-material world differently, and re-think the basic principles of our human and more-than-human encounters in the era of the Anthropocene, an era extensively dominated and created by human activity (Kirksey & Helmreich, 2010; Mellander & Wiszmeg, 2016). The ethnography configured in this study is an exercise in ‘living transition’ (Braidotti, 1993) from traditional to new materialist ethnography through a practice, suggested by Schadler (2017), that bends the boundaries and redefines the tools of ethnography for the more-than-human world. Such an
ethnographic practice is inspired by feminist scholars, such as Visweswaran (1994) who deconstructs, interrupts, and interrogates ethnography from within.

An ethnography developed in this study employs new concepts as methods to inquire differently, as proposed by Colebrook (in Lenz Taguchi, 2016). It is a practice that does not shy away from the “uncomfortable realities of doing engaged qualitative research” (Pillow, 2003, p. 193). Moreover, thinking with Ingold (2014), the ethnography developed in this study is found in-between people and their environments and therefore can form a correspondence with the entangled, more-than-human world. Following Ingold (2014), such ethnography does not aim to come up “with some exact match or simulacrum for what we find in the things and happenings going on around us,” it aims to bring forth “interventions, questions, and responses” of its own (p. 389).

Thus, attending to ethnography as more than a mere method and more as a logic-in-use, that is, a particular non-linear, abductive, iterative and recursive approach to practice, as Green, Skukauskaite and Baker (2012) propose, allows for methodological innovation through becoming with human and more-than-human encounters in the field. According to Hammersley (2006), ethnography’s boundaries are not restricted by clear and systematic classifications and rules. Although it is often thought of as fixed and given, ethnography is actually open to variation in the way it is employed. Murchison (2010) and Howell (2018) draw attention to the rich history of experimentation and variation in terms of research strategies and sites, as well as presentation, that go back to 1900s, which are embedded in contemporary ethnography. Such an openness and flexibility in an approach to social research, Murchison (2010) argues, is due to the ethnographers’ awareness of the tremendous complexity and diversity in flux that underlies all social and cultural phenomena. Therefore, looking back at the rich history of ethnographic research from armchair anthropologists, through the Chicago School of Sociology and feminist ethnographers to multispecies ethnography, it is argued here that ethnography can change and embrace the uncertainty and messiness of knowledge production in the Anthropocene.

4.2 Ethnography <-> New materialist ethnography

Nevertheless, not everything is an ethnography. Indeed, while more than one ethnography is possible, not every study described as an ethnography is indeed one (Agar, 2006). There is a substantial discussion around what ethnography is (Green et al., 2012; Hammersley, 2006, 2018; Ingold, 2017), which is not summarised here. Instead, the following section proposes
what ethnography can become. It outlines how the becoming of ethnography and new materialist onto-ethico-epistemology in this study situates ethnography in the more-than-human world as more than a method and instead proposes that is a way of living, thinking, and becoming with others in the more-than-human world. It is an attempt to re-invent and connect this traditional approach to inquiry about people and culture in contemporary, anti-anthropocentric, relational ways of knowing and becoming in the world. This study therefore engages with and is informed by ethnographies that decentre humans, and focuses on the complexity of more-than-human encounters that account for how mutual ecologies are generated (Hickey-Moody, 2020; Kirksey & Helmreich, 2010; Lloro-Bidart, 2018).

New materialist onto-ethico-epistemology enriches and extends rather than changes the principles of operation guiding ethnographic research. Now when we are becoming more ecologically and relationally attuned, Tsing writes: “we have a lot to learn about how humans and other species come into ways of life through webs of social relations […] we need to know what more-than-human socialities are being made.” (p.28) Resisting a human-centred frame of reference is not easy nor straightforward. Pacini-Ketchabaw, Taylor, and Blaise (2016), argue that such an approach to ethnography requires re-learning how to do research beyond the framework of human exceptionalism, and constantly reorienting from individuals to collective, more-than-human becomings. Moreover, they argue, to do that, there is a “need for taking risks (and being allowed to take risks)” (p.151).

While engaging posthumanist and new materialist theorization in enacting ethnography that focuses on complex, entangled, affective relations, this study therefore remains entangled with traditional ethnography. Indeed, the initial approach to ethnography taken in the field was heavily influenced by a formal training that upheld a particular approach to ethnography put forward by Atkinson and Hammersley (2007). Nevertheless, the reorientation towards more-than-human onto-ethico-epistemologies of the new materialist paradigm shift kept resurfacing in the field in part as a result of the way in which artmaking activities are enacted, since glue-paper-child-table-smell-friend are often difficult to fully separate. In the field, objects were clearly affecting children as much as children were affecting objects, which reinforced the need for doing ethnography differently. One day, for example, children were introduced to a new material: clay. This was exciting as most of the children said they never worked with clay before. Each child was invited one by one to knead the clay, make a ball, and shape it into a Christmas tree. The table was set for one, but children kept crowding the table as they were eager to see, to touch, to play with a material that responded to poking, prodding, and squashing by changing shape. The more children
engaged with the clay, the more the clay engaged with them. The teachers struggled to keep the children away from the clay after they ‘finished’ their task of making a tree, as much as they struggled to keep the clay off children’s bodies and furniture. As with the children’s encounters with clay, the humanist ethnographic tradition and new materialist commitments became deeply entangled during fieldwork in this study as new ethical and methodological concerns arose in response to more-than-human encounters in the settings. Thinking about the research practice developed here through the various types of ethnographies, in both the humanist and posthumanist traditions, presents an opportunity to consider and engage with an array of concepts and techniques both critically and creatively.

To acknowledge a connection to traditional humanist ethnography is not to move backwards and advocate for methodologies of humanist tradition, but to acknowledge both the future and the past, as an important part of the present. This study therefore takes up the challenge of putting posthumanist and new materialist theories in practice, not by cutting itself off from traditional approaches to ethnography, but by thinking with them. Indeed, Atkinson (2015) urges ethnographers not to forget where they came from:

“We overlook our origins at our peril, and too many contemporary commentators find novelty where there is none, revealing nothing new but a collective ignorance of the past” (p.4).

In reality, Hammersley (2018) writes that there are some essential features of ethnography that most ethnographers would accept as core to their practice, such as “long-term data collection process, taking place in naturally occurring settings, relying on participant observation, or personal engagement more generally, employing range of types of data, documenting what actually goes on, emphasises [...] culture, holistic focus” (p.4). This study then embraces several traditional elements of ethnography in the way that (a) it seeks to learn about the tendencies and practices in early-years classrooms in a particular community (Green et al., 2012; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Simpson & Coleman, 2017); and (b) through “long-term and open-ended commitment, generous attentiveness, relational depth, and sensitivity to context” (Ingold, 2014, p. 384).

This study delineates a set of important features of ethnography and explores the possibilities of how this particular methodology can be reconceptualised in order to develop a relational, more-than-human, and non-representational research orientation that bridges the nature-culture divide. In this work, the traditional ethnographic methods in particular
were carefully deconstructed and constructed again during fieldwork, which disrupted normalised ways of inquiring. The new methods reflect not only the posthumanist and new materialist commitments this study adopts (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013), it also responds to new technological and geo-political possibilities of the 21st century. New methods enable new ways of knowing, that is, new ways of seeing, being, experiencing and becoming with phenomena.

For example, Atkinson and Hammersley (2007) argue that observing patterns of behaviour across longer time spans is essential to understanding people and their communities. From the posthumanist perspective, however, actors and their practices are in a constant state of change. They are particular collections of temporalities at any point in time and therefore embody the past, the future, and the interconnected presence (Murris, 2017). The reiterative differentiations that are always interconnected with the past, present, and future are central to posthumanist inquiry. Similarly then, this study observes activities through a particular temporal lens that recognises the importance of the past, its connection to present, and their interconnectedness with the future as a fundamental part of the present reality rather than separate temporalities. Moreover, understanding subjectivities as nomadic, multiple, and interconnected (Braidotti, 2011), the purpose of ethnography within the posthuman and new materialist paradigms is not representing or interpreting (Schadler, 2017). Instead, it is a process of engaging, relating, inquiring, changing, making, and being made, that is, a process of becoming with the culture, perspectives, and practices of more-than-human communities.

Thus, precisely because “there isn’t just one real ethnography,” as Agar (2006, p. 5) writes, in order to bring ethnography into a focus in the early 21st century, this study brings back what is at its heart: committed, productive, relationships over design and procedures. Ethnography in this study is therefore developed as a relational, response-able, and risky practice open to uncertainty as it engages with traditional aspects of ethnography while exploring what else can ethnography become. The following paragraphs then highlight the core features fundamental to the ethnography developed here through situated encounters.

**Participatory <-> Relational**

The ethnography conducted and argued for in this study is participatory. Indeed, one of the most significant aspects of ethnography has been the commitment to spending extended amounts of time in the field, in communities, and with others (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). The definition of participation is however crucial as the amount of time one spends
with others may vary, and the ways ethnographers engage with others in the field may vary too. This study therefore argues for participation as a process of becoming-with (see Methods section 7.2 Participant observation \(\rightarrow\) Becoming-with). The process of becoming-with is an approach in which thinking and inquiring is more than an individual doing but a doing that extends towards others as it entangles, responds, and changes course in relation to more-than-human others, in which being/doing/knowing/becoming are mutually co-constituted (Barad, 2007). Ethnography is inherently relational, as Hammersley (2018) writes. The being with others, as Atkinson (2014) argues, and this study aligns with, is more than physically being there and instead it is listening, changing, engaging, and responding as “ethnography necessarily and profoundly depends on the direct engagement […] with a distinctive form of life” (p.34). Such understandings resonate with the posthumanist approach to research in which becoming-with is a physical, embodied and even intimate encounter of differences that is not about representation, but rather about making productive connections (Mazzei & Jackson, 2017). What follows is that ethnography allows thinking about inquiry as more than the reporting of individual ‘voices’ and developing lived, embodied, sensorial ways of attending to common processes of becoming/doing/living together/apart instead. Ethnography then produces knowledge that is essentially relational and expansive and brings into focus the different ways humans and more-than-humans all relate to each other and their becoming, instead of trying to pin them down.

Ethical \(\rightarrow\) Response-able

Approaching ethnography as a relational, more-than-human inquiry forefronts the concerns with and commitments to ethnography as an ethical practice. Indeed, both humanist and new materialist ethnographers are dedicated to developing and most importantly practicing ‘less harmful’ research practices (e.g. St. Pierre, 2011a). Ethnography, as Atkinson (2014) writes, derives from very distinctive commitments: “personal, intellectual, and even emotional” (p. 172) in which the researcher regards others with ‘serious attention’ and ‘respect’ (p. 173). In this sense, participant observation, enacted here as a process of becoming-with, does not seek to objectify but entangle, interconnect, and become mutually dependent, and therefore mutually ‘response-able’ (Pacini-Ketchabaw, Taylor, & Blaise, 2016) as being in the world is not disconnected from knowing about the world. It does not other, it brings humans and more-than-humans together. Such an approach to ethnography attends to the real concerns with asymmetry of power in the field as it engages non-essentialist values and responsibilities in which asymmetry of power is always present but
never given, or static. Instead, as Alldred and Fox (2017) write, power is “a transient, fluctuating phenomenon – a momentary exercise by one relation over another” (p. 1166). Indeed, Atkinson (2014) observes that ethnographers may often find themselves in other than positions of power as they are gaining access and trust to be able to live and inquire about a community that is not their own.

Ethnography as an ethical practice is then more than a set of rules and regulations, as Atkinson (2014) also suggests, that normalise and essentialise which methods and practices are good and which are bad; it does not call for ‘the right’ response. Instead, drawing on Barad (2007), the ethics in the approach developed here manifest as a “responsibility and accountability for the lively relationalities of becoming of which we are a part” (p. 393). The ethical practice develop here is therefore that of response-ability (see 6 CARING: Ethics) in which ethnography becomes a practice where one is not only actively responding to more-than-human others, but also becomes open to a response (Barad in Kleinman, 2012). In response-able ethnography, using the words of Barad (2015, pp. 401–402 italics in the original), “each is constituted as respon-sible for the other, as being in touch with the other.” Response-ability is then not only ethical but also an affirmative process in which all entities are in the process of becoming, that is both making and being made at the same time as new responses lead to new ways of being and doing. Indeed, Hammersley (2006) argues that ethnography is more than a first-hand empirical investigation in which knowledge is discovered and documented, instead it is a process of knowledge co-construction. Thinking with posthumanist and new materialist theories, ethnography becomes even more than the coming together of participants’ perspectives and a researcher’s analytical take, it is an iterative, embodied inquiry in which all entities, both human and more-than-human –the researcher, the children, adults, tables, pencils, place, practitioners— co-construct a collective and co-compositional practice (for examples see chapter 7.1 Framing of methods).

Exploratory <--> Risky

Ethnography is a relational and response-able form of inquiry that allows for thinking to be expansive, complex, and abductive. Both ethnographers (Atkinson, 2014) and posthumanist/new materialist scholars (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014) criticise social science research for simplifying inquiry in line with positivist analytical practice. Thinking with Atkinson (2014), ethnography then has an exploratory character and is therefore more than
data collection. Ethnography is an investigation, a ‘tracing’ (Etymonline dictionary), or ‘tracking,’ as Bell and Vachhani (2019, p. 5) argue, of multiplicities, the various ways of being and doing of material-discursive phenomena. An important part of such an inquiry is following the traces and lines of flight, and becoming a part of the on-going worldmaking processes, or as Ulmer (2017) writes, “corresponding with [the] environment” (p. 82). Such an embodied, exploratory ethnography is a process of encountering attuned to the flow of affective forces, the ongoing, dynamic, and relational enactments of phenomena. An ethnographic journey is then about making ‘serendipitous discoveries’ (Howell, 2018, p. 3) in which serendipity, as Howell argues, “is not just a chance event. It is the ability to make discoveries, by accidents and wisdom, of things which one was not in quest of” (p.3). The form of ethnography argued here attends to productive uncertainties of spatial and temporal character that shake up and mess with identities, positions, relationships, and thus opens the possibility for new thoughts to arise (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). It is therefore necessarily creative and experimental as it not only engages with what Haraway (1992) calls ‘risky worldings’, that is, the precarious and difficult more-than-human intra-actions. It also unsettles and constructs new perspectives and asks difficult questions about important topics. Encounters, and ethnographic encounters specifically, are precarious and risky, but they are also productive and generative of both new ideas and new possibilities.
5 ENTANGLING: Place(s)

“The reorientation stimulated by the conceptualization of the rocks as on the move leads even more clearly to an understanding of both place and landscape as events, as happenings, as moments that will be again dispersed.”

- Massey (2006)

The sometimes precarious yet productive ethnographic encounters with children and adults in early years settings were equally important to, and were interwoven with, the encounters with the material world of the community in the study, the objects, classrooms, buildings, and streets. Entangling not only with people and objects in place but also with place(s) became central to the inquiry. It led to the entanglement with the politics of place(s) (Massey, 2005), as well as to the becoming-with place(s) (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Such an approach questions normalised understandings of place(s), opens itself up to production of difference, and becomes-other through encounters with the frictions, contradictions, and multiplicity of place(s). Atkinson and Hammersley (2007) argue that a sense of place and space is integral to ethnographic accounts in which the environment is not merely a context, but rather a significant actor that is fundamental to the organization of everyday life. Indeed, a growing body of literature increasingly engages and thinks with diverse place(s) to expand current understandings of various social processes as emergent, entangled, and embodied (Hackett, 2014; A. Hickey-Moody, 2010; Malone, 2016). This further allows for the unsettling of the normative politics of place in which encounters and events, such as those around artmaking, happen as coherent, bounded, and pre-given.

The people, place, and time assemblage is also a fundamental part of artmaking events in this study. Artmaking in the three settings was almost always conducted in the same place, at the same time of the day, and with more or less the same participants. The rooms designated for an artmaking activity in all three settings were fashioned in a similar way. They were equipped with similar furniture: tables, chairs, a cupboard with materials, and children’s artworks decorating bare walls. Nevertheless, people and objects were constantly shifting around the classrooms and moving in and out of the settings. They created different arrangements on different days and shaped what Barker (1968) calls the constellation of place-time-things always differently.

Moreover, the place-time-things constellation, or assemblage, was considered by practitioners to be integral to the success of the artmaking events in terms of outcomes. For
example, the family centre practitioner shared how difficult it was for her to go into family homes and organise an artmaking activity with children there as opposed to doing it in her class, and thus revealed both the structural and the dynamic attributes of the place-time-things constellation of artmaking events:

“Since I have the smart board here [in the classroom] and I work with bigger groups, then, for me, it is more practical if parents learn on their own to come here. This way they have to learn to commit to a particular time schedule and to get up with their child and prepare them for going out. Having to have to come here is then the same as having to have to prepare children for school in the morning. So, this way, we are introducing a particular daily routine. And also, when I carried it [the artmaking materials] there [to the family homes] it was very strenuous because you always have to drag some supplies to be able to make something. And you know, if you bring all the things from A to Z into the family homes then it becomes really exhausting.”

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The family centre practitioner highlights not only the importance of artmaking place but also the importance of artmaking objects in relation to participants as well as time when artmaking happens. Moreover, the practitioner shows how a specific constellation territorialises artmaking events and results in a particular routine. The entangled nature of place-thing-time constellation suggests that what is traditionally perceived as separate and bounded entities is actually a complex phenomenon that extends across time, space, and the various human/non-human entities that are in fact inseparable. Barad (2010) describes the complex interconnectedness within a phenomenon as a particular entanglement or a ‘spacetime mattering’ in which artmaking events are then located. This section therefore offers not only an introduction to the different places (e.g. town, streets, buildings, rooms) in the community in this study, it attempts to entangle with and in place in order to attend to what the places do, how they are shaped as well as how they shape the various actors, both human and more-than-human, that intra-act with/in them, including the researcher herself.

5.1 Town

The small town located in the western part of the Czech Republic was an unassuming cluster of family houses lined along a winding main road that cuts through a town centre made of a
small local grocery store, several office buildings, an elementary school, a civic centre, and a butcher nearby. The town was well-maintained with several accessible playgrounds and several small businesses that employed locals. It was reminiscent of many other similar towns of its size in the Czech Republic despite its several, storied apartment buildings that once served as council housing. Only upon closer inspection, walking through the streets and looking into windows, could a visitor notice a general lack of luxuries common in affluent towns of similar size: buses come and go infrequently, some homes have broken windows patched up with planks of wood, other homes use newspapers in place of curtains, public seating is missing, and there are no chain grocery shops.

The town became one of many excluded localities in the Czech Republic in the past decades as it has struggled with a large influx of disadvantaged families, many of whom are labelled or describe themselves as Roma. Many families in search of affordable housing relocated here from nearby, larger towns where housing is difficult to find, especially for families considered to be ‘Roma.’ The community in this study has been experiencing rising unemployment rates, increase in criminality, housing instability due to privatization of its council housing complexes, and poor education culture. To tackle these effects of exclusion the town has taken decisive measures. It began integrating local ‘Roma’ population, investing into social services, and supporting local community projects. The local government, for example, created and provided many locals with stable jobs, repurchased many privately owned apartments and turned them back into social housing, and invested into various formal and informal learning opportunities for local residents.

For what has been deemed a successful inclusive effort, the town has received large EU grants as well as international recognition. It is now quite well-known across the country and abroad. The educational settings are regularly visited by delegations of teachers and policymakers from mostly Western countries, such as Sweden and Spain, becoming a golden standard within an EU policy discourse. The push for integration of residents and development of inclusive projects in this town therefore presents a unique window into how processes of social inclusion and exclusion unfold. More importantly yet, it offers the opportunity to attend to what else is there and what else comes to matter in this particular community in which social inclusion and exclusion are central to people’s everyday lives.
5.2 ‘Roma’ community

The designation ‘Roma’ directly or indirectly shapes the everyday life of all people of the town whether they are Roma or not, and it structures places of learning around a common experience of a specific label. Therefore while going beyond the ethnic frame of reference is crucial in order to achieve a rich and honest account of people’s experiences of the dynamics of social inclusion and exclusion, as it has been argued by Vertovec (2007), the designation ‘Roma’ is still an important part of some people’s lives and their culture because it shapes their daily experiences; this was also found by others, such as Tremlett (2014) and Bittnerová, Doubek and Levinská (2014).

The designation ‘Roma’ in the community where the study took place was a word of multiple, often contradictory, meanings, some of which were known and shared only among certain groups of people. The label ‘Roma’ was used interchangeably with other similar words, such as cigán (reads tzigan), denoting not only Roma heritage and ethnicity but also a specific character or belonging to a specific group. Some older children, for example, proudly called themselves Roma and complained that their parents do not speak Roma language to them or did not learn enough Roma language to teach them. The same children proud of their Roma heritage would, however, a few moments later use the term ‘Roma’ in a derogatory way to refer to misbehaved and unwelcomed children they did not like. Similar tension was introduced by a practitioner proud of her Roma heritage who also ran a local Roma dance group when she suggested that the tenants in her apartment building were disruptive because they are ‘Roma.’ Many children in the town knew Roma music and sang Roma songs even though their physical appearance did not match the typical stereotypes of ‘Roma’ people. Indeed, as discussed previously, neither language, physical appearance, family relations, nor any other criteria could clearly define the residents of this community in terms of any coherent, fixed identity as the label ‘Roma’ is sometimes understood.

The learning settings were nevertheless often structured around similar, stereotypical notions of ‘Roma’ family and ‘Roma’ lives. The family centre practitioners, for example, attempted to organise their classes in the morning to teach ‘Roma’ families to a morning routine of waking up and bringing their children to school. Due to low attendance, however, the classes had to be rescheduled and ran in the afternoons because, as the practitioners said, that is when ‘Roma’ families are more likely to be up, out and about. The nursery practitioners, among many other beliefs, claimed that some ‘Roma’ families are not interested in educating their children and that is why they do not bring them to the nursery. On the other hand, those ‘Roma’ families that brought their children in to the nursery,
according to the practitioners, did so only to use the nursery as a cheap babysitting service that takes care of and feeds their children for them.

The label ‘Roma,’ as experienced in this study, was therefore culturally rich, saturated with lived contradictions, and impacted on a wide range of the smallest aspects of people’s everyday lives. It was also a label infused with both covert and overt racism and associated micro-aggressions connected to the use of the term. Thus, despite recognizing the negative impact of emphasizing ethnic identity, especially as it relates to socio-political discourse in the Czech Republic, the study became at times very closely entangled with both the self-designation and the label ‘Roma’, its lived meanings, and its affects and effects. Engaging with its multiplicity and richness was not central to the thesis, but when pertinent to processes in and around artmaking, it became a productive site for thinking about the complexity of classroom dynamics. The self-designation and label ‘Roma’ and its significance shared by children, adults, and their settings was one of the many important elements that shaped the processes of social inclusion and exclusion in and around artmaking, and therefore contributed to a more nuanced understandings of the phenomenon in this study.

5.3 Early years settings

The clubhouse, family centre, and nursery are the three early years settings in a town of around two thousand people that provide care and education to young children and their families. Both the family centre and the nursery are state-run while the clubhouse is run by a local Christian non-profit organization. For many of the local children and their families these settings are the first point of encounter with an institutionalised learning environment. The settings run what they describe as inclusive learning programmes supported by a range of inclusive practices as well as various attitudes towards inclusive education. They all share the same goal of helping children successfully integrate into mainstream education. They are located a few minutes’ walk away from each other, and together they delineate a space in the heart of a community in which children spend most of their days.

Despite their close physical proximity, the settings are far from a united system of services. Yet they all express a desire to work more closely with each other despite being

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7 A fourth setting was founded by a Christian group from Germany toward the end of the fieldwork. They started by organizing short, weekly activities including drawing and watching films. Some parents shared that they are sceptical of the new setting and tried to stay away because they were not sure who the group is. Nevertheless, some children, mostly those playing nearby the setting, sometimes attended the events and participated in the activities offered.
severely restricted by the funding they are receiving. On daily basis, however, the settings operate separately and cooperation among them is very limited. Indeed, each one is in part established to fill the gaps the others are not able to fill. The family centre began its programme for families to extend on the work of the local nursery by organizing out-of-school activities. The clubhouse was then found as an alternative space where children and families that did not attend or did not want to attend the nursery could play, learn, and spend time in a ‘meaningful’ way. The settings are therefore fundamentally connected through people, places, practices, and resources even if their connection is defined through absence rather than presence. In reality, not all children attend all the settings.

All three settings organise artmaking activities with similar scope, depth, and focus. They all aim to teach young children the essential sets of early skills for a successful entry to mainstream education. The structure of their artmaking activities is also very similar: artmaking almost exclusively happens indoors, around tables, in groups and always with specific art objects, such as colour pencils, markers, and paper. Getting a sense of place(s) is therefore a crucial aspect of this study as it attends to the emplaced, embodied, and emergent encounters in and around artmaking events beyond routine encounters. Entangling with and in place therefore expands current understandings of classroom practices at the intersection of educational justice. Moreover, it disrupts charted territories by connecting disconnected settings with sedimented ways of practicing social inclusion. As such it attends to the complex, richer and ‘entangled’ reality of the processes of social inclusion and exclusion in place and to what else is there. The entanglement with place(s) opens up a productive, uncharted territory where new possibilities and imaginations of just educational future come to matter.

5.3.1 Clubhouse

*Figure 1 The entrance and the inside space of the clubhouse*
Place

The clubhouse, located inside a public activity hall, is an unassuming, dark, medium-size room with its own small kitchen and a lavatory (Figure 1). Located on a top of a hill, at the town boundary, it overlooks council housing. The practitioners and children frequently use other locations in the town for their activities, such as local playgrounds or the civic centre. Artmaking, however, much as in the family centre and nursery, is almost never taken outdoors, and thus always happens inside while sitting or standing around a common set of joined-up tables.

People

The clubhouse room provides a meeting place for a group of children that varies in size on different days and their two or three practitioners, or ‘aunties’ as children call them. Children and practitioners meet there every day. They do homework, play, chat, draw, and eat snacks together. To some, the clubhouse is a home away from home. The practitioners are local women who are often in some way related to at least one or even several of the children in the setting. In the past, the clubhouse was open to children of all ages. They even organised an informal nursery for a while, but their funding was cut, and one severe incident forced the practitioners to decide that only children older than six can participate in the clubhouse activities from then onwards. Nevertheless, this rule is often broken especially during major holidays and associated events as older children often babysit their younger siblings and therefore come to the setting with them. Parents, while encouraged to come and spend time with their children in the clubhouse, or to have a coffee and a chat with practitioners, do not normally come to the clubhouse nor do they participate in any of the activities.

Programme

The group meets under the auspices of a local Christian organization run by a local pastor, yet its programme is not organised around religious practices, but rather around activities that are aimed at socializing, educating, and caring for children. Those consist of regular trips that take children outside of their community (i.e. trips to theatres, swimming pools, museums, playgrounds, or parks). The practitioners along with the pastor also organise several adult-led activities for children to join during the week or on the weekends which include a dance group, athletics group, or a camp during the summer.
Artmaking

The practitioners organise adult-led art activities for the children. These mostly involve colouring pages or making seasonal crafts. Occasionally, a professional artist is invited to lead an artmaking workshop. Nevertheless, most of the artmaking activities that take place in the setting are child-initiated and child-led. After a one-month period of observations during which the practitioners continued to organise activities ‘for’ the researcher to see what the children ‘can’ do, they finally admitted: “We don’t often prepare activities ahead of time. We do what they want to do.” They continued, “Look at this group, for example,” they remarked, “they are not that into artmaking anyway.”

Objects

During artmaking, children always sit or stand around a set of three, large, conjoined tables surrounded by many chairs. The art supplies are stacked away in a cupboard that is neither clearly visible nor easily accessible. Moreover, the practitioners guard the art supplies closely as they are worried that the supplies would be used up too quickly. Children have a free access only to a box of old colour pencils and markers which they take at will and make art with most of the days. Some days, however, children search through forbidden drawers and cupboards to find new tools or request new tools to enrich their artmaking activities, and thus co-curate their artmaking space and events.

5.3.2 Family centre

Figure 2 The entrance and the inside space of the family centre
Place

The family centre is a cluster of three rooms within a small ground floor apartment directly accessible from the street and located in the heart of a council housing development where most of the disadvantaged families of the small town live (Figure 2). Two rooms are dedicated to offices where social workers meet and assist parents. The largest room is designated as a community room that doubles up as a classroom and a playroom for children. Large windows allow anyone passing by to look in and encourage children playing outside to join others in the class.

People

The family centre is regularly visited by several large families with many children most of whom do not attend a nursery setting. Indeed, the family centre targets children who are not receiving preschool education. The practitioner and the social workers are constantly attempting to increase attendance by inviting more families, but that is proving very difficult. Negative relationships among families sometimes deter some from coming in. Thus, children that come into the setting are mostly siblings from large families, their cousins, or close family friends. Parents are required to accompany their children, but it is only women, mothers, grandmothers, and older sisters who bring the children in and participate in the activities with them. The practitioners are mainly social workers but there is always one practitioner who is an art teacher. The staff often organise the artmaking activities all together, but it is always the art teacher who leads the art activities.

Programme

The family centre is one of many projects run by local social services. Similarly to the clubhouse, the family centre organises a variety of activities from local walks, theatre visits, to athletic competitions or movie afternoons. Unlike the clubhouse it targets whole families and asks parents to always accompany children when participating in their events. Nevertheless, children come on their own at times as their parents are not always free to come with them and the practitioners rarely ever send anyone away, especially since they know most children in the town very well. The aim of their programme is not only to introduce children to ‘school-like’ environment and ‘school-like’ activities and teach children pre-school skills, such as how to hold a pencil, but also to educate parents on how to work with their children and how to ‘meaningfully’ spend time with them at home.
Artmaking

Artmaking is a central activity of the family centre as it is the only activity that happens regularly every week. The family centre organises several artmaking sessions spread across one or two days during which they invite all the regular families to participate within their pre-determined time slots. The art activities are mostly practitioner-led and often require children to reproduce a predetermined image or an object. Very few activities are child-led as the practitioner on several occasions shared that the children prefer to have something to copy rather than make things up, an understanding echoed by the practitioners in the clubhouse.

Objects

The community space of the family centre is furnished with a large, long table and two small, child-size tables that are conveniently placed along the walls of the room. There is also a work desk for the practitioner and a large, electronic whiteboard with a projector that is used for interactive activities, such as tracing and colour recognition. A large, closed cupboard is stacked with a variety of art materials, and low floor shelves display an array of colourful toys, books, and puzzles. The room is spacious, modelled after a nursery setting layout, with children’s artworks decorating all the walls. Besides artmaking, children love to come a bit early and play with the few toys on display. The practitioner always sets out the classroom and the art materials for the day before anyone comes in. Children are then asked to work with the materials in specific ways in order to master specific fine-motor skills and learn new techniques. While acting unsure and timid when encountering new materials, children are almost always happy here and engage with all that is on offer, often in ways that are creative and unexpected. Indeed, while having a particular outcome in mind, the practitioner is relatively happy to let children experiment and experience materials as she finds it to be the most rewarding artmaking experience.
5.3.3 Nursery school

![Figure 3](image)

*Figure 3 The entrance, hallway, and the inside space of the nursery*

**Place**

The nursery school is a typical soviet-style, two-story, concrete cuboidal building with several classrooms, on-site kitchen, large windows, and a green garden with play equipment placed around its perimeter (Figure 3). It is located near a local primary school which allows the nursery practitioners to work closely with the school especially during periods of transition from one setting to another. Indoors, the classrooms are bright, painted in vibrant colours and decorated with children’s artworks similarly to the family centre’s classroom. The rooms are well equipped with wooden, children’s furniture, many toys, educational games, and role-play areas. All the spaces are very clean and well-maintained as the staff believe that good habits are important not only to talk about but also to demonstrate.

**People**

There are three classes in the nursery of around twenty children each and two practitioners for each classroom. Two classes are mixed-age groups, and the third class is dedicated specifically to preschool children. Siblings are therefore often able to stay in a class together which increases participation and helps practitioners as older children are very likely to help the young, especially if they are from the same family. Nevertheless, not all families send their children to the nursery, and the school struggles to draw some families in. The nursery has several long-standing practitioners but has also been struggling in attracting new teachers and keeping them for a long-term employment. Staff are therefore frequently changing, and the nursery director often has to step in and substitute missing teachers.
Programme

The nursery follows a standard national curriculum programme in which nursery practitioners are provided with general guidelines and goals. Each teacher is then encouraged to develop their own practice that aligns with the national curriculum themes but remains sensitive to children’s needs and their learning contexts. Furthermore, the school participates in several national programmes, such as the Safe School and Logopaedic Prevention Programmes, that reflect the needs of its learning community. The nursery also occasionally organises an afterschool club for parents and children to contribute to community building and improving home-school relationships.

Artmaking

The nursery practitioners combine both child-led and practitioner-led approaches to artmaking activities, but the latter dominates in their daily practice. During artmaking, much like in the family centre, children are asked to reproduce objects and images predetermined by the teachers. Also, similarly to the family centre, the nursery practitioners prefer children making art in small groups. Sometimes, only one child is invited to complete their project while others are playing. Only occasionally, all children work on one project, drawing or painting, together.

Objects

Much like in the clubhouse, only ordinary art supplies, such as pencils, markers, and scissors, are given to children to use on their own. Other materials are carefully handled and distributed by the practitioners. The nursery artmaking activities are most varied and introduce a good range of both traditional and non-traditional materials for children to work with. Nevertheless, unlike in the other settings, nursery practitioners often interfere with children’s work and are less willing to let children ‘experience’ new objects and materials in creative and playful manner.
6 CARING: Ethics

“Interdependency is not a contract, nor a moral ideal— it is a condition. Care is therefore concomitant to the continuation of life for many living beings in more than human entanglements— not forced upon them by a moral order, and not necessarily a rewarding obligation.”

- Puig de la Bellacasa (2017)

6.1 Institutional Guidance

The study follows and adheres to a code of research practice and ethical as well as legal principles for social research involving vulnerable participants that complies with the internal Open University Ethical Framework, the 2018 edition of Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research developed by British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018), the 2005 National Ethical Framework for research, as provided by the Ministry of Education of the Czech Republic (MŠMT, 2005), and the 2016 EU General Data Protection Regulation on data protection and privacy (European Council & European Parliament, 2016) (in the UK replaced by Data Protection Act in 2018). This work is a continuation of a successful preliminary study conducted in 2017. The preliminary study was reviewed favourably by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Open University with the reference number HREC/2017/2554/Vackova/1 and the favourable opinion was extended also the main study.

Although these various guidelines have similar orientations in that their aim is to protect research participants from potential exploitation and infringements of their human rights, they also reflect particular cultural contexts and therefore at times present different attitudes and approaches to ethical research methods.

The friction between different ethical guidelines was most evident in their different approaches to research in early years settings and to working with young participants. While the British Educational Research Association (2018) has developed a comprehensive framework for research with children and young people that emphasises the rights of children, as outlined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), there are no obligatory codes of ethics in the Czech Republic specifically concerning research with children, young people, or vulnerable individuals. The Ministry of Education in the Czech Republic provides only a brief ethical framework for research in early years settings and instead calls on individual universities to develop their own ethical codex and to grow a culture of ethical behaviour that stimulates researchers towards developing the highest standards of work (MŠMT, 2005).
Instead of requiring researchers to follow a set of normative guidelines, researchers in the Czech Republic are expected to have a moral and social responsibility to act in the best interest of their community and hence are also accountable to their community (Palacky University, 2015). The ethical codex of Charles University in Prague, for example, argues that ethical community is a “community in which relationships of its members are shaped by a spiritual authority rather than through control, in which the principles of academic freedoms are maintained as an important foundation of the existence of academic community and its pedagogic and research work” (Nigrini, Zima, & Gerloch, 2018, p. 1). In the Czech Republic, there is therefore no equivalent to the Disclosure and Barring Service check. There are also no mandatory regulations on consent. The government encourages, yet not requires, that researchers working with children under 14 years of age seek the consent of their parents. Access to children in educational settings is always first and foremost negotiated with individual schools, specifically the school principals, and second with parents and/or guardians. The BERA Ethical Guidelines (2018) propose that local legislation and law should be consulted when doing research abroad. Nevertheless, they do not give clear guidance on how differences between two different approaches to research ethics should be resolved, nor how they should be applied in local contexts.

The cultural differences in expectation of what counts as an ethical approach to researching with children caused tensions and unexpected situations. These had to be negotiated and worked out in the field. A culturally responsive method that critically evaluates what is deemed legitimate and normative (Bermúdez, Muruthi, & Jordan, 2016), together with situated judgements and critical approach to key assumptions about ethics (Hammersley, 2015a), was therefore taken up and became fundamental to the approach developed here. For example, some practitioners were not sure why children’s consent was important and why monitoring their consent was an important element of the ethical practice in this study. A decision was made to follow the BERA guidance which, however, did not translate into an implementation of a standard practice. Rather, it led to negotiating, discussing, and thinking with teachers about how, for example, a show-and-tell activity could be organised in the classroom in order to introduce both research and research equipment to children and adults without disrupting the particular learning environment of the group. Communicating, and sharing values and ideas around ethics then aligned with the accountability and moral and social responsibility to others expected in the Czech research context.
Another issue that was continuously negotiated was the practice for parental consent. It is well documented that appropriate informed parental consent can be difficult to achieve (Gorin, Hooper, Dyson, & Cabral, 2008; Lloyd et al., 2008; Rajaraman et al., 2011), as research with people from marginalised and underrepresented communities is inherently shaped by relationships of power (Paris, 2011). Indeed, a body of literature documents the difficult relationships of families from marginalised and low socio-economic backgrounds with and within education (Reay, 2001; Szalai & Schiff, 2014; Vincent, 2017). Informed consent is therefore not merely a procedure, but a fundamental aspect of building respectful and meaningful relationships (Brown, 2019; Dallat, 2009; Hammersley, 2015a). It is the first step in acknowledging the importance of the involvement of families that have been ignored, excluded, and marginalised in research, and in closely attending to power imbalances in the research process.

During the preliminary stages of the study, parents were quite quick to consent for children and for themselves to participate in the research project but were somewhat surprised when asked to sign a consent form. This attitude changed later in the main study as a result of the implementation of GDPR rules that impacted and changed the practices of all the early years settings in the community. While a consent form was at first considered by parents as superfluous and odd, later on, signing any paperwork became for parents almost a matter of habit that was not questioned but performed. As a result of GDPR rules, parents were suddenly showered with paperwork to sign during almost every encounter with the early-years settings. At the beginning, asking parents to sign a consent form seemed culturally inappropriate, as parents were uncomfortable with signing a form because, for example, some felt they were not confident writers which they expressed on several occasions. Later, as parents became accustomed to GDPR rules, the signature was seemingly again redundant as parents signed almost automatically, without looking, reading, or being interested in what the consent form stated. The consent form, the parents, and the researcher were therefore entangled in complex socio-materials ways that called for a culturally responsive, care-full, appropriate, and situated practice. The study therefore extended beyond normative ethical codes of practice, and approached ethics as grounded in critical, creative as well as felt and embodied ways of becoming-with others through response-able, more-than-human encounters.
6.2 Ethical code --> Ethics of Care

The ethical practice in this study does not consist of merely following institutional codes of ethical conduct. It also reflects specific onto-ethico-epistemological commitments (for discussion see 3.4 Ontology-epistemology-ethics) and therefore specific entanglements and thinking with ethical practice framed around notions of care (Noddings, 1984; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017) and response-ability (Haraway, 2007). Engaging with non-normative ethicalities here is thinking with Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) who argues that living in the “age of ethics,” in which ethical codes and recommendations are produced across a multitude of different sites, produces hegemonic ethics that manifest as “formalized regulation of research procedures” that “often translates into a ‘tick box’ approach, in which ‘ethics’ becomes programmatic and formulaic— another accountability apparatus” (pp.131-132).

Indeed, a body of literature points to the friction between ethnography and research ethics regulation and governance which lies in their different epistemological orientation with ethnography being inherently relational and ethics regulation being predicated on the notion of human subject as separate and ‘isolatable’ (Busher & Fox, 2019; Otrel-Cass, Andrée, & Ryu, 2020). Hammersley argues that ethics regulations and principles are too narrow and do not reflect the situated nature of ethical judgements needed in the field nor the values, obligations, and virtues inherent to qualitative, ethnographic research (Hammersley, 2015a). This study therefore develops an ethical practice that frames its values and obligations around matters of care and response-ability that not only correspond with the epistemological basis and meaning of ethnography but extend it towards ethical engagements in more-than-human world.

The ethics of care is not a straightforward or unproblematic endeavour. It engages with the notion of care as not necessarily a “rewarding or comforting” practice but a complex and multi-layered, affective encounter (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2012, p. 190). It has been critically explored and challenged across multiple disciplines and theories, mainly by feminist scholars and activists (Denzin & Giardina, 2007; Haraway, 2011; Mol, 2008; Noddings, 1984; Tronto, 1993), and more recently by feminist new materialist scholars (Coleman & Osgood, 2019; Langford, 2020; Osgood, 2019; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017). The approach to ethics of care in this study builds on Noddings (1986) original development of ethic of care as “an ethic that has fidelity to persons and the quality of relations at its heart” (p.498). In this sense, an ethic of care is a pre-individual, relational competence sustained by adherence to obligations and concern for others. An ethic of care thus concerns more than merely the protection of individuals and their rights, it aids in developing ethical engagements. Such an ethic is
relational and co-constructive and therefore challenges hegemonic practices that legitimise specific structures of dominance.

To research and act ethically in this study was to become entangled in the making of socio-material worlds. The practice of ethics of care is then, as Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) elaborates, an embedded, collective, unpredictable, and emergent practice “born out of material constraints and situated relationalities in the making with other people, living beings, and earth’s ‘resources’” (p.145). This mode of thinking dislocates ethics from the researcher as the starting point of ethical interactions, or as someone who shows ‘the’ way, as Puig de la Bellacasa argues (2017). Instead, it positions the researcher as a part of an ethical assemblage driven by affect in which being attentive and engaging, negotiating, and working ethical matters out together allows more-than-human co-construction of ethical considerations. Hence, to continue researching ethically requires particular obligations and response-ability to the experiences of human and more-than-human others that maintain relations and help them flourish.

New materialist ethics, and ethics of care specifically, are predicated on particular responsiveness and obligation towards both human and more-than-human others and the materializing relations that co-constitute a particular ethical practice (Knight, 2019; Mauthner, 2018; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017). Haraway’s (2007b) notion of response-ability is thus fundamental to ethical practice in this study as it develops responsibility as a particular situated responsiveness and respect towards human and more-than-human others. Response-ability is nevertheless more than responsiveness and respect. It is a practice that accounts for difference as differing, looks to what is yet to emerge, and remains open to the challenges of the complex and constantly changing field (Beausoleil, 2015). It is a practice driven by affect and attentiveness to what not only people do but also what objects do (Knight, 2019). Thinking with Osgood (2019) and her conceptualization of feminist new materialist ethics as ‘mutated modest witnessing,’ ethical practice here is a multisensory encounter with one’s “own as well as other bodies, materialities, knowledges, politics, ethics and truths” that “unfurl and interweave to produce other ways to encounter” (p.118). Moreover, as it aligns with specific ontological and epistemological commitments, it also accounts and takes responsibility for the particular inclusions and exclusions which it enacts (Mauthner, 2018). According to Barad (2007), response-ability is thus “not about right response,” (p.393) but about the ability to respond brought about by particular conditions of possibility that need to be accounted for:
“The range of possible responses that are invited, the kinds of responses that are disinvited or ruled out as fitting responses, are constrained and conditioned by the questions asked, where questions are not simply innocent queries, but particular practices of engagement. So the conditions of possibility of response-ability include accountability for the specific histories of particular practices of engagement” (Barad in Kleinman, 2012, p. 81).

What follows is that the research activity in this study and its ethical commitments were not only sustained by specific obligations, but constantly challenged, and thus continuously growing in richness and complexity. The emergent obligations that define the specific practice of ethics of care, as developed by this study’s research assemblage, brought forth a particular ecology of practice that values helping, sharing, and ‘thinking-with’ as particularly beneficial aspects of ethical and flourishing relations.

**Helping**

Helping relationships became the core of ethical encounters in this study. Children, adults, and objects were helping the researcher during fieldwork in some way or another. Children took turns putting cameras up at the beginning of the day and away at the end of the day. Parents worried whether their participation would be helpful to the study at all. Practitioners’ eagerness to draw attention to various socio-material aspects of classroom artmaking events, such as display and teaching resources, without external prompts, was also very helpful. On many occasions, even, the nursery housekeepers held the otherwise closely guarded entrance door open to allow the researcher to enter the setting easily. The recording equipment was helping to expand the capacities of the researcher to turn, to look, to hear and move into different spaces. The researcher responded by offering help herself where needed or when asked. For example, the researcher helped the family centre practitioner to manage an artmaking class when large number of participants came all at once. The researcher distributed paper or showed children where artmaking supplies are. The researcher also helped by introducing children to a local library or by donating books to the clubhouse bookshelf.

Such acts of helping connected the researcher, children, adults, objects, and places in the community and became a reciprocal, affirmative behaviour in which building relationships was more than a utilitarian gesture but a particular obligation of ethics of care.
Moreover, helping each other led to new ways of being and becoming together which resulted in creative relationships. For example, the coming together of tripods, cameras, camera cases, children, teacher, the researcher, and the floor, extended a Show-and-Tell activity from an informed-consent activity to a multisensory practice of becoming together. The children were twisting knobs, pushing buttons, and observing the intricate surfaces of digital cameras and tripods. The teachers were observing with a smile and helping to pass the objects. The cameras were heavy and fragile, sometimes flashing at children as they tried to take a picture. The Show-and-Tell activity was more than talking about research process and methods, it was a new, co-constructive way of encountering research, equipment and ideas that led to other topics for exploration, such as how pictures and videos are produced and stored at home and for what purpose, children’s relationships to digital technology and even weather forecasts. In the session, the children-objects-adults creative assemblage helped the group to explore and understand different practices, ideas, and phenomena.

Sharing

Sharing was another aspect of the emerging ethical relationships developed in this study. To the researcher it was important to develop relationships in which others are keen to share their artmaking experiences, as much as it was important to others that the researcher shares things about herself. Teachers often chatted about their private lives, opinions, dreams, and beliefs during artmaking activities, and they were keen to enjoy the chit-chat together with the researcher. Sharing particular conversational practices then led to closer relations, not only to people but also to places as the researcher was drawn to different spaces in the classroom, namely to the teachers’ table or the kitchen. Similarly, parents and children were happy to share a walk to a local shop, their experiences of living in the UK, or asked the researcher to enjoy a sunny day outdoors together. Objects and places were an integral part of these sharing relations. Around artmaking, children, adults, and objects joined together to co-create dynamic, learning encounters. A carpet, which children loved to caress and wiggle about on, was as much part of the Sharing Circle in the family centre as were the practitioner and the children. Sharing with objects, people, and children led the researcher to change her practice. Spending more time in the community before, after, and in between classroom observations became important as it allowed for more intimate ways of enjoying and joining in with human and more-than-human others to occur. Eating outside in the grass, chatting at a playground, playing with a playdough, or going on public transport became an important part of the research. Thus, sharing was more than talking about the
phenomenon of social inclusion and exclusion. It was a collectively produced practice that was more than a method. Instead, sharing became an important process of becoming-with human and more-than-human others through emerging, intimate, and close relationships.

Thinking-with

Finally, a more open field of inquiry allowed for a practice of ‘thinking-with’ to develop (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017). The research questions in this study were broad allowing for a more open approach to inquiring about processes of social inclusion and exclusion in and around artmaking activities. Indeed, thinking what inclusion and exclusion could be rather than what they are, the researcher was more interested in observing any and all encounters around artmaking activities. Children were drawn to the equipment. As the research progressed, they also became interested in the various encounters around artmaking themselves and began moving the 360-degree video cameras towards happenings that were interesting to them. The 360-degree video camera captured what is normally not seen in and around artmaking, such as snapshots of feet, or sunlight changing the colours of children’s drawings. As such the cameras were entangling with and expanding the researcher’s understandings of classroom encounters. Teachers also often engaged the researcher in thinking about the various, less visible aspects of their experience, such as documentation and funding, as it directly related to the materials and furniture in the settings. While making kites and cutting with scissors, parents were reminded of and spoke about their past experiences of schooling and how significantly these experiences shape their encounters around artmaking now.

An ethical inquiry as a practice of thinking-with emerged as more than a collective sharing of stories. It became a generous practice that entangled with and opened up to difference; different ideas, experiences, ways of doing, making, and thinking in and around artmaking. Such a practice embraced children moving cameras, practitioners introducing classroom assessment, the unpredictable contributions of objects, and multiple, contradictory experiences of (un)productive artmaking encounters. The thinking-with that was taken up here can therefore be described as a practice of ‘living-with’ and ‘taking care,’ as Puig de la Bellacasa (2012) writes, “for the unavoidably thorny relations that foster rich, collective, interdependent, albeit not seamless, thinking-with” (p.203).
6.3 Access

To gain access to all three early years settings in the same community, permissions to enter and work with the settings had to be first negotiated and secured with local gatekeepers. As the preliminary study (Vackova, 2017) had already been conducted in the same community the year before, this study was able to draw on already established friendly and professional relationships with several key gatekeepers, in particular the nursery headteacher and the director of the family centre, as well as on the warm relationships with several children and their families. These relationships facilitated the return to the field and helped with the initial introductions and ethical procedures regarding consent. The study had been, in its preliminary phase, also approved by the local mayor who is an active and well-known proponent of social inclusion and alternative methods. Nevertheless, it was the directors of the settings that held the most power in terms of allowing access to settings. A contact with the directors, the nursery headteacher, the family centre director, and the clubhouse director, was established via email conversations followed up by telephone calls when details of the study were further discussed. All the directors were hesitant at first. Some had previous negative experiences with researchers and outsiders coming into their settings who were not interested in reciprocal relationships with the children and practitioners. Others felt that the study was too long and might have disrupted classroom dynamics. Nevertheless, they were willing to meet in person and hear more about the study. After face-to-face meetings with each director, all fears were dispelled, common objectives of reciprocation were put forward, and permissions to access the settings were secured. The researcher was allowed to come into the settings during workdays to meet and talk with practitioners and children.

6.4 Consent <--> (Con)senting

While the study employed a normative ethical procedure for consent to meet the principles of established research ethics practice in the educational field, it also developed an approach to ethical practice around a more felt, embodied understanding of consent as (con)sent. Attending to the etymology of the word consent as deriving from the Latin word ‘consentire’ draws attention to the literal understanding of the word as ‘con-sentire,’ which translates loosely from Italian into English as feeling-with and feeling-together. In this approach, consent is more than a set of procedures or particular morality, it is a material and affective
practice that Fannin et. al (2010), drawing on Stewart, define as a “sensory practice of alertness” (p. 924). Indeed, Schulz, Schroeder, and Brody (1997) argue that “participants in a collaborative research relationship should enter into discussions with an open agenda, guided by the relationship at hand rather than standardized rules and consent forms” (p.477).

Following Stewart (2007), a practice of (con)sent requires opening up of senses and allowing slow attentiveness to affective intensities that are not always pleasurable or positive and may also at times be unpleasant and painful. Such a practice makes itself known, according to Bennett (2004), “as an uneasy feeling of internal resistance, as an alien presence that is uncannily familiar” (p.362). Moreover, a practice of feeling-with is a practice that is embedded in the situated materiality of social life. Indebted to feminist politics of feeling (O’Neill, 2001), this study nevertheless drew on posthumanist and new materialist understanding of affect as embodied sensibility that is “directly manifested in the skin – at the surface of the body” (Massumi, 1995, p. 85), and engaged with Bennett who argues that:

“Ethical motivation needs also to draw upon co-feeling or sympathy with suffering, and also upon a certain love of the world, or enchantment with it” (p. 361).

Bell and Vachhani (2019) further expose what affective engagement does in practice when they write how embodied feelings draw attention to “what is incoherent and enigmatic in our attachments” (p.15). Such an approach then increases awareness, draws people, places and objects closer together and allows an inquiry to attend to the affects produced through the proximity in specific environments (Ahmed, 2010).

**Power relations**

Relational ethics of response-ability and (con)senting draw attention and a new way of attending to the more-than-human relationships within the complex and dynamic orders of early-years settings. Underlying power relations and hierarchies are inherent to both the educational settings and the research process, these are however messy, fluctuating, and complex, and inherently entangled with a multitude of other micro-political forces and intensities, such as resistance (Fox & Alldred, 2018b). In this study, the research relationships are therefore understood, drawing on Albon and Rosen (2014), as both “contingent risk and great potential” (p.8) for conducting ethical practice that is situated, affective, and relational. Such a practice is critical of traditional frameworks predicted on deficit discourse in which
the knowledge and experiences of some (e.g. children, the non-humans, and others) matter less if at all (Schulte, 2020; Taylor, 2013). The study therefore takes up Kind’s (2020) proposition to take time and give ‘careful attention’ to “webs of relation, movements, rhythms, regions of intensity, and to that which is activated and set in motion” (p.49) among children, adults, consent forms, equipment, place, and researcher, and fluidly move with it in order to follow the inclinations of the assemblage.

The practice of informed consent and consent forms, in particular, became central to the webs of ethical relations in this study and shaped them, through both frictions and productive encounters. Consent forms were not distributed to the practitioners, parents, and children right away, but only after several days or in some cases weeks of introductions. Getting to know each other first, becoming attuned to the place, objects, children, and adults, and the ‘inclination of the assemblage,’ while sharing, helping, and thinking with others about the research, methods, and implications, was essential to conceiving what response is necessary and what is possible (Kind, 2020). No data were recorded at this time. Gaining a truly informed and free consent was difficult to achieve. Practitioners were influenced by the decisions made by the settings’ directors. Parents were affected by each other. Some parents were not interested in reading or talking about what they are consenting to. One parent wanted it confirmed that other parents had consented to the project as well before she signed the consent form herself. There was also little interest on the part of practitioners and parents to find out what children thought. Atkinson and Hammersley (2007) acknowledge that a “fully informed consent is often neither possible nor desirable in ethnographic research” (p. 42) as not everything about research can or should be always fully disclosed. Moreover, similarly, eliciting a free consent is a problematic endeavour as there is a considerable disagreement in the research community about what a free consent means and what it requires (Albon & Rosen, 2014; Hammersley & Traianou, 2012).

Consent in the study was therefore treated as interlinked, interdependent, and entangled ethical engagement (Green, 2012; Kind, 2020). Such consent respects and values input, not only from adults and children (Alderson & Morrow, 2004), but also from objects and their movement in/across places as important and active in shaping ethical engagements (Kind, 2020; Christopher M. Schulte, 2020). Some parents were, for example, less comfortable with writing and therefore asked the practitioners to sign consent forms for them. Few parents wanted to take the form home and read it with family. Consent forms from one setting sometimes appeared in another. Old consent forms, provided by the
settings, inspired the new consent forms in the study. They were brought home by children or distributed to parents by a clubhouse practitioner from her own home. The consent developed here was a moving and living practice that connected people, places, and objects in the community, and thus provided an inter-connected and enlarged sense of community.

The parent information sheet that accompanied the consent forms encouraged parents to discuss the study with their children as well as the rest of the family. The Show-and-Tell activity, organised by the researcher as part of informed consent in the early years settings, encouraged children to chat about the research and consent with their peers, their teachers, as well as their parents at home. Only two disagreements between children and their parents were observed which were carefully noted in consent forms and consequently resolved by communicating and changing how classroom observations are conducted (i.e., pointing cameras away from two specific children or switching them off while offering these children more opportunities to chat and share by helping them and spending more time with them or allowing them to record instead of being recorded).

Parents were approached for consent first, but children’s opinions and wishes were treated as fundamentally interdependent with the opinions and wishes of their parents. The parents were understood as the guardians who play a central role in protecting children from harm and helping the researcher to understand children’s wishes and needs (Anderson, 1995). Nevertheless, children’s voice was equally important to that of their parents/guardians and other adults. Children throughout this study were regarded as competent citizens and experts in their own life who, as Moss (2007) proposes, are “having opinions that are worth listening to and having the right and competence to participate in collective decision-making” (p.13).

The researcher was committed to continuously monitoring wellbeing in the classroom, and both adults’ and children’s willingness to participate throughout the study, as a form of ongoing consent in which anyone can withdraw their consent anytime and for any reason (Flewitt, 2005; Kellett, 2005). The aim was to develop ethical listening and responding to children and adults and their more-than-human engagements relevant to issues of research ethics, by attending with all senses to critical, charged moments, both positive and negative. For example, a child hiding under blankets, or a child placing a camera playfully in other children’s faces, became important moments when issues of consent and (con)senting were (con)noted, (con)sidered, and (con)structed again. Each encounter in this study was therefore approached with sensitivity and care, while supporting children in their
right to be heard. The approach adopted here was one of ‘achieving simplicity’, coined by Green (2012), and meaning:

“[S]imply standing back, taking time to think and reflecting before taking any action” (p.20).

To develop an environment centred on informed consent, also meant developing a space where dissent could be communicated too. To inform children and parents properly, and assure that everyone felt able and comfortable to say no to being a part of the project, the study developed several additional strategies, such as Information posters (Appendix 1) and consent forms tailored to young children (Appendix 2). Ethically relevant information about each stage of the research project and any changes occurring were shared with all to best of the researcher’s abilities and the extent of the participants’ interest and willingness, to enable adults and children to be able to respond to any changes by, for example, withdrawing their consent. Thus, in this study, consent has been an ongoing process that was renegotiated at every turn in order to preserve its ethical, situated, relational and more-than-human core, framed around care and response-ability to others.

Consent forms-practitioners-children-parents-researcher

The consent form-children-researcher-parents-practitioners assemblage was an ever changing and ever evolving practice of situated, relational, and more-than-human consent in which people, places, objects (e.g. posters, forms, cameras, toys, and art tools) shaped the ethical engagements in the study. More personal conversations around consent had to be arranged with practitioners in the nursery without the headteacher present. Having the headteacher’s consent and permission to access the settings was essential but not unproblematic, as it was treated as final and extending to all. The practitioners in the nursery therefore gave a permission to conduct research in their classroom and agreed to participate in the study immediately. However, they then behaved in a withdrawn and distant manner until the researcher engaged them outside of the school and before work. Over morning coffee, the researcher assured the practitioners that the research would not be conducted in, what they felt was their classroom, if they did not feel comfortable with it. The aim of the study and its approach to inquiry framed around ethics and relationships of care as well as the practitioners’ right to have an input, to be heard, and to change their mind was discussed with sensitivity to allow the practitioners to make an informed consent.
The dominant presence of the headteacher was also felt when she was willing to overlook one parent’s refusal to consent to video recording of her child. The researcher was nevertheless able to speak to the parent in great length as they both walked to a shop. The aim was to understand the parent’s position and devise ways together to include the child in the research without recording them. Indeed, the child kept showing interest in being included in the project by constantly stepping in front of the camera and asking questions. The researcher then responded and acknowledged the child’s wishes by spending more time with the child, observing their activities in person, and asking them more questions to devise methods of thinking-together that respect both the child and the parents’ wishes.

In the clubhouse, the practitioners struggled to help the researcher develop ways to reach out to parents and ask for their consent as the parents never came into the setting. The practitioners were at first troubled by the director’s decision to get the setting involved in the research because it gave them more work and concerns, especially since their relationships to parents of children in their setting were not very close. In response, the researcher distributed posters around the neighbourhood and in public display areas and sent consent forms home with children to take the responsibility for consent onto herself, but the forms never came back. After spending some time together, in which the researcher was able to demonstrate commitment, care for children, and sincere interest, the practitioners, as a friendly gesture, offered to distribute consent forms from their home to parents living nearby, and walk door to door to seek those consent forms back. The consent forms and the practice of informed consent were difficult to navigate and caused some tension. Nevertheless, they also presented possibilities to share ideas, practices, and concerns, and think-with each other and with the material context to develop a more ecological ethical practice of consent and (con)senting.

6.5 Safeguarding

The study did not encounter or identify any risks, harm or disadvantages to children and adults from taking part in the research. No particularly sensitive topics were discussed, nor were any instances of harm or abuse discussed or shared with a researcher during the span of the study. Anything that was said, recorded, and noted was strictly confidential and available only to those it concerned before all the recordings and fieldnotes were anonymised for the purposes of the study. The researcher took into consideration that the study may reveal undesirable or even harmful early years practices as well as harmful and
even discriminatory views during observations and interviews that could be potentially used against individuals and threaten their wellbeing if shared. The researcher had no intention to draw attention to or judge what was and what was not an appropriate practice unless the practice posed a serious risk of harm to others. Extra precautions were taken to keep observations and notes anonymous and safely stored so that no one could gain unauthorised access. All data were transferred from research equipment every day to a secure virtual location designated by the Open University.

The study’s aim was not only to be sensitive to children’s and adults’ health and wellbeing but also to their right “to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously” (United Nations, 1989). The researcher, for example, arranged multiple opportunities for children and adults to voice their concerns in an empowering and safe spaces. Children and adults were given opportunities to speak to the researcher outside of the artmaking settings (e.g. on a bus, in a shop, at a playground), away from the earshot of other children and adults (e.g. at a peripheral artmaking table, at a teacher’s table, in front of the settings), to communicate and address any questions or concerns related to the research study confidentially and without fear of repercussions.

The researcher on several occasions spoke to practitioners outside of the school building and early in the morning before everyone arrived to alleviate the pressure if speaking in front of colleagues. The researcher and the practitioners in the nursery invited parents to share their opinions and feelings about the research and discuss their concerns together during a parent evening where parents could speak and support each other. In addition, the practitioner spent time with parents outside of the settings to engage in more informal conversations. Children in each setting were invited to participate in a Show-and-Tell (Appendix 1) activity in which the researcher placed emphasis on children’s own agency and the researcher’s utmost respect for their free choice. Children were told repeatedly that they did not have to help with the research and that a decision to participate or not is all up to them.

The researcher, though interested in developing friendly and responsive relationships, always maintained professional boundaries outside the settings by spending time with children and adults always in public places or public settings, and in groups with other adults and children. The researcher thus attempted to provide opportunities for adults and children to express themselves freely by making sure that they felt safe to share anything in a manner, time, and place they found most appropriate. Finally, comprehensive
Information posters (Appendix 1) were designed to attract attention and communicate about the research and the researcher clearly. These posters were then displayed on accessible bulletin boards in each setting, and also distributed in and around the community to reach those parents (mostly fathers) who normally do not accompany children to the early years settings.
7 BECOMING: Methods

“At some point, we have to ask whether we have become so attached to our invention – qualitative research – that we have come to think it is real. Have we forgotten that we made it up? Could we just leave it behind and do/live something else? [...] The ethical charge of our work as inquirers is surely to question our attachments that keep us from thinking and living differently [...]”

- Lather and St. Pierre (2013)

7.1 Framing of methods

Response-able methods

The ethics of response-ability, being able to respond as well as being open to response (Barad in Kleinman, 2012), give rise to the conceptualization of methods in this study as response-able methods (Murris & Bozalek, 2019; Renold & Ivinson, 2022; Strom, Ringrose, Osgood, & Renold, 2019). Response-able methods open not only the methods up to new ways of doing and thinking, but also open the research up to both thinking-with and to sharing stories, places, and tools in an attempt to respond to others in the research assemblage in affirmative manner. During observations, for example, the researcher was at first trying to keep her distance away from the artmaking activities in order to allow for ‘natural’ interactions to take place, but children and even teachers wanted to share their activity and talk about what it was they were doing and experiencing. They wanted to connect and relate. Being pulled into the activity, becoming-with the various people and objects in the activity, led to a more intimate, felt, and embodied way of inquiring about processes of social inclusion and exclusion. Springgay and Truman (2018) propose that “knowledge of place is not something grasped from a distance but emerges through proximity” (p.210). Situated methods, according to Springgay and Truman, are therefore not predetermined in advance and instead arise out of ‘speculative middle,’ and thus present themselves as problems rather than solutions. Springgay and Truman (2018) argue that methods must emerge as propositions that constitute “a place for different (in)tensions to matter” where introducing small variations disrupts normative practices (p.210). How methods that arise from the ‘speculative middle’ were developed and enacted in this study is further discussed in the following sections.
Voice <--> Assemblage of enunciations

The response-able methods in this study are shaped by concerns with the essentialist ontologizing of agency as wilful and independent (Murris & Osgood, 2020; Spyrou, Rosen, & Cook, 2018), and the preoccupation with ‘authentic’ voice and agency in childhood studies and research with children (Spyros Spyrou, 2016; Spyrou, Rosen, & Cook, 2018). Moreover, this study adopts a critical stance and troubles the still present trend in which current scholarship strives to ‘liberate’ children and young people from ‘non-agency,’ while positioning adults as enablers who ‘enhance’ (Eriksson & Lindberg, 2016), ‘make space for’ (Houen, Danby, Farrell, & Thorpe, 2016), or ‘improve’ (Wallace-DiGarbo & Hill, 2006) children’s agency in order to empower them. Such approaches to agency are embedded in an a priori assumption that children lack agency, and thus participate in maintaining rather than eradicating harmful deficit discourses. Moreover, as Spyrou, Rosen and Cook (2018) write, a humanist conceptualization of agency that rests in a singular subject privileges a unifying, grand narrative, a universalised notion of agency as a property that particularly children must have to achieve a specific, ‘desirable state’ often defined by those with ‘more’ power.

Children’s voice and how to capture it are still predominately driven by essentialised notions of voice as verbal and rational (Komulainen, 2007), and by the search for a voice that is ‘authentic,’ and thus represents children’s ‘true’ experience (Lewis, 2010; Mazzei & Jackson, 2017). Komulainen (2007) cautions against the automatic assumptions that children have “message-like thoughts” that are easily accessible to adults, and that child-centred research is necessarily ethical (p.25). Both Lewis (2010) and Spyrou (2016) further problematise the simplistic conceptualization of children’s voice, and propose a more complex understanding of children’s voice as situated in interactional, institutional, and discursive contexts.

This study engaged with voice as found in the material-discursive intra-actions of the research assemblage (Mazzei & Jackson, 2017). As such voice exceeds language as both verbal and non-verbal communication from one subject to another and presents itself as an assemblage of enunciations in which, as Jackson and Mazzei (2017) write, “objects, discursive signs, utterances, bodies—all exist on different temporal and spatial scales that work collectively to produce a territory” (p.1092). The study then attends to the coming together of the various ‘voices’ in the research assemblage and what they produce together. That is, the study engages with the processes and the conditions of production of children-adults-researcher-objects-place ‘voice’.
Participants <-- Research-assemblage

Participants

Conducted in three different early years settings, a clubhouse, a nursery, and a family centre, located in a small, disadvantaged community in the Czech Republic, as described in detail elsewhere (5 ENTANGLING: Place[s]), this study involved numerous adults, children, places, and materials that in the early years settings regularly or occasionally take part in artmaking activities. Specifically, this study encompassed multiple places, more than sixty children and twenty adults, nine tables, enough chairs to seat everyone, boxes of colour pencils and markers, few erasers, and countless other materials and objects. The decision to extend the study to all the early years settings in one community was based on the preliminary study (Vackova, 2017) which showed that some children and their families are excluded from artmaking activities in one setting but attend artmaking events in the other settings in their community. Some children, for example, were sent home from nursery because their family repeatedly forgot to pay the nursery fees. The clubhouse was also only open to children who paid a yearly fee, and the family centre only allowed children to join their artmaking activities if they were accompanied by an adult. The aim of the study was then to engage the range of both formal and informal early years settings organizing artmaking activities in order to connect to, work-with, and think-with a diverse group of children and adults with different enactments of inclusion and exclusion in one community.

The study also remained open to newcomers throughout as new children and adults were joining all three settings continually reflecting the flux and flow typical to many disadvantaged communities in the Czech Republic affected by insecurities of employment, housing, and food. Finally, as artmaking events in this study are understood as open rather than closed systems, other people in the settings, such as the head teacher and cleaning staff, were considered and recorded as an important part of the artmaking activities. The cleaning lady in the nursery setting, for example, sometimes sat down with children to draw or commented on their drawings, and older siblings sometimes accompanied children to artmaking events instead of parents. All the adults, young adults and children in the settings were informed about the study and the role of the researcher in their settings in detail through posters, hand-outs and personal chats, and ethical consent procedures were followed, as outlined in the previous section (6.4 Consent <-- (Con)senting).
Research-assemblage

This study investigates processes of social inclusion and exclusion by making sense of classroom encounters in place and elaborating a vision for just educational encounters through a practice of ‘becoming-with’ and ‘thinking-with’ a particular learning community (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 1997). In a relational ontology of the posthumanist and new materialist theories knowing is inherently connected to being and doing through intra-actions in which a researcher is affected by other entities, such as children and objects, as much as they are affected by the researcher (Barad, 2007). Participation is therefore conceptualised around the notion of a research-assemblage, underpinned by Deleuze and Guattari’s (1988) concept of assemblage, and further elaborated by Fox and Alldred (2015).

Research-assemblage is constituted by the coming together of autonomous entities into a relationship of affect. Thinking with Deleuze and Guattari, Fox and Alldred (2015) approach a research-assemblage as “a machine that works because of its affects” that produce and challenge the assemblage. Building on Fox and Alldred’s conceptualization, this study further suggests that a research-assemblage works because of care which is, according to Puig de la Bellacasa (2012), a fundamental part of all relations. Thus, to care is to create relation and vice versa. The ‘becoming-with’ and ‘thinking-with’ others in the study therefore exceeds mere collection of data that are already there and suggests a process of transformation in which the research-assemblage exceeds itself and produces new imaginations (Lenz Taguchi, 2012).

Relationships of care

Reconceptualizing a research-assemblage as relationships of care is to think about research relations as sustainable, response-able, and emerging out of productive relations of difference. Drawing on DeLanda’s (2016) understanding of Deleuze and Guattari’s (1988) concept of assemblage, the research assemblage referred to here, the researcher-academia-children-adults-objects-language-place, does not represent a unified whole and rather it is provisional, revisable and therefore dynamic rather than static (Briassoulis, 2017). The research assemblage was indeed changing as some days it was the children actively moving researcher’s cameras from one table to another, and other days it was the researcher’s close adherence to ethical regulations preventing video recording of spontaneous outdoor activities joined by the whole neighbourhood for which full consent of children’s guardians was not possible to get. DeLanda (2016) further writes that a research assemblage suggests
a particular emergence in which a specific property of the research assemblage arises as the result of the interactions within the assemblage.

The most evident feature of the research assemblage enacted here was care, as all the various members of the research assemblage entered a particular ethical relationship of caring. The children, for example, knew that two families opted their children out of video recordings and therefore made sure that the cameras were never capturing these children during artmaking. Practitioners were protective of the equipment making sure that cameras were not mishandled and broken. The researcher was continuously seeking children’s consent and ways to discuss the general implications of the research study with them. The encounters in the field aligned with Puig de la Bellacasa’s (2012) notion of care that is creative, constructive, and arises out of “sustainable and flourishing relations” that foster thinking-with (p.198). Puig de la Bellacasa conceptualises caring as more than comforting and rewarding, an idealised notion of care. Instead, Puig de la Bellacasa (2012) argues that care is “everything that we do [...] to create, hold together and sustain life’s essential heterogeneity” (p.198). Caring in this sense also embodies conflict in a way it attends to rather than erases differences. The ‘thick vision’ of caring is important because it builds response-able community and practices. Puig de la Bellacasa (2012) therefore further suggests that thinking with care is response led, drawing on Haraway (2007b) and Barad’s (2007) concept of response-ability in which welcoming and inviting the response of the others is a particular practice of a research engagement that is open to new configurations and new ways of doing research.

Similarly to the concept of ‘response assemblage’ developed by Briassoulis (2017), the ‘research assemblage’ in this study refers to a ‘response-in-context’ in which methods are context-based and emerge from relationships developed in the field. Briassoulis’ response assemblage defines sustainable future practices and points to the importance of an assemblage approach arguing that it presents an opportunity “for developing suitable integrated methodologies, and for guiding sensible problem solving and decision-making” while resisting traditional, monolithic approaches to educational research and bringing both human and more-than-human entities together (p.180). Similarly, this study is an attempt at inquiring differently (St. Pierre, 2014) while at the same rethinking relations of being (St. Pierre et al., 2016) which, as St. Pierre (2016) argues, requires unlearning the qualitative humanist approach to research. The conception of a research assemblage is therefore a venture into the post-qualitative research territory that challenges and revitalises
educational justice inquiry by seeking new ways of thinking that come out of “experimentation in contact with the real” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 12).

7.3 Reflexivity <---> Diffraction

The commitment of this study to new materialist onto-ethico-epistemology is also reflected in its approach to the research practice. In contrast to the objective practices of positivist science, this study thinks with current approaches to reflexive practice (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2017; Serra Undurraga, 2020, 2021), and employs what Barad (2007), drawing on Haraway (1997) calls ‘diffractive’ practice. Reflexivity here is understood as an affective practice of response that allows researchers to relate and attend carefully to the (be)coming of themselves-others-theories-instances of phenomena and what this produces (Undurraga, 2020). Diffraction here is a critical practice that helps researchers pay attention to their material engagements with people, data, objects, place, and the relations of difference they enact and how these relations of difference matter within the research (Barad, 2007). While some argue that there are clear ontological differences between reflexivity and diffraction (Mauthner, 2018; Moxnes & Osgood, 2018) others point out their intersections and productive relationship (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2017; Serra Undurraga, 2021).

According to Barad, diffraction constitutes an alternative to reflexivity (Lenz Taguchi, 2012) as it introduces new possibilities in research that position the researcher as an integral part of the world rather than as an individual standing on the outside. Agency, accountability, and responsibility in a new materialist sense do not reside in the human researchers and instead reside in their practice. Yet constitutive reflexivity proposed by ethnomethodologists, as Macbeth (2001) argues, conceptualises reflexivity similarly to diffraction as a practice that contributes to the organization of “cogent worlds” (p.50). “Rather than a reflexivity of professional self-reflection, textual deconstruction, or methodological procedure,” Macbeth (2001) writes, “ethnomethodological reflexivity points to the organization of ordinary sense and meaning—how order, fact, and meaning in everyday life are produced as practical objectivities.” What it means is that constitutive reflexivity is embedded in the organization of common worlds rather than merely in a professional discourse of a researcher. It is a multi-voice practice of constitutive reflexivities that are “public and witnessable” as opposed to internal (Macbeth, 2001, p. 52). Thus, the researcher and other entities in the research assemblage together produce and implicate each other in their understandings of the phenomenon at hand and reflexively produce a
particular structure of inquiry. Similarly to diffraction, reflexivity is a ‘sense-making’ practice that attends not only to what one sees or hear but also to what one feels to immerse oneself completely in the event of place. It does not result in representation, but rather in accountability as inquiry is co-constitutive of the phenomenon it inquiries about.

Moreover, Bozalek and Zembylas (2017) further argue that there are not only differences but also intersections between diffraction and reflexivity. They are therefore not to be applied but approached critically as socio-material becomings. It is thus argued here that engaging with the interferences between diffraction and reflexivity is important because it generates new ways of doing/being/thinking within a research practice. Adopting diffraction, therefore, does not do away with reflexivity, it introduces the possibility to attend to both practices in an affirmative and productive manner that links the two together (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2017). Indeed, even Barad (2007) argues for “respectful engagements with different disciplinary practices, not coarse-grained portrayals that make caricatures of another discipline from some position outside it” (p. 93). Employing diffraction in this study then suggests continuity in a development of ideas. It also presents an opportunity to attend carefully to the intra-action of the two approaches and to their differences that, according to Dolphijn and van der Tuin (2012), constitute useful insights and ‘inventive provocations’ in a research practice that lead to new ideas, practices, and methods (p.50). Moreover, Petersen (2018) points out that setting humanist and posthumanist practices against each other, i.e. reflexivity and diffraction, only brings back unhelpful, bracketing binaries that discourages more complex thought.

In this study, reflexivity, as an affective way of relating, was therefore used during data collection, as well as during data analysis where points of reflexivity are laid out throughout the Findings and discussion chapters. It is accompanied by diffraction, which is signposted as particular cuts, that cuts different lines of thinking together/apart and re-orient inquiry (e.g. 9.3.3 Cut: Trans/formative encounters). Both approaches then evidence the thinking processes and show how meaning is entangled with and made sense of in this study. Through reflexivity and diffraction the study shows how understanding and knowledge are co-constructed and inquiry is non-linear and attentive do differences that matter (Barad in Kleinman, 2012). Moreover, reflexivity met with diffractive thinking in this study extends thinking to generate affirmative, entangled ways of inquiring and making sense of social inclusion and exclusion. Presenting and engaging with the various reflexive and diffractive moments in this study therefore reveals the shifting ways of thinking and
provides transparency as to the development of the research design and the role of the context of the inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In practice, reflexivity was often the initial response to new aspects of the research process. Nevertheless, the practice of attending to the self in its becoming with other entities, e.g. theories, ideas, people, objects and texts, and how the self engages and comes together with others to affect the study (Dodgson, 2019) always shifted towards attending to the what emerges as different entities entangle and affect each other. The process of reflexivity becoming a diffractive apparatus. The practice of turning the mirror onto oneself shifted towards an ethical, situated practice concerned with affirmative relationships and collective development deeply embedded in research encounters rather than a re-examination of a fixed identity in a quest for perfecting methods or representing ‘objective’ reality (Pillow, 2003). Thus, the initial reflexive thoughts concerned with the self, and with what it means to be a middle-class, white, woman with particular experiences of schooling and upbringing researching issues of inclusion and exclusion in a community experiencing range of disadvantages and exclusions, became pertinent as it materialised through close encounters with children, adults, places, and objects in and around artmaking in the early years settings. Spending time with children who spoke about their difficult relationships with adults, learning from teachers about their pedagogic views different to that of the researcher, and sitting on a concrete pavement waiting for the clubhouse session to begin, it became evident that it is not the awareness of the differences that perfects the research process. It is the relations that are built and shaped through various inclusions and exclusions of newly emergent possibilities that an ethical and affirmative inquiry materialises. The practice in this study therefore acknowledges the role of the entire research assemblage in the construction of the research problem, the research methods, and research findings. It also highlights the importance of the ongoing materialization of research relationships and its implications in the research study.

Reflexivity here therefore does not stand in contrast to diffraction. Instead, reflexivity in the field developed through and with diffraction, which turned the study into a deeply situated practice enacted in a moment that presents new ethical commitments to others in the research assemblage. This study is indeed a practice of accountability, care and responsibility for emergent relations as opposed to being merely concerned with the self of the researcher. The aim of the study was to find ways for the entire research assemblage, the relationships in and outside of the field, to thrive and develop through mutual entanglement. Such an approach requires an in-context response to the different ways of being, acting,
thinking together that emerge within a research assemblage. The practice developed here is an affirmative practice that builds on the complex and multiple aspects of research encounters. Moving beyond exteriorizing difference that reveals individuals’ weakness and lack, this study opens up to difference that develops strengths and abilities through relational ways of being/knowing/thinking.

Reflexivity in this study is therefore more than an inner mental activity that takes place in the mind of the researcher (Lenz Taguchi, 2012; Serra Undurraga, 2020). Reflexivity is an embodied, relational practice that strives to enact different ways of doing research rather than following discrete set of tasks which, as has been argued ensures quality and accuracy (e.g. Ball, 1990; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Throughout this study, initial preconceptions and assumptions are attended to (e.g. see discussion of the designation ‘Roma’ in 5.2. ‘Roma’ community). The study also develops a substantial discussion of the processes that allowed the researcher to open up to the emerging differences and new ways of being together with others (see 7.1 Framing of Methods). Both reflexion and diffraction then in this study bring about productive encounters with people, concepts, beliefs, and place that lead to an active, engaged exploration of how inquiry is co-constructed and comes about within the research.

7.4 Participant observation --> Becoming-with

7.4.1 Fieldwork

The fieldwork of this study was conducted across a span of seven months, specifically from April to June 2019 and from September to December 2019, in which the researcher spent a little over three months in the three early years settings actively observing and participating in artmaking activities. The researcher was also invited to spend time with children and adults outside of classrooms in places such as playgrounds, streets, a shop, and a bus stop as locals were eager to share their favourite places where they pass their time, wanted to spend time together or needed help. General impressions or important realities of the everyday dynamics and occurrences were noted during these out-of-class experiences, but no personal conversations or situations were transcribed in detail. Systematic notes were made only around artmaking activities. The experiences outside of the classrooms only shaped the researcher’s more general understanding of the community. Thus, rather than attempting to provide a holistic description of culture, this ethnographic study is focused on particular aspects of life (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2010), specifically the processes of social inclusion and exclusion around artmaking, in one community.
7.4.2 ‘Becoming-like’ & ‘Becoming-with’

The core method of data collection of this ethnographic study began as a ‘moderate’ participant observation (DeWalt, DeWalt, & Wayland, 1998) in which the researcher assumed a role of a peripheral member (Adler & Adler, 1987). The participant observation practice of ‘becoming-like’ (Spradley, 2016) was later in the field, however, reconceptualised as a practice of ‘becoming-with’ (Barad, 2007). Employing moderate participant observation, at first, meant maintaining a balance between observing and interacting with children, adults, and objects in the various settings. The goal of a peripheral membership is to interfere as little as possible in central interactions as not to change the natural’ flow of classroom processes but still become a part of the scene. A peripheral member interacts with central members only moderately and seldom, only in moments when valuable insight may be gained, yet interacts with others frequently enough to be recognised by members as an insider and gain an insider’s knowledge (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2010). Interactions with children and adults working centrally in and around art were to be kept to a minimum. The plan was to speak with children and teachers mainly before and after artmaking activities. Conversations during activities were to be limited and meant to access children’s and adults’ immediate reflections about what they were doing and experiencing. The goal was to become eventually relatively invisible by sitting slightly apart from the rest of the group and moving about carefully and with purpose, allowing for everyday situations to occur by becoming a familiar yet unobtrusive figure.

In reality, however, a ‘moderate’ participant observation was difficult to achieve, as both children and adults wanted to share their experiences by being and making together rather than just talking. For example, clubhouse carers invited the researcher to join their Christmas party to not only ‘see’ what children are making but also to ‘make’ decorations together with them and ‘experience’ the atmosphere, as they explained. Moreover, it also felt inappropriate and unethical to say no to requests for help and support during artmaking activities during which children had to wait sometimes a long time to get an attention from an adult. A family centre practitioner for example asked on several occasions for help with her class as she was expecting large numbers of children to attend on those days and wanted to provide the best experience to everyone. The early observations brought the focus back to the methods of data collection and the issues of ethics.

Participant observation, according to Spradley (2016), means learning from people through a process of ‘becoming like’ them. Thus, traditionally, the purpose of participant
observation is to view and to understand events through the perspective of others which requires watching people, following their example, and slowly becoming a part of their group. As the research began by meeting the children and adults who agreed to take part in the study, it became obvious that the researcher was not and could never become ‘like’ the others. It became clear that the researcher would never be able to see processes of social inclusion and exclusion from the perspective of others despite spending several months in the community, speaking the same language, sharing layers upon layers of cultural knowledge, experiencing the same cultural artifacts, and most of the time exhibiting the same cultural behaviour (Gregory & Ruby, 2011).

Most children taking part in the study experienced a wide range of difficulties concerning their mental and physical health and wellbeing on a daily basis, as was revealed not only by various adults but also the children themselves. Many children came from large, poor families that did not have access to what most people would consider basic resources, such as washing machines, beds, blankets, or even water sometimes. They had irregular access to food and adult care as they spend most of their days outside of their homes with other children rather than adults. Many families had to take care of not only all of their own children, but they also often took care of children of their relatives who were ill or in prison, all while struggling with the various aspects of a life in an excluded community (e.g. difficult commute to the city, living in infested apartments, and housing and job insecurity). Finally, some practitioners struggled with the demands of working within an excluded community, experienced burn-out, and had difficulties engaging with parents and children successfully.

On the other hand, the researcher herself grew up as a single child of middle-class parents with access to basic resources, food, and what is considered a ‘sufficient’ care. Having no experience of living in an excluded community, the researcher was never regularly exposed to neither job nor housing insecurity. Moreover, while being a teacher, the researcher did not receive her education nor teaching experience in the Czech Republic. Thus, it became clear that no amount of time spend in the community would help the researcher to ‘become like’ the others, nor was it ever the aim; an experience other ethnographers describe as well (Li, 2008). To seek the perspective of a lived experience that can never be fully understood nor represented (MacLure, 2011; Pillow, 2003) therefore became not only futile but also an unethical endeavour because that would inevitably reduce and fix the complex, rich, and deeply personal, evolving experiences of others (Lorimer, 2005).

To start inquiring about the processes of social inclusion and exclusion, a ‘multi-voiced’ process (Fayard & Van Maanen, 2015) that engages with more than children’s and adults’
own perspectives, and more than researcher’s own understanding of those perspectives, new way of making sense of events needed to be brought to the fore. The experiences in the field gave rise to a more helpful conception of ethnographic observation through the process of ‘becoming-with’ others, a concept introduced by Barad (2007), that allows for various, complex configurations and reconfigurations of being and thinking with others and materialises through various alliances, assemblages, and constructions of human and nonhuman subjects. Such an approach goes beyond the multiple voices of a singular researcher inherent to the emic and etic, or insider/outsider, approach that many ethnographers employ to inquire about a phenomenon through the participant perspective, an analytic perspective, or both (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). ‘Becoming-with’ is an approach that extends thinking beyond the researcher and towards the others.

‘Becoming-with’ is more than a data collection tool, or an analytical tool, it is also an ethical tool that signifies particular responsibility towards others that rests on responsiveness and openness to change through encounters of difference. Gregory and Ruby (2011) introduce the idea of doing research ‘with’ participants by developing a Bakhtinian dialogic approach to knowledge production that goes beyond the insider/outsider perspective and instead brings attention to the situated and relational aspects of knowledge production. Quoting Bakhtin, they emphasise the fundamental importance of talking and thinking with others in a research encounter because this reveals researchers’ beliefs and defines their role in the research setting:

“In the realm of culture, outsideness is a most powerful factor in understanding [. . .] A meaning only reveals its depth once it has encountered another foreign meaning” (Bakhtin cited in Gregory & Ruby, 2011, p. 7).

Yet they also show that developing a constructive and responsible position as a researcher goes beyond being open to others and difference, they point to the necessity of becoming different through research encounters. Gregory (Gregory & Ruby, 2011) writes how Tony, one of her participants, and his family, changed her conceptualization of ‘child-centeredness,’ which not only surfaced her assumptions, but also changed her position towards the teacher in the study, whose notion of ‘child-centeredness’ no longer matched with hers.

The ‘becoming-with’ approach, introduced here, extends on the dialogic view of knowledge production by attending to embodied and embedded ways of producing
knowledge in which objects, such as art materials, furniture and the artmaking room, are treated as entities that have the capacity of affect, that is, the ability to animate, act and produce effect (Bennett, 2010). Accounting for the affective traces of objects, Smith (2019) also argues, “deepens the possibility of field observations” as it draws attention to how classroom interactions are constituted by the various material properties of classroom matter (p.7.) For example, the size of furniture in the family centre often not only limited young children in getting to the various art materials propped up in the centre of a large table, it also eventually led to a decreased interest in participation. It also made adults at times assume that children are ‘unable’ to participate in specific art activities. Moreover, attuning to the entanglement of people and objects as they participate in the production of particular meaning and materiality, led to the development of new methods of inquiry. For example, a deeply embodied attentiveness to various sensations was developed in response to different classroom multi-sensory stimuli, such as the smell of paint drying on windowsills, the touch of children’s caring hands and the loudness of teachers’ voices. The multimodal appraisal of place (Mills, Unsworth, Bellocchi, Park, & Ritchie, 2014) became fundamental to a deeper, more inclusive, and thus more ethical understanding of classroom encounters (Davies, 2014) as well as to a more embodied research practice of ‘becoming-with’ the ecologies of social inclusion and exclusion.

Being a participant observer therefore meant not only being a researcher but also being a listener—mother—worker—local—Czech-expat—English-speaker—student—practitioner and more. Becoming-with others in a research assemblage led to becoming a different participant observer which in turn made different encounters possible. For example, motherhood was an aspect of the researcher that, at first, seemed important to hide in order to look professional and completely focused on research. However, being a mother and experiencing motherhood was a very present and immanent aspect of the lives of most if not all women and children in the study. All parents and practitioners in the study were women and mothers. Mothers, grandmothers, or aunts were the main carers to most children in the early years settings. The researcher herself is a mother and her caring role manifested through the impossibility of separating childcare from research responsibilities. It was difficult to secure an appropriate day-care, negotiate time in the field with caring responsibilities, and continue conducting interviews during nursery pick-up hour. Motherhood not only connected the researcher and adults in the community, but it also reoriented inquiry as it shaped the topic of conversations and ways that time together was spent. Moreover, it pointed to a variety of objects that became essential to observations.
One parent, for example, admitted that she has not been able to buy a washing machine and therefore has struggled hand washing the clothes of her many children. This confession then brought attention to children holding back during artmaking activities to keep their clothes clean and sometimes even being excluded during activities by other children who made remarks towards the (un)cleanliness of their clothes.

Similarly, being a Czech expat living in the UK was a particularly meaningful aspect of being, doing, and thinking with others in the community. Several of the local families lived many years as expats in the UK themselves. Indeed, many of the children attending the settings were born in the UK and spoke English very well. The children often included English words and phrases in their drawings that were inappropriate and would have gotten them in trouble had they been written in Czech. Practitioners then struggled with the Czech expat families upon their return to the Czech Republic because they didn’t behave like other Czech families; for example, not taking shoes off when entering the nursery building was seen as a major transgression, or it was deemed inappropriate that parents fed their children ‘only hamburgers,’ as the practitioners often made the point to mention. Sharing common experiences of life in the UK led to connecting with parents. Similarly, speaking English created a special relationship between children and the researcher as children loved to speak English but did not have anyone to speak with. Also, sharing personal experiences with British culture was interesting to practitioners who always wanted to know more about a life abroad. Sharing and opening up about different subjectivities, experiences, and ways of being, the researcher, children, and adults, together, were able to expand, grow and change their positions in the research assemblage which, as a result, became ‘multi-voiced’, responsive, and transformative. Building safe, ethical, and productive relationships based on profound reciprocity became a core of fieldwork observations through the approach of ‘becoming-with.’

7.4.3 Non-representational inquiry

Developing a responsive, ethical approach of ‘becoming-with’ to participant observation highlighted the need to move beyond representational thinking that is interested in the formation of fixed subjects and towards a non-representational inquiry that focuses on practice, the “onflow” or “animic flux” of life, which Thrift (2008) describes as “a succession of both luminous and mundane instances” (p.5). Haraway (1992) writes that representing the other is indeed a risky move as it instantiates specific hegemonic relations and traps others within a particular hegemonic discourse. Similarly problematic is a representational
practice that aims to ‘give voice’ to people, as Hammersley (2015b) notes that people’s accounts are neither transparent nor authentic, they are situated and constructed. Moreover, Barad (2003) draws attention to the apparent disconnect between representation and embodied encounters that materialise and are materialised within practices, when they write:

“[It] seems that at every turn lately every ‘thing’—even materiality—is turned into a matter of language or some other form of cultural representation [...] Language matters. Discourse matters. Culture matters. There is an important sense in which the only thing that does not seem to matter anymore is matter” (p. 801).

This study aligns itself with Barad’s agential realist ontology that reorients inquiry away from representation and language toward posthumanist performativity that focuses on material-discursive practices. Barad (2003) builds on Foucault’s notion of discourse as a set of ideas and practices producing knowledge and meaning which in turn structures relations. Barad further proposes that consideration needs to be given to matter because matter and meaning are constitutive of each other and in order to exist discourse must be materialised (Orlikowski & Scott, 2015). Hence, Barad (2003) calls attention to materializations, or how discourse is materially enacted and materialised in practice. This reorientation is significant as the posthumanist subject is no longer being determined by others, such as the researcher, and instead is understood “as an active participant in the world’s becoming” (Barad, 2003, p. 803).

This study employs posthumanist performative inquiry to investigate how social inclusion and exclusion are continuously enacted and materialised, how people and material environments are implicated in the ongoing material reconfigurations of those processes, and what the relationships between the various reconfigurations are. Instead of attempting to understand processes of social inclusion and exclusion by fixing and essentializing their properties, the focus of inquiry in this study is shifted away from the meaning of stable features of social inclusion and exclusion to the becoming, the iterative (re)configurations, of the material-discursive practice of social inclusion and exclusion.

The consideration of the issue of representational fixing and framing (Lorimer, 2005) is reflected in not only how inquiry is conducted in this study but also in how instances of phenomena are presented, that is, how ‘data’ are produced, analysed, and written up. Lorimer’s (2005) reconceptualization of non-representational thinking as “more-than-representational” thinking that is “multifarious” and open to being enacted differently rather
than predetermined by established academic habits serves as a helpful guide to how non-representational theory is used here. This study engages with the work of Kuby (2017) who introduces the concept of (re)presentation as she argues elsewhere that “[t]he words we use, their definitions, produce us, the world, policies, pedagogies, and practices of inquiry” (Kuby, 2019, p. 126). Kuby (2019) draws attention to the etymology of the word representation and invites researchers “to work at (re)imaging and (re)thinking what it means (and what it produces)” (p.126). Kuby builds on St. Pierre (2011b) who finds the conventional language of traditional, humanist research problematic and constraining:

“At the very moment, we are latched onto descriptions that are producing us and the world, descriptions that, over time, have become so transparent, natural, and real that we’ve forgotten they’re fictions. We accept them as truth” (p. 623).

To engage and attend to the etymology of the word representation presents an opportunity to open up the practice of presenting ideas and thoughts in a thesis differently. Indeed, according to dictionary (Etymonline) the prefix ‘re-’ does not only mean again, as in to return to the original place, but can also signify anew, as in writing in a new manner accompanied by “a sense of undoing.” The core of the word representation, i.e. present, does not only mean to show or portray but also to be before someone as in being materialised in a particular time and place and thus being partial rather than comprehensive or exhaustive of all possibilities. Reframing representation as (re)presentation or re-presentation then allows to produce different, “previously unthought” knowledge (Mazzei, 2014, p. 743) that does not attempt to mirror reality. (Re)presentation here is spatial and temporal material-discursive practice as it lies in a productive tension with particular academic publishing guidelines, writing convention, keyboard, memory of a child moulding clay, fieldnotes, recordings of classroom encounters, all of which exert a powerful influence on knowledge production (Atkinson, 2011). Similarly to diffractive reading, that Mazzei (2014) describes as dispersive, rhizomatic, and therefore constantly on the move, (re)presentation, as it is employed here, does not seek definitive meaning. Instead, it materialises as a spreading of knowledge in which “text is thought happening” and in constant flow of becoming with not only the studied phenomenon but also with theory (Bridges-Rhoads & Van Cleave, 2017, p. 298).
7.4.4 Fieldnotes

The practice of writing fieldnotes was employed extensively in this study as notes were written during and/or after every single observation. Writing fieldnotes was nevertheless a challenging task that presented a variety of issues and considerations prompting several reconfigurations of the method as well as reconfigurations of the relationship between the researcher and the method. Written fieldnotes are regarded as central to ethnography. Geertz (1973) draws attention to the fact that “the ethnographer ‘inscribes’ social discourse” (p.9). Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2011) argue that fieldnotes are ‘foundational’ and ethnographic studies not only rely but also build on the fieldnotes. Yet Atkinson and Hammersley (2007) are more careful and, while recognizing the prominence of fieldnotes, they note that there are instances when taking fieldnotes may prove to be difficult if not impossible. Indeed, in this study, fieldnotes were first written during observations. Nevertheless, writing into a notebook was not only a strange activity in the setting, as neither children nor teachers engaged in any writing exercises, but it was also disruptive of the flow of ‘becoming-with’ approach to participant observations. While writing and observing at the same time, researcher’s subjectivity was shifting between being an observer one moment and being participant next. The notebook was always placed in-between, yet it was not a shared object. The notebook is researcher’s own property and contains ‘personal’ and sometimes even inaccessible thoughts as it is written in shorthand or code. Drawing on Jackson (1990), the fieldnotes became an object with a “liminal quality” that position the researcher neither here nor there (p.9-10). To situate observations and develop an embodied practice of “knowing in being” (Barad, 2007, p. 185), experimenting and playing around with “what to write down, how to write it down, and when to write it down” became an essential part of the research practice (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 142).

Specifically, following Flora and Anderson (2019), the different re-articulations of writing practice in relation to the spatio-temporal research encounters in the field became important. According to Flora and Anderson (2019):

“The way we write fieldnotes, when we write them, and thus what fieldnotes are, is not just a matter that is determined by the fieldworker. It is also one that emerges from the field, suggesting thus that all ethnographic fields require their own distinct methodological approach” (p. 541).
First, the researcher experimented with carrying the notebook and pen around the classroom writing only quick notes in the lap and while standing up. The children found such a behaviour curious and entertaining. The teachers kept encouraging the researcher to sit down at their table. Sitting at the large table, the only adult-size furniture in the room, allowed for new encounters to occur as teachers started sharing various documents with the researcher, such as letters from parents and children’s drawings evidencing developmental milestones. Sitting at the teachers’ table gave the researcher an access to new materials, but at the same time pulled the researcher out of the ongoing encounters in and around artmaking. Sitting at the teachers’ table, the researcher became positioned as withdrawn because that is indeed where teachers sat when they did not want to be disturbed. The fieldnotes became entangled with assessments and curriculum which reflected in the text. Suddenly, teachers’ desire to get children to be ‘able’ to draw ‘properly’ (i.e. drawing hands with five fingers, heads with necks, and sun with rays) became more evident. Writing during observations was nevertheless still difficult and prevented the researcher from finding a balanced position within the research assemblage.

7.4.5 Remembering as living thinking

A decision was made to start writing fieldnotes outside of classrooms after observations and rely on recall (Flora & Andersen, 2019). Remembering was not as difficult as first imagined. It was not possible to capture everything that happened during day but Atkinson and Hammersley (2007) also state that “[f]ieldnotes are always selective” (p.142). It was however possible to note down what was relevant to the inquiry each day. At first, fieldnotes were written up in the car after observations. The car was a quiet place where it was easy to focus but it was impersonal and sterile, devoid of the sounds, smells, and movements that inhabit early years classrooms. The notes written in a car reflected that void. They were descriptive and to the point. After rolling the car window down the sound of children laughing and playing, some in the garden, some in their classrooms, filled the air. The laugh reminded the researcher of an important event that happened not long before when one of the teachers remarked “We will see who gets the last laugh!” which framed particularly transformative encounter that day.

After that, fieldnotes were written outside, on the lawn, in front of the settings. One could hear parents chit-chatting in a background, smell cooked lunch to be served soon, feel the energy of children running, and trees swaying in the wind. All the multimodal senses assisted in recall and brought back the different encounters that were observed in the
settings that day. Indeed, Stevenson (2014) writes that remembering is “a phenomenon which is a construction of the postcognitive, embodied, distributed mind, rather than an internally located operation” (p.346). Stevenson (2014) brings to the fore the emplacement of thoughts and calls for attending to the living-thinking, we all do every day, in which thinking is a practical part of every-day life, relational, and thus collaborative and situated. The process of remembering as ‘living-thinking’ is engaging with memories that are located outside of an individual. It is an embodied and emplaced practice that is connected to senses, actions, and place, unlike the traditional notion of memory that requires reaching inward into an individual’s internal archive of memories. Adopting the living-thinking approach to remembering, allowed the researcher to generate emplaced knowledge that “is constructed through embodied engagement with multisensory environments” (Stevenson, 2014, p. 339).

Moreover, it also allowed for new encounters around notetaking to happen. Children could peek over the researcher’s shoulder. Parents could engage with the researcher in friendly banter, further developing notes, and co-creating knowledge. Remembering and writing became more than a practice of recalling what is known but also a method of discovery, as Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) call for. Diverse notes were therefore taken in order to put into writing not only what was observed and experienced during artmaking sessions by the researcher but also what some children, parents, and practitioners said later that was recalled together with other reflections. The emerging multivoicedness of fieldnotes and the practice of doing fieldnotes with others through the practice of ‘becoming-with’, as came forth in this study, has a potential to stimulate new ideas and imaginations around collaborative academic methods and writing as more than the standard academic practices of triangulation and participant validation. The fieldnotes were therefore more than a repetition of letters, words, and conventional structures, they were an evolving assemblage of transcriptions of conversations written in the language of the participants (Czech), descriptions of settings in English, mentions and sometimes drawings of significant objects, different codes, and snippets of various thoughts, ideas, and reflections written in the margins. The fieldnotes thus became a body-mind, multi-voiced practice that attempted to foreground matter, offer multiple accounts of phenomena, and provide a contextual support for video recordings by capturing details of important events possibly ‘outside of the shot’ (Swann, 2001).
7.5 Video recording <-- 360-degree video recording

Video recording became a fundamental part of the research methods because it not only provided the main body of information this study draws from, but it also instantiated new understanding and framing of research methods in this study around the concept of *response-able methods* (see section 7.1 Framing of methods). Video recording is indeed a well-established practice in qualitative research (de Freitas, 2016; Dicks, Soyinka, & Coffey, 2006; Hammersley, 2010; Heath, Hindmarsh, & Luff, 2010; Pink, 2007), especially in the early years (Hackett, 2021; MacRae, 2020; Pacini-Ketchabaw, Kind, et al., 2016; Thompson, 2008), as it has been argued that visual technologies provide new insights into classroom interactions. Flewitt (2006), for example, emphasises the potential of video to produce rich data that reveals the range of multimodal resources children employ to make and express meaning. Kind and Argent (2017) further show that the different aspects of video-making, not only filming but also editing and viewing, can aid in developing a “deeper attunement and invite more sensitive and diverse ways of knowing, seeing and responding” in research (p.85). Moreover, Mengis, Nicolini, and Gorli (2018) write that new technologies can become generative and foster innovation because they allow reframing of the various aspects of phenomena in terms of a flow of affective, expressive, intra-active forces.

The next section is a discussion of how video recording as a multimodal, ethical, more-than-human practice in movement was developed in this study through the various response-able encounters within the research assemblage in the field.

*Multimodal*

In this study, artmaking events were initially regularly recorded by two digital HD cameras to attend to multimodal encounters. In preparation, a Show-and-Tell activity was organised by the researcher in all three settings to familiarise children and adults with both the project and most importantly the equipment. Children were welcomed to not only ask and learn about the camera equipment throughout the project but also use the equipment to record short clips of each other. Several children in the clubhouse setting asked the researcher for a short crash-course and then recorded one of the artmaking activities on their own. Allowing children to interact with the video cameras as they wished became a further learning opportunity that extended understanding of the method and its implications (e.g. audience, storing, looking back, accessibility). The focus on video-recording as a central method came...
as a response to findings from the preliminary study (Vackova, 2017) which was conducted in the same community a year earlier. The scoping study showed that many young children in the community experience different levels of difficulties to communicate with adults verbally. Indeed, in the main study too, adults (including the researcher) struggled to understand some of the children’s verbal communication. Video recording then presented an opportunity to pay close attention to the different modes within encounters, to listen carefully to what may have been missed during observations, and to respond by going back and listening again. Forsey (2010) writes that engaged listening is as much a part of an ethnographic research as observations. This study further suggests that the same is true for video data analysis. Video here is therefore employed for careful listening as much as it is for close viewing. In the field, video cameras were strategically placed on heavy tripods in the corners of the various classrooms or on windowsills to stay out of the way and provide a close but overall view of artmaking activities with a good sound quality. The intention was to record both the activity as well as the space beyond the activity in order to acknowledge that an artmaking activity is not merely what children and adults do around tables, papers, and other artmaking tools central to the activity. The artmaking event is a complex ecological environment that is nevertheless easily discriminated from other activities as it consists of a specific system of embodied, normative processes and structures (Barker, 1968).

The two cameras worked well at providing a fine-grained analysis of classroom encounters at first. The video captured not only what was happening immediately before, after, or in relation to artmaking, such as play developed in relation to the artmaking activities and movement of objects in and out of the activity. The video also captured quite clearly both verbal and non-verbal forms of communication, such as body language, handling of tools and small gestures. Video, as Flewitt (2006) argues, moves the inquiry beyond focusing on language as a main carrier of meaning and towards non-verbal behaviour as a meaningful and intentional communicative behaviour. What is more, the equipment sparked children’s and adults’ interest and initiated fruitful conversation about what happens with the video, what can be seen by the cameras, or how can things be seen differently with a camera. Indeed, Robson (2011) argues that video recording should be understood as a collaborative method in which children are provided with opportunities to explore and use video cameras. Building on Robson (2011), this study involves children and adults in using and engaging with video equipment to ensure that they are not only co-participating in knowledge production but also actively developing an in-depth understanding of the implications of their participation in a research project.
Disruptive

Despite what seemed to be a good start in integrating video equipment into the classroom daily art activities, a few weeks into fieldwork, teachers, children, and parents learned to ignore the cameras, and sometimes did not even realise they were there. While becoming an unobtrusive inside-outsider is particularly important aspect of traditional ethnography (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) it became quite clear that it is also particularly unethical and unhelpful. Children helped to put up and take down the equipment, but they could not really reach and position the cameras as they wanted to. The equipment was large and heavy. As a result, they could not participate and shape their role in data collection easily. Moreover, erecting cameras on the outside of artmaking activities meant raising cameras high above the floor. This produced a view that peers over children’s backs and onto their papers producing a surveillance-like, or inspection-like view. Such a view sustains normative power-dynamics, narrow conception of inquiry, and traditional visual ontologies that limit how researchers see what they see and what is therefore made important. In light of the rising prevalence of video surveillance across an increasing range of public and private spaces, including classrooms, Pink (2012) underscores the importance of acknowledging that observation or “practices of looking” are politically charged, and that what is acceptable to record and made public is constantly changing. Hope (2016) argues that invasive school surveillance practices are becoming normalised and furthermore concludes that:

“[S]urveillance devices threaten the inherent nature of schooling, limiting potential for democratic engagement, while undermining the values of a progressive education” (p.900).

Normative conceptions of vision also posit, as Baker (2017) writes, that “to show is to know,” an understanding that restricts inquiry and reinforces a selective and repetitive ways of thinking (p. 170). This study therefore engages and thinks with Hackett and Caton (2019) about how to ‘push’ against traditional visual ontologies by practicing looking differently.

More-than-human

To engage with the ethical and practical considerations raised during the initial recordings, a 360-degree video camera was introduced into the settings during observations because it provides a different view of artmaking activities from within. The 360-degree video camera
is very small. It can therefore be easily placed in the centre of artmaking activities and handled by children. Gomez Cruz (2017) highlights the possibility of 360-degree video camera for opening up new, emplaced ways for the researcher to collaborate and engage with others in the field. Employing this small, yet powerful 360-degree video camera indeed opened up new ways of working in this study as it not only disrupted normalised ways of attending to classroom interactions, but also enriched understanding of artmaking events as more-than-human while paving the way for developing the concept of response-able methods that lies at the core of this study. The introduction of the 360-degree video camera repositioned the practice of observing into the heart of the artmaking activity where bodies, hands, furniture, tools, and paint interacted in dynamic and constantly changing ways. Attention was heightened to the more-than-human encounters taking place around the camera: the desk, the brushes, a liquid paint leaving traces of movement on paper encouraging the human body to act – matter constantly engaging with other matter in unpredictable and multiple ways. Such encounters epitomised the socio-materiality of the artmaking process and brought about the nuanced specificities of how social inclusion and exclusion are made and lived.

The 360-degree video camera generated a particular ontological encounter that not only decentred human bodies as the sole source of meaning and knowledge, but also emphasised mundane or ‘irrelevant’ moments (Hackett & Caton, 2019; Maclure, 2013) as important to understanding the processes of social inclusion and exclusion as a material-discursive practice. The children were ecstatic and even teachers smiled after the small camera was placed on their artmaking table. There was something non-threatening about its presence and even though the best place for it was in the middle of an activity, right in the middle of the bustle, it was hardly ever in the way. Instead of recording artmaking by peering over and mimicking an adult, surveillance-like perspective, the 360-degree video camera was located in the thick of it, in the constantly changing, affective, more-than-human assemblage of people and objects intra-acting. The 360-degree video camera looked to more than human bodies by capturing various other views of bright sunny windows, half empty tubes of paint, or blurred outlines of flying paper (Figure 4). As a result, the human body was no longer the sole producer of meaning and knowledge. Instead, the camera followed a flow of multi-sensory intensities among various entities “constantly assembling, dissembling, and reassembling” (de Freitas, 2016, p. 568). Hackett and Caton (2019) draw attention to these ‘out-take’ shots of over exposed window sills or moments when camera is on the move because, as they argue, rather than being mere disruptions, they challenge normative
viewing practices and understandings of video data by bringing forth how knowledge emerges out of more-than-human intra-actions (Barad, 2007).

Figure 4 A still image from a 360-degree video camera: a boy recording completed classroom art project

In movement

The 360-degree video camera also allowed for a particular research assemblage through more-than-human collaborative encounters in which the researcher, children, adults, objects and camera became mutually co-constructed (Sørenssen, Aarsand, & Hoveid, 2019). Very quickly children and adults grew more and more involved and curious again about the equipment in their space and the purpose of the recordings. Both children and teachers also began moving the camera around their tables freely, without being asked or encouraged to do so, to find the best place for it, to make it work for all, using other objects to prop it, raise it, and partially block view of children whose parents did not consent to video recording. Parents at times directed the video by, for example, asking the researcher to follow them with the camera and record outside where they wanted to try out the kites they just made.
Children stopped dancing and making faces in front of the camera, and instead they used the camera to show what interests them and to generate new information that would have been left out otherwise. They learned to switch it on and off and handled the equipment with great care despite teachers’ concerns.

The new footage was erratic, colourful, in-movement, formless, and chaotic at times, and as such brought forth a new approach to viewing. Building on Malone (2016), video recording became more than a documentation of what is observed but a particular way of sensing or letting oneself being affected by experiences in and around artmaking. Sensing, as Hackett et al. (2015) write, is being attuned to “embodiment, sensoriality, co-presence with others and movement” (p. 436). Moreover they emphasise that it is precisely “within the relationships formed through doing research together that new approaches and insights are surfaced and new potential pathways to knowing can emerge” (Hackett et al., 2015, p. 441). A rich, multi-layered knowledge was thus being co-produced through a constantly changing research assemblage involving the researcher—children—adults—objects—camera and gave rise to the conception of response-able methods grounded in a commitment to thinking-with and becoming-with human and other-than-human others within the phenomenon.

7.6 Interviews <--> (Inter)views

*Ethnographic interviews*

Similarly to the other methods in this study, interviews were at first structured traditionally as ‘natural conversational ethnographic interviews’ (Whitehead, 2005) and natural extensions of participant observation (Patton, 2002). Their role was to complement the other methods. The interviews thus began as conversations in an informal, respectful, and friendly manner of listening to children’s and adults’ immediate reactions and insights into processes of social inclusion and exclusion around artmaking activities. They were conducted with children and adults before, during and after artmaking to gain an insight into the various processes and encounters without interfering and influencing the dynamics of the observed situations. Similarly to participant observation, interviewing was unobtrusive and engaged others in a discussion only moderately and seldom, in quiet moments, in moments of disengagement, or when valuable insight could be gained (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2010).
Open-ended questions, formulated both on the spot in reaction to observed situations and ahead to account for past observations (see Appendix 3), initially guided the conversations (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). The open-ended nature of the questions allowed the respondents to talk in more depth, use their own language, and provide clarity on issues the researcher struggled to grasp; subsequent examples are some of the questions posed: Can you tell me about modelling drawing with children that I noticed you do regularly? What do you do with the work your child brings home? What do you have here? The intention was to become familiar with participants’ complex understandings without imposing a priori knowledge and limiting the field of inquiry (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). When speaking with children, a caring and sensitive approach was adopted to make them feel safe and secure as well as empowered to refuse talking if they did not want to. An extra effort was put into avoiding questions that could put a child participant into conflict with others or make them feel vulnerable or uncomfortable. A similar approach was taken with both parents and teachers.

The method of recording all conversations was flexible and dependent on context. Conversations were therefore sometimes captured on a video, written in fieldnotes, or audio recorded. The culture of the settings, the children’s and adults’ immediate reactions, and topics of conversations shaped and guided how and when different recording methods were employed (Tessier, 2012). Nevertheless, video recording of conversations and writing notes became dominant methods. Audio recordings provided only an additional support, mostly in moments when video recording was not possible due to technical problems or lack of consent for video recording, or the quality of sound was low. Audio recordings were found to be insufficient in providing a full, clear picture of the situated character of conversations but aided in recall after the sessions.

Storytelling

This study embraced Haraway’s (2016) conceptualization of story-telling as a transformative practice of multiple modalities and an important source of information that brings forth alternate possibilities and affective relations. Different stories were brought together, not to test for validity, but to diffract and reorient thinking away from dominant discourses (Burnett, Merchant, & Neumann, 2020). Stories not only enriched the understanding of ‘data,’ that is the instances of phenomena in this study, beyond the ‘truth,’ but also extended conceptualization of “stories as a case to stories as a method” (Gallagher, 2011, p. 49). In the preliminary study (Vackova, 2017), it was observed that communication around artmaking
in an early years setting was not only verbal and non-verbal but also expressed through stories in pictures, music, and dance. These expressions were creative, embodied, passionate, shared and imaginative, containing elements of fiction (Thrift, 2008). A four-year-old, for example, devised her own little pocketbook consisting of inscriptions and images to tell a story of a terrible father, an evil character, who was fought by magical fairy teachers (Vackova, 2017). The story opened new ways of attending to both the relationship between children/adults and children/objects. Furthermore, in the main study, clubhouse practitioners sang and shared heartfelt Roma songs with children who listened with eerie stillness and attention to sounds, repetitions, and the story of the main character’s life as a Roma, a life full of obstacles as well as joys. On other days, children in the streets practiced dance routines that spoke of longing for success, creative expression, and reconnection to Roma culture. These events brought a new dimension to the experiences of Roma families in the community as well as a new dimension to the relationship among researcher, children, and adults. Thus, children and adults communicated mostly through stories rather than providing direct answers, to-the-point comments, or exact observations. A nursery practitioner spoke once in great length about one of her few attempts of reaching out to a local family. She described her journey, her fears, and impressions during the search for one boy’s family among the decaying council housing complexes, and finally the unexpected and apprehensive attitude of the parents when she finally found them. These stories that became fundamental to this study were not mere accounts of experience but suspenseful, captivating, personal stories full of fantastic, affective modalities.

Whether anyone is telling the ‘truth,’ or not, became insignificant. Meaning was found in how narratives intertwine, blur dichotomies, such as truth/fact or subject/object (Haraway, 2016), and thus contribute to co-construction of new understandings of social inclusion and exclusion as well as ways of being and thinking together. Atkinson and Hammersley (2007) argue that an ethical approach to people’s accounts is to separate the question of the truth or falsity and treat information as both resource and topic. Indeed, Eisner et al. (1990) suggest that the process of telling a story shifts the equilibrium from the researcher towards the storyteller. Similarly, Davis (2007) suggests that storytelling presents a more socially inclusive and democratic approach to data collection. Extending on the notion of stories as a method that disrupts dominant practices which sustain inequality, Burnett, Merchant and Neumann (2020) draw on the notion of multiplicity to emphasise the co-existence of multiple versions of what is ‘real’ in which “a variety of ‘modes of ordering, logics, frames, styles, repertoires’ are said to co-exist” (p.118). They employ multiplicity to
bring alternate stories together and to the fore so that different conversations can be held. Thus, to look beyond the obvious in stories and to activate new imaginations, this study understands the various stories “as a place to begin inquiry,” as Gallagher (2011) proposes, and not as “a place on which to settle meanings” (p.59). Moreover, the various stories and narratives brought forth new possibilities of interviewing that not only resist representation, but also allow for new relationships between interviewer and interviewee (Scheurich, 1995), in which spending time and thinking together is a situated, affective, and more-than-human encounter.

(Inter)views

The kaleidoscope of colourful, rich, imaginative stories shared during the course of the research challenged the standard informal interview format employed in the study at the beginning. Neither children nor adults were always fully engaged in answering questions. They often changed the direction of the line of interviewing or became interested in doing something else. As soon as the informal interview approach was abandoned, stories, ‘seemingly’ irrelevant observations, joys, and questions flooded the conversational space. The interview method opened up from within and positioned the researcher, who was both the interviewer and interviewee, as vulnerable to questioning and providing answers. More-than-human encounters guided and changed the research practice. Sitting with children on a hard, concrete patio in the cold waiting for class to begin led to talking about more than what was said indoors around artmaking tables. Following Mazzei (2013), this study began giving more attention “to the where of the interview, and the when of the interview, and the if of the interview” (p.739). The interviews became reciprocal, physical, embodied, and intimate. At that moment, this study argues, they became a space for a lively, practical, and real exploration of a subject rather than a task trying to immediately solve a problem.

Kuntz and Presnall (2012) introduce the reconceptualization of interviews to intraviews to draw attention back to interviewing as an intra-active event in which multiple bodies and forces come together to co-create knowledge and meaning. Understanding interviews similarly, this study further introduces a concept of (inter)view to emphasise that interview here is a process of becoming and the emergence of difference through the various connections and relations within the interview. It is argued here that the prefix inter- is helpful when talking about interviews as it suggests directionality away from the inside and towards the new possibilities emerging among, in the midst of and betwixt the various entities. To (inter)view, in this study, is then an ethical practice that attends to more than
As previously discussed (see 7.4 Participant observation <--- Becoming-with), being and thinking with others in a research assemblage led to a process of becoming-with that became fundamental to the research practice in this study, in which new links and connections to others were developed making different encounters and a more responsible, ethical practice possible. Motherhood, painting, geography, and language, for example, connected the researcher, children, adults, objects, and spaces. In this way, parents’, practitioners’, and children’s stories did not exist apart but entangled with the stories of the researcher and others in the research assemblage. Indeed, discussing ethical engagement, Beausoleil (2015) argues that “[t]o refuse to be affected by or accountable to another is to assume the nonreciprocal, voyeuristic and ultimately colonial gaze of the unseen seer, a form of mastery rather than meeting” (p.5). Thus, sitting on a concrete patio and waiting for the clubhouse to open and talking to two young girls about the importance of the setting in their life, led to thinking about and sharing how important art classes were in the researcher’s life. It further emphasised that sitting uncomfortably on the bare ground in the cold was something the researcher never had to do as the art school that the researcher attended had a foyer and comfortable couches, which repositioned the researcher in the research assemblage.

To capture the intra-active thinking and note the lines of thought that co-constructed voice as collective assemblages of enunciation, (inter)views were always captured not only through video and audio recording but also written down in as much detail as possible and accompanied by intersecting thoughts, lingering questions, impressions, and sometimes even small drawings. Moreover, physical sensations and embodied shifts in experiences, such as sitting on a rough concrete patio in front of the clubhouse, were attended to and noted down because it produced affective responses in the body that led to new ways of thinking and shifts in understanding. Kuntz and Presnall (2012) call this mode of interviewing “a whole body listening” as well as “responsive listening” in which spaces contribute meaning...
and shape inquiry. Thus, the additional notes served as a tool that reorients thinking and brings to light moments in which the researcher-children-concrete-questions-art cut together/apart and produce new ways of thinking (Barad, 2007).
8 SENSING: Analytical framework

“[T]hose instances that truly surprise us, and cause a breakdown in our understanding, are in fact much more ‘given’ than the ‘data’ that we ‘take’ [...] Usually, these are not simply given, as ‘data,’ but, at certain times, they may cause us to stumble—and thereby become data. On such occasions, we should, as qualitative researchers, allow ourselves to stay unbalanced for a moment longer than what is comfortable, for this is where we may learn something new.”

- Brinkmann (2014, p.724)

In the Analytical Framework chapter, several processes that underlie the inquiry in this study converge: a process of developing and formulating research questions, operationalizing research questions, and making sense of all gathered information in relation to the research questions to think of new possibilities around social inclusion and exclusion in and around artmaking in early years settings. Each step is discussed in the following paragraphs in depth to demonstrate the analytical path that was taken from exploring the various encounters around artmaking, identifying instances that aid in thinking beyond inclusion/exclusion, to ‘plugging’ the critical instances into diverse theories (Mazzei, 2014).

The chapter shows how the initial sensing of boundaries of a phenomenon, that is an ‘imperfect mapping’ of how things come together in the process of becoming, can provide initial topologies of more-than-human encounters in the processes of social inclusion and exclusion in and around the artmaking. Wondering-with data helped in locating those moments where impossible becomes possible and vice versa (Barad, 2007), and brough about what Brinkmann (2014) calls a “breakdown in understanding” (p.722). Wondering-with data, as outlined below, led to the unexpected rather than the expected, the moments of uncertainty that disrupt normal understanding and disperse thinking like a ripple effect across unexpected topics and ideas. The final stage of analysis, and the last section of this chapter, are centred around diffractive analysis, an entanglement with the moments that cause breakdown in understanding. The aim of such an analysis is to stay and think with these moments, to think about how they materialise, and attend to how new openings for different knowledge come to matter (Barad in Kleinman, 2012; Mazzei, 2014).

Being flexible, open to new ways of seeing and doing, and most of all being able to respond to people, objects, place, community, and environment in this study, was fundamental to both the becoming-with others in the field as well as to the sense-making with data during data analysis. Rather than giving in to the pressure to record and collect data right away, an extra time was spent on getting to know the children, parents,
practitioners, and settings in this study. Similarly, rather than analysing data quickly, in a linear fashion, an extra time was dedicated to thinking-with observations, inter-views, and videos that were often collectively recorded. Having the opportunity to slow down data collection and later data analysis provided space for attentiveness to relationships first and for developing a research approach deeply embedded in ethics of care.

8.1 Formulating research questions

The research questions were rooted in a literature, yet also developed in a non-linear fashion. They were shaped, expanded, and reduced, in response to the various encounters with people, places, and theories within this study. Such research encounters fundamentally contributed to the co-construction of, first, the research questions, and then, the particular line of inquiry. Knowing that is taken up here, is therefore both discursive and material in its entanglement with both human and more-than-human others, as Barad (2007) proposes:

“[…] knowing is a matter of part of the world making itself intelligible to another part. Practices of knowing and being are not isolable; they are mutually implicated. We don’t obtain knowledge by standing outside the world; we know because we are of the world. We are part of the world in its differential becoming” (p.185).

Simply speaking, knowing is closely connected to doing, as Brinkmann (2014) claims. The role of the researcher is therefore not that of an isolated figure, but an actor entangled in the complexities between the phenomenon and the inquiry. The three research questions that are discussed below are but one of the novel productivities among the different connections and divergences co-produced within such an encounter.

RQ1 What processes are enacted in and around artmaking in the early years settings beyond social inclusion and exclusion and what they do?

The first research question reflects the growing concerns with inflated and over-generalised findings produced by theoretically and methodologically weak studies that support the longstanding and widely accepted claims that the arts have positive effect on individuals and communities (Guetzkow, 2002; Harland, 2014). Many agree that more nuanced understandings of classroom interactions have been under-researched (Gaztambide-
Fernández, 2013; Nind et al., 2004; Pollock, 2008). This finding is echoed in Allman (2013) who draws attention to the fact that understandings of experiences of social inclusion and exclusion, that is how inclusion and exclusion are produced, are neither well known nor well developed. Indeed, some scholars argue that educational justice is becoming further out of reach for more children and young people today (Francis & Mills, 2012; Harding, 2014; Hedegaard-Soerensen & Grumloese, 2020; Kroll & Schraad-Tischler, 2014). Educational equity, a commonly accepted goal of socially just education, has been argued to disguise the “accumulation of societal and educational exclusions of and prejudices toward historically marginalized students, their families, and their communities” (Scheurich et al., 2017, p. 508).

Social inclusion as an instrument for educational equity is not only difficult to define (Nind, Benjamin, Sheehy, Collins, & Hall, 2004) but has been found problematic as a position of othering and essentialism (Campbell, 2010). Social inclusion has also become a divisive topic of educational reforms in the Czech Republic around which neither public nor teachers can come together (Burkovicova & Hanuš, 2004; Kartous, 2017; Straková et al., 2014). Francis and Mills (2012) suggest that educational research must move beyond “identifying social injustice in education, and in analysing the ways in which education systems reproduce inequality” towards proposing alternative models, new principles, and new visions for fair and just education system (p.579). There is therefore a need for situated, relational, non-binary, and anti-anthropocentric studies that do not focus merely on social inclusion and exclusion of individuals. There is a need for an inquiry that attends to the dense and complex encounters among people, materials, time and space, and the new possibilities they co-create towards educational justice-to-come.

RQ2 How can inquiry into what appears impossible reorient thinking about educational justice in and around artmaking in early years settings?

The second research question has been shaped by the need to ask a question that challenges and unsettles normative human-centred understandings of social inclusion and exclusion, and that reorients the study away from mere representation of a phenomenon to attuning to the conditions for new possibilities to emerge (Thrift, 2008; Ulmer, 2017). It is a reaction to Lather and St. Pierre (2013) who caution that “[w]e always bring tradition with us into the new, and it is very difficult to think outside our training, which, in spite of our best efforts, normalizes our thinking and doing” (p.630). The third question therefore allows this study to open up to what Barad (2010) calls an “indeterminacy in moving towards what is to-come” (p.264).
To think about social inclusion and exclusion around artmaking in a way that disrupts the anthropocentric nature and the binary logic of current understandings, means to open specific classroom practices up for discussion, and generate new, potential principles and concepts that move beyond normative understandings of educational justice (e.g. Lerner & Fulambarker, 2018). Indeed, a growing body of literature (Cutter-Mackenzie, Malone, & Barratt Hacking, 2020; Denise Hodgins, 2019; Osgood & Robinson, 2019; Spyrou et al., 2018; Taylor & Hughes, 2016) argues that innovative inquiries that reimagine traditional, humanist conceptualizations, such as social inclusion and exclusion, are necessary “to address, respond to and engage with the realities of the 21st-century” (Denise Hodgins, 2019, p. 1). A more-than-human inquiry of social inclusion and exclusion around artmaking may challenge current understandings of social inclusion and exclusion and contribute to the re-making of settled topologies in order to extend current debates on the intersection of the arts and educational justice.

RQ3 What else can thinking diffractively about the web of more-than-human relations across the different early years settings in one community reveal about the intersection of artmaking and educational justice?

The third and last research question was born out of the everyday reality of the community in the study. A small town of fewer than three thousand people has three different settings that employ artmaking to draw young children out from the streets, to engage them and involve them in organised learning activities. With their artmaking programmes, the settings all aim to help children succeed and thrive in mainstream education. The expanding early childhood initiatives in this particular community mirror the contemporary belief that early intervention provides young children, particularly those experiencing some form of disadvantage, with a better start in life and therefore more educational success in the future (e.g. Themelis & Foster, 2013). Some research studies (Hands, 2010; Temple Adger, 2001) show that schools and families alone, especially in disadvantaged areas, cannot sufficiently help children to succeed academically, and therefore new alliances between schools and community-based organizations that address the specific needs of children in particular localities have been emerging as a result.

The third research question therefore diffracts across the inter and intra-connected, multiple, and intersecting places, objects, people of the three early-years settings in the community, to attend to dynamic links and differentiations. Although different, the settings are intimately connected through not only their geographical placement, similar missions,
and practices but also through their differences. Objects, adults, and children are constantly on the move among these settings; their movement is manifested as presence in one and absence in another, as the director of a family centre states:

“It’s like this, we are all completely different. Every organization is setup differently and has slightly different aims. But the children connect us. What unites us is that we all want the children to do well and be successful. And it doesn’t matter whether they do well in life, at school, or at home, but they need to do and be well. And for that, we are all trying to create the right conditions, even though each one of us is limited in our own particular ways, some of us are limited by law, others money, and others by personnel [...] So, where I see we are definitely connected is the children, even though it is not often that a child attends all the settings. But the reason why we are all doing this, I think, is the same. I think we are all just moving forward in our own lanes.”

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Understanding the dynamics, the differences differing, in/among/around these settings, how the differences “coexist or affect each other over time” (Temple Adger, 2001, p. 24), and most importantly, what intersecting processes beyond social inclusion and exclusion in and around artmaking the dynamic topologies generate, became a central concern of the last question.

8.2 Conceptual framework

To operationalise the research questions, a working terminology of key words and phrases was first developed which aided in engaging with information acquired in the field while also providing clarity over core concepts of this study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The phenomenon under investigation in this study is a network of artmaking events, across different early years settings in one community. Artmaking events consist of particular more-than-human assemblages that are both a process and a product of more-than-human encounters. Such encounters bring about differentiations that (de)territorialise, or settle and unsettle, normative processes in and around artmaking, and create new possibilities for conceptualizing fair and just ways of being together in early years settings. Artmaking events, encounters, and differentiation are the three core concepts that are carefully considered and discussed in the next sections.

8 All data were translated from Czech to English by the author.
8.2.1 Phenomenon: Artmaking events

This study is interested in exploring how processes of social inclusion and exclusion are made and remade through human and more-than-human encounters within artmaking events, and what else these situated, more-than-human, affective relationalities make possible. Artmaking events within which social inclusion and exclusion are (re)enacted, take place across space and time in one community and as such they are situated as well as temporally and spatially distributed. To better understand the possibilities and the capacities of the relational materialities within artmaking events beyond social inclusion and exclusion, this study attempts to attend to the entanglement of artmaking encounters and artmaking events and to the processes they generate beyond social inclusion and exclusion. To start bridging the micro level, the more-than-human, artmaking encounters, and the macro level, the different artmaking events across several early-years settings, this study engages Barker’s (1965, 1968, 1978), concept of behaviour setting, and DeLanda’s (2006; 2016) theory of assemblages. The aim is to start formulating not only which processes relationally define, or territorialise, the boundaries of artmaking events, but most importantly which relational materialities deterritorialise and open up artmaking events to change and new possibilities for enacting fair and just educational relations differently.

Artmaking events can be conceptualised as a behaviour setting, a specific ecological unit that has both structural and dynamic attributes (Barker, 1978). It refers to the interconnection, or assemblage, of place-time-matter. Moreover, an artmaking event, as a behaviour setting, is not only the entanglement of a physical environment and more-than-human encounters in time, but also inherently connected to and inter-dependent with other place-time-things entanglements, that is other artmaking events. Artmaking events, as place-time-matter constellations, are therefore fundamentally connected to each other, and thus cannot be easily changed by the components that are a part of it, as Barker argues (1978). Nevertheless, “because of the interdependence of behaviour settings,” Barker writes (1978), “changes in parts reverberate in unexpected ways through them, and a change in programme may have unforeseeable consequences.” (p.290)

DeLanda (2006; 2016) argues that traditional approaches to understanding social processes that focus only on individuals’ interactions on micro scale, or on social phenomena on the macro scale are reductive, and leave out important entities on a meso scale, such as communities or inter-relational networks. DeLanda (2006) argues that society is multi-scaled and each assemblage generates new assemblages on a different scale. In this study, the
encounters around artmaking, the assemblage of children-adults-objects-place, are therefore viewed as fundamentally interconnected and entangled with other artmaking assemblages across time and space, as well as the assemblage of artmaking events across time and space in the community. Moreover, these assemblages that function on different scales are then in a relation of exteriority, meaning that their relations do not constitute their identity and they are relatively autonomous in respect to the other scales (DeLanda, 2016, p. 126).

This study therefore treats both the more-than-human encounters around artmaking, as well as the artmaking events across the three early years settings, as particular assemblages that are fundamentally connected, interdependent, and co-constitutive of particular processes of social inclusion and exclusion in the community. This means that encounters around artmaking are in a co-constitutive relationship with artmaking events and vice versa. Encounters around artmaking then shape and co-construct artmaking events, but as soon as these emerge they “start acting as a source of limitations and resources for its components” (Delanda, 2006, p. 252). Conceptualizing the network of artmaking events as an assemblage rather than individual activities, the objective is not to compare the settings or their practices. Instead, the objective is to step away from focusing on separate events and entities and attend to the complexity of processes of subjectification, or the becoming of people-objects-place-time, beyond social inclusion and exclusion, produced by “a continuous and largely involuntary process of encounter” across the different settings and their artmaking events in one particular community (Thrift, 2008, p. 7).

Situated, more-than-human encounters are always closely entangled with social structures and vice versa. Barker (1968, 1978) writes that social structures are inherently connected to place-thing-time, the tangible and material, ecological environment that both surrounds and constructs particular behaviour patterns shared by participants in a setting. Barker describes the behaviour patterns as extra-individual behaviour, meaning a behaviour of people as a group. Artmaking, similarly to shopping, playing soccer, or going to church, is one such extra-individual behaviour phenomenon. Artmaking events are therefore bounded entities associated with particular behaviour, or ecological encounters, that are directly linked to particular objects in the setting: brushes are to be painted with rather than placed in a mouth; children are to make rather than talk; papers are to be painted on rather than crumpled; artworks are to be displayed on walls rather than on floors. In this sense, artmaking becomes extra-individual, or more than something that children, objects and
adults do together in a nursery, but as something that many children, objects, adults do regularly across diverse settings.

According to Barker et al. (1968), understanding not only the behaviour of individual members of one community but also the behaviour of people as a group is fundamental for understanding the community; “the worship service, the high school basketball games, and the post office, for example, persist year after year with their unique configurations of behaviour, despite constant changes in the persons involved.” (p.25). Thinking with Barker and eco-behavioural theories (Barker, 1965, 1978), artmaking events can then be regarded as independent of particular persons and instead directly related to particular place-time-matter configuration. According to Barker’s behaviour settings theory (1978), artmaking events do not have a common content or qualities. Artmaking does not represent a uniform type of behaviour where uniform actions are always performed. Instead, it consists of differentiated parts of behaviour (e.g. chalking on arms and hands, drawing superheroes) that have complex qualities related to place, time, and matter.

DeLanda (2016) argues that inquiring about communities or inter-relational networks as entities that have their own properties curbs the tendency to reduce the communities to its members. A property of a community or a network of events in a community is an emergent property that is generated by the encounters of the components within it. This means that relations do not constitute individual identities and instead produce particular properties of the whole, or the properties of the assemblage on a different scale. In this sense, artmaking event is not only a ‘mundane practice’ that organises and arranges encounters among the individual entities within its space (Mulcahy, 2010; Thrift, 2008), but artmaking consists of more-than-human encounters that shape and compose specific properties or processes that either stabilise, that is territorialise, or destabilise, deteritorialise, the artmaking events (DeLanda, 2016).

This study explores the emergent properties of the artmaking events co-produced by artmaking encounters beyond processes of social inclusion and exclusion. Thinking with the Deleuze-Guattarian concept of (de)territorialisation (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 88), or the process of (un)settling normative practices and relations, the study attempts to map and think with the processes that homogenise and stabilise, and therefore territorialise, artmaking events, and the processes that heterogenise and destabilise, and therefore deterritorialise, artmaking events. The aim is to not only open artmaking up to new possibilities for enacting just and fair classrooms differently, but most importantly to open
the possibility for new imaginations and new ways of doing, making, being and becoming-with just and fair educational futures.

8.2.2 Unit: Encounter

The process of an encounter at the heart of this study draws on Barad’s (Juelskjaer & Schwennesen, 2012) concept of intra-action where encounter is an entanglement of interacting agencies in which entities are performed into being. The moments of intra-action are therefore the empirical indicators that translate theoretical concepts into determinate variables or concepts that can be observed or, as Barad (in Kleinman, 2012) writes, “It is through specific agential intra-actions that the boundaries and properties of ‘individuals’ within the phenomenon become determinate and particular material articulations of the world become meaningful” (p.34). A thorough exploration of such moments of agential intra-actions around artmaking pertaining to processes of social inclusion and exclusion is crucial because it is precisely those moments when an ‘agential cut,’ or a production of boundaries of a phenomenon, as Barad (in Kleinman, 2012) proposes, that brings about separation and differentiation, is enacted. An agential cut brought about by specific intra-actions is what determines the properties of entities within a phenomenon, and particular material articulations of social processes at hand become meaningful. Murris (2017) notes that it is through encounters that “the self is named and cut apart from other selves and things” (p.532). Intra-actions, or encounters, are therefore relations of ongoing differentiation in which the ‘other’ is constituted. This study is therefore interested in and attends to more-than-human encounters in which differences are constantly materialised and rematerialised, stabilised and destabilised, and pays attention to how they matter as they produce certain worlds and exclude others (Barad in Kleinman, 2012).

This study focuses on more-than-human encounters in which both humans and more-than-humans engage and co-create in particular ways, and thus become entangled in particular social realities. Differences are made through encounters, and thus social inclusion and exclusion are made through encounters (Barad in Kleinman, 2012). The processes of social inclusion and exclusion in this study are no longer understood as a particular practice or the changing circumstances of socially excluded individuals in relation to mainstream society. Instead, social inclusion and exclusion are relational processes in which barriers, binaries, and particular material-discursive practices are constantly stabilised and destabilised. The analysis is therefore centred around artmaking encounters in which the
becoming and (re)making of artmaking and educational justice materialises through intra-active differentiation.

8.2.3 Pattern: Differentiations

Attending to intra-active differentiations means focusing on how relations of various entities in and around artmaking change and the new connections and commitments they make. Such a focus allows this study to reorient understandings around artmaking and educational justice by extending away from and thinking beyond social inclusion and exclusion. Furthermore, attending to intra-active differentiations allows this study to move away from producing specific, fixed representations of classroom practices. Differentiations precede material-discursive practices that underlie the processes of social inclusion and exclusion and therefore present themselves as an opening, a particular pattern of material reconfigurings within a phenomenon, that reveals the iterative construction and deconstruction of that phenomenon (Barad in Kleinman, 2012). Attending to the differentiations in which bodies have the capacity to affect and be affected at the same time (Haraway, 1992), is to pay careful attention to affective relations as ongoing relations of difference that, as Barad (2010) argues, produce new possibilities. Thinking with Hickey-Moody and Crowley (2010), the conceptualisation of affective relations as micro-political relations that “constitute the beginnings of social change” (p.401) then opens up the possibility of attending to the new becomings of artmaking and educational justice.

Barad’s (2007) agential realist approach to the making of difference manifested in and through intra-actions draws attention to the particular agential cuts in which specific boundaries and possibilities are made and others are not. An agential cut, the moment of intra-active differentiation, therefore, denotes a point in which particular properties of phenomenon are made and others are foreclosed, as observed by Hollin et al. (2017). They argue that the most fundamental contribution of Barad’s agential realism is precisely the focus on both the cuts and the exclusions that these cuts instantiate. What is absent is therefore as important as what comes to be as a result of particular intra-actions. Hollin et al. (2017) argue that adopting Barad’s agential realist approach to understanding a phenomenon means to be interested in more than multiple ontologies, or possible ways of being, but in “conceptualizing the precise moments at which things congeal ‘as they are’ by understanding the processes through which particular material properties emerge and other realities are excluded from being” (p.933). By tracing or attending to agential cuts, or the differences made in intra-actions, a particular pattern of mattering is produced and a
particular ways of becoming together come to matter (Barad in Kleinman, 2012). A pattern then is not a repetitive arrangement representative of a particular stable feature of people, practice or organization, as normally argued (e.g. Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Instead, it is, according to Barad (in Juelskjaer & Schwennesen, 2012), a historical arrangement that makes both the constructive and deconstructive interferences visible.

8.3 Organizing Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Settings</th>
<th>Primary methods</th>
<th>Complementary methods</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fieldnotes</td>
<td>Videos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursery</td>
<td>16 sessions</td>
<td>6 sessions DC* + 360**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 sessions DC</td>
<td>1 session 360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Centre</td>
<td>7 sessions</td>
<td>3 sessions DC</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 session DC+360</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clubhouse</td>
<td>14 sessions</td>
<td>2 sessions 360</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 session DC+360</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1 session DC</td>
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Table 1 Methods and gathered information according to setting
*Digital camera  **360-degree video camera

Observations, recordings, inter-views, photographs, and other documents were stored and organised according to methods within the qualitative data analysis software NVivo (Table 1). After taking stock of all information gathered, fieldnotes and videos were established to be central to answering research questions because they provided an opportunity for a care-full and close engagement with the entangled encounters in and around artmaking and the processes they produce. Inter-views, while significant for building rapport and better understanding of artmaking participants, their community, and culture, provided mostly reflections on past situations and in most instances did not bear on the micro-processes that became central to the inquiry.

Photographs produced the least appropriate information as the stillness of the images stood in a stark contrast to the dynamic encounters that happened around art. An image of a child and a brush depicted only a moment in an encounter – a child holding a
brush, looking down and pointing the tool at a paper. Such an image then lacked the richness of the processes of becoming-together (Braidotti, 2016b). Images were by far the most disconnected from the complex series of micro-encounters that constitute the entanglement between a child and a brush in which the brush rolls to the child’s hand, and the touch calls the child’s attention, which results in the child seizing the brush, dipping it in a blob of paint and observing its fine bristles moving gently across the rough surface of a paper, leaving traces here and there. Photographs and interviews were therefore designated as complementary methods that contextualise and provide a deeper understanding of the information gathered by the primary methods (Robson, 2011).

To finish organizing all the gathered information, and begin the process of familiarisation, all the fieldnotes and interviews were transcribed by the researcher, and all video files and photographs were annotated. Following Atkinson and Hammersley (2007), each of the many video recordings was treated as a document that was indexed and summarised, and only encounters that were directly related to research questions were transcribed. Indeed, Hammersley (2012) argues that “[t]he focus must be on producing relevant and accurate descriptive material with which to try to answer one’s research questions [emphasis added]” because neither the transcripts nor the video will ever exhaust the potential of the gathered information (p.6).

Nonetheless, all the video footage was carefully observed, yet only instances of more-than-human encounters were noted in detail, and only those episodes that caused ‘breakdown in understanding,’ as discussed by Brinkmann (2014) and developed later in this chapter (see 8.5.2 (Wonder)ing-with data), were then transcribed. Indeed, transcribing all data would have been a redundant exercise as many of the encounters were highly repetitive. As a result of this approach, some information may have been overlooked and the findings in this study are therefore not exhaustive. This study therefore does not present a definitive set of truths or prescriptions, instead it attempts to open up to multiplicity that generates new lines of thinking and imagining different ways of being and becoming together in and around artmaking in early-years settings.

8.4 Listening and translating

This study is written in English but different languages, dialects, slang, sounds and non-verbal cues entangled with each other at different points in the study and shape the inquiry (Birbili, 2000). The researcher is a Czech native speaker. Most children and adults in the study spoke
Czech, but some also spoke Roma, English, local dialect, or used non-verbal cues to communicate. Also objects produced sounds, affects and attachments and therefore participated in various verbal and non-verbal encounters in unexpected ways (Gallagher, Kanngieser, & Prior, 2017; Lemonnier, 2012; Tonya, 2019). Listening, writing, and consequently translating all verbal and non-verbal accounts accurately and preserving the ‘conceptual equivalence’ and ‘comparability of meaning’ during translation and data analysis has been an important challenge. Birbili (2000), drawing on Phillips, argues that this is “in absolute terms an unsolvable problem” (p.3). One way to combat these issues when working across different modes of expression is by being “explicit in describing the choices and decisions, translation procedures and the resources used” (p.3). Indeed, thinking with Barad (2007, p. 380):

“Knowing requires differential accountability to what matters and is excluded from mattering.”

The following paragraph therefore details the translation-related decisions, exclusions, inclusion, and problems encountered during fieldwork, analysis, and the writing of the thesis (Temple, 1997).

Going into the field, the objective of the study was to develop care-full listening by becoming attuned to encounters, both verbal (e.g., slang, dialect, home language, or any other languages) and non-verbal (gestures, movements, sounds, silences), and record these in video, sound, and in fieldnotes. The listening developed here, drawing on Bennett et al (2015) was one “that weaves through, around and beyond what is immediately heard, including the unspoken, the articulateness of objects and the listening that comes through participating” (p.7). While adults, both practitioners and parents, around artmaking almost exclusively spoke in Czech, children sometimes used English, slang, dialect, and Roma language not understandable by the researcher to communicate to each other. Drawings were accompanied by English words and phrases that, sometimes, communicated meaning and, other times, were treated as decorative elements. Brushes travelling across papers made swirling sounds and were accompanied by children’s joyful noises that responded to the sound of objects they were engaging with.

The researcher showed interest in the entanglement of languages-sounds-silences and how these are not only generated by people-objects-place but also what they do together and how they matter. Adults and children in turn were eager to share their different expressions, meanings, and translate among languages. In most situations, translations were therefore done directly by those involved in the communication on the spot. Nevertheless,
slang and Roma language were often employed by children to hide the meaning of their discourse from adults, especially teachers, and therefore the researcher respected children’s decisions to not share meaning on several occasions. Adults, children, and objects also used non-verbal cues to engage with each other. Adults nodded or smiled in response to classroom encounters. Some children never engaged with others verbally and only expressed themselves by engaging with objects around them, such as grabbing a pen from underneath the hand of another child, or by looking for tools to work with. The heater made itself known by making gurgling sounds at which point all looked forward to the warmth spilling through the room. Most verbal and non-verbal data were then recorded through Czech language symbols and signs, and only certain frequent sounds, slang, English, and Roma words and phrases, were noted along with their translations.

The complete data set was not translated into English until after data analysis. It was translated during the write-up stage of the thesis to match the language of the written element of this study and to make the thesis accessible to non-Czech speaking audiences. Thus, only data presented in the thesis have been translated from Czech to English by the researcher herself. The raw data remain in the original language. Most translations were made verbatim but where this was not possible a conceptual equivalence or a translation with comparable meaning was used instead (Nurjannah, Mills, Park, & Usher, 2014; Temple, 1997). The ethnographic aspect of the study, long period of time spent in the community and close relationships developed in that time meant that the researcher developed as accurate understandings of verbal and non-verbal behavior as possible (Polkinghorne, 2005).

Nevertheless, translations are never completely accurate, and some translation-decision problems may be “unsolvable,” as Phillips (1960, p. 291) writes. Several techniques were therefore employed to reduce translation related problems, namely, consulting translations with English native speakers and bilingual speakers, such as colleagues (Birbili, 2000), and discussing ambiguity in meaning with participants themselves, a strategy closely related to a respondent validation approach (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The aim of this study, however, goes beyond mere representation of meaning, and instead extends towards a more embodied approach to inquiry in which the unfamiliarity with different languages, the challenges of translating, and the difficulty of listening beyond human voice open the possibility for a better attunement to place-time-people-object assemblages. It also allows for a more expanded attention to which verbal and non-verbal encounters are made to matter and which are not that further reorients and expands inquiry into processes of social inclusion and exclusion in and around artmaking. Thus, drawing on Atkinson (2014) and
Hammersley (2018), the accuracy of what is being communicated in and around artmaking is secondary to how being and making around artmaking is co-constructed and what else it makes think-able or possible.

8.5 Analysing <-- Sense-making

This study engages sense-making as a particular approach to data analysis as it expands the range of ways in which an anti-anthropocentric inquiry engages with and responds to the more-than-human encounters in early years settings (Huuki & Renold, 2016; Merrell, 2016; Trafí-Prats & Caton, 2020). It has been argued and is now commonly understood that focusing on language limits inquiry, while making sense of a range of modes in relation to each other allows for a more complex understanding of classroom interactions (Jewitt, 2008; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). Thus, to make sense of a phenomenon, is to attend not only to what one sees or hear but also to what one feels, to immerse oneself completely in the event of place (Massey, 2005). A new materialist way of knowing centres around senses or embodied ways of being and knowing, as Barad (2003) observes:

“Practices of knowing and being are not isolatable, but rather they are mutually implicated. We do not obtain knowledge by standing outside of the world; we know because “we” are of the world” (p.829).

Sensing therefore means employing different bodily sense and attending to different modes of expression to register difference and attune to the boundaries of a phenomenon before its normative meaning can truly be problematised (MacRae, 2020; Trafí-Prats & Caton, 2020). Sensing is a mode of attention and a way of knowing through affective engagement of bodies. The study draws on a body of literature that turns to Deleuzian notion of affect (Deleuze, 1988) and positions affective relations as central to ways of knowing (Coleman & Osgood, 2019; A. Hickey-Moody & Crowley, 2010; MacRae, 2020; Mulcahy, 2012; Springgay, 2019; Steward, 2007). Affect is then a capacity to affect and be affected that is produced, flows and intensifies through, across and between bodies (Clough, 2009; Massumi, 1995). More than looking and listening is therefore employed in this study. Felt and embodied understandings of encounters contribute to the organization of thought and directed the particular line of inquiry during the analysis in this study. Inquiring by doing more than
looking and listening, requires trusting own senses as feeling is also knowing. It requires the researcher to learn to stay with the trouble of inquiring and thinking with others, as Haraway (2016) calls for, and paying attention to more than what is given or readily apparent. Sense-making in this study is therefore a practice of following the various movements of difference that during the inquiry elicit “curiosity, horror, fascination, disgust, and monstrosity,” as MacLure (2013, p. 229) writes. It is also an inquiry that keeps coming back to these “fragile territories” (MacLure, 2013, p. 173) in order to stay with these moments and (re)think, that is both think and rethink, what more-than is happening there (Bridges-Rhoads & Van Cleave, 2017).

8.5.1 Sensing boundaries

To start inquiring about What processes are enacted in and around artmaking in the early years settings beyond social inclusion and exclusion and what they do? the initial data analysis is framed as a boundary sensing practice. Barad writes that to sense the boundaries of a phenomenon is to attend to the relata-within-phenomena that emerge through agential cuts between subject and object within an encounter (Barad, 2007, p. 140). In this way, the analysis becomes a boundary-drawing practice that, as Barad develops, pays attention to specific material (re)configurings of the world, or what comes to matter. Sensing the boundaries of artmaking events then means care-fully mapping the processes that come to matter and what they do. Lenz Taguchi (2016) describes the practice of mapping as a creative practice that transposes and transforms dominant discourses by putting “multiple voices in action” and creating “a field of forces” (p.37). The initial analysis in this study is therefore a creative and generative process of finding new connections and new ways of becoming with instances of phenomena. Finally, thinking with Deleuze and Guattari (1988) and DeLanda (2006), the aim is to start mapping and understanding which processes territorialise artmaking events and fix their meaning and which processes deterritorialise them and re-make them.

Drawing on St. Pierre and Jackson (2014), not all data are equal and worthy of analysis and that is why theory must be used to determine what counts as data. The first steps in making sense of the instances of phenomena in this study is therefore led by attending to and highlighting the boundaries enacted within the phenomenon of artmaking events. Sensing the boundaries of a phenomenon means listening, stopping, analysing, responding, assembling, removing, including, interfering, drawing, (re)naming and (re)writing. This step leads to (un)familiarization with data and creates opportunities and
conditions, as Clark (2019) describes, for “meetings among ideas, matters, and objects that may be logically divided, and it produces effects from their relationalities that are unpredictable and risky” (p.123). By going repeatedly over data, gathering, connecting, moving, crafting, and composing, the analysis generates initial understandings and topologies of various articulations of processes that come to matter and become determinate beyond social inclusion and exclusion around artmaking. Important relationships and constitutions that speak to the nature of the processes as homogenous and heterogenous become materialised and acquire meaning through the boundary sensing practice rather than being established as a framework for analysis beforehand (Patton, 2002).

8.5.2 (Wonder)ing-with data

Drawing on MacLure (2013), the practice of (wonder)ing-with data developed in this study brings attention to the instances of phenomena that cause, “breakdown in understanding” (Brinkmann, 2014, p. 722). Entangling with instances of phenomena, the mutual affective relatoriality, as MacLure (2013; 2011) writes, produces a particular data-researcher assemblage, in which not only the researcher looks to the instances of phenomena but also the instances of phenomena reach out and open the inquiry onto the new or the unanticipated. This is similarly argued by Brinkman (2014) who writes that researchers need to attend to instances of phenomena that make one ‘stumble’ or ‘feel uncomfortable.’ Thus, sensing and drawing boundaries is followed by (wonder)ing-with data and brings to light instances of phenomena that, in Sommerville’s (2016) words, “command attention precisely because they defy explanation” (p.1163).

Such an approach to analysis then expands thinking beyond what is obvious and directs inquiry towards the im/possible to develop the second research question: How can inquiry into what appear impossible reorient thinking about educational justice in and around artmaking in early years settings? Instead of reducing or synthesising the instances of the phenomena, mapping them “across differently entangled spaces and times,” as Barad (in Kleinman, 2012, p. 34) suggests, becomes a generative exercise that brings attention to what is unexpected. Mapping reveals, thinking with Haraway(1992), “new topographies of impossible but all-too-real present, in order to find an absent, but perhaps possible, other present” (p.295). (Wonder)ing-with data then reorients inquiry towards the seemingly im/possible processes of artmaking events, where subjectivities become undone.
To understand the processes that make the impossible possible and how they can be harnessed towards new ways of thinking about the intersection of artmaking and educational justice, this study turns to quantum physics and engages with the quantum tunnelling paradox to answer the second research question (Barad, 2007). Drawing on Mazzei (2017), and thinking with Quantum tunnelling theory as a concept challenges classical behaviour and reorients thinking around what is possible. It seeks to explain that entities separated by a barrier can appear next to each other without any external forces acting on them to cross that barrier. The quantum tunnelling paradox then not only provides a new insight into the encounters through which processes around artmaking events materialise, but it also challenges traditional ways of inquiry. De Freitas and Sinclair (2018) argue for the quantum turn in social sciences and humanities as they propose that thinking with quantum theories presents an alternative model of reasoning that embraces uncertainty as fundamental to a phenomenon, and as such addresses non-classical behaviour and complexity. The concept of quantum tunnelling in this study is therefore not a mere metaphor or a model of particular encounters; rather, it is a particular logic or a method of reasoning, in which what is deemed impossible is not only possible, but most importantly it is understood and conceptualised as a fundamental process of life. Quantum tunnelling shows the possibility of impossibility and vice versa (Barad, 2010, p. 248) by bringing attention to the fact, as Trixler (2013) explains, that:

“[U]nder certain conditions elementary particles, nucleons or atoms are, to negotiate the obstacle of a potential barrier (which is, from the classical point of view, a forbidden area for a particle) without having the energy to overcome it” (p.1758).

Thinking with quantum tunnelling theory is therefore an “inventive provocation” (Barad in Dolphijn & Van der Tuin, 2012, p. 50), that not only helps to imagine just and fair encounters in early years settings differently, it is also a call to invention and new modes of thinking for an anti-anthropocentric inquiry.

Engaging with Barad’ approach to quantum theories (2010) also allows this study to start attuning to more-than-human encounters as multiscale events. To attend to the macroscopic scale, the socio-material phenomenon, through microscopic scale of quantum event, removes the analysis further away from human-centred inquiry towards an anti-anthropocentric analysis. Nevertheless, quantum approach to macroscopic phenomena is neither straightforward nor unproblematic (Hollin et al., 2017; Pinch, 2011; Tsing, 2015).
Hollin et al. (2017) argue that there are several issues presented by “jumping scales,” one of which is the uncertainty that the same rules that govern the quantum sphere rule also the macro sphere (p.925).

To Barad, the entanglement of micro and macro is, however, a fundamental, ethical, ontological position in which differences or binaries do not pre-exist, they materialise, they come to matter as result of particular discourses. Barker (1978) has indeed argued what is echoed here, that this is precisely what is needed: “We need a science, for which we as yet have no name, that stands with respect to molar behaviour, as the physics of light and sound stands with respect to vision and hearing”(p.30). Indeed, Hollin et al. (2017) do not argue against jumping scales per se, but argue that the different scales do not have a harmonious existence by which they emphasise “the frictions experienced when jumping scale and urge a consideration of what is lost during the jump” (p.925).

This friction, Hollin et al. (2017) describe, is here approached through Braidotti’s (2016a) neovitalist affirmative thinking that, in Braidotti’s own words, “indicates the process of transmuting negative passions into productive and sustainable praxis, which doesn’t deny the reality of horrors, violence and destruction of our times but proposes a different way of dealing with them” (p. 51). Affirmative thinking is generative and allows thinking of ‘friction’ as a possibility rather than a problem reorienting attention towards what is gained by the friction rather than what is lost. Thus, this study, drawing on Barad (in Juelskjaer & Schwennesen, 2012) argues that what is gained by linking the micro scale with the macro scale is a new frame of thinking about encounters as events always becoming co-constituted by other events in which specific material relations of the ongoing differentiating of the world come to matter.

8.5.3 Diffraction
The concept of diffraction as a method, employed in this study, was first introduced by Haraway (1992) as a critical response to the widely used practice of ‘reflexivity’ in a search for an alternative practice that does not seek to replicate or reproduce, nor develop fixed, authentic, positions, or capture the essence of phenomena. Reflexivity, grounded in representationalism, urges self-reflection which stems from the Cartesian idea that the self is an independent, knowing individual who has a direct access to their own thoughts and representations. In contrast, diffraction creates interferences that aid in arriving at something new, unfitting, and unexpected instead of displacing “the same elsewhere, setting up worries about copy and original and the search for the authentic and really real,” as
Haraway (Haraway, 1997, p. 16) argues (for more discussion see 7.3 Reflexivity <-> Diffraction). To make sense of instances of phenomena through diffraction in this study, meant to interact and be interacted with, to “be in critical, deconstructive relationality [...] – as the means of making potent connections” (Haraway, 1992, p. 299). To analyse diffractively, was to position oneself in the midst of and in relation to one’s own data, to be moved by data while moving together (Lenz Taguchi, 2012; Mazzei, 2014). Moreover, to analyse diffractively, as Mazzei (2014) writes, is to move beyond coding, “to move away from habitual normative readings [...] toward the production of readings that disperse and disrupt thought” (p.743). Jackson and Mazzei (2012) propose:

“Coding takes us back to what is known, not only to the experience of our participants but also to our own experience as well; it also disallows a repetition that results in the production of the new, a production of different knowledge. A focus on the macro produced by the codes might cause us to miss the texture, the contradictions, the tensions [...]” (p.12)

Moving beyond coding therefore allowed this study to resist representing what the artmaking participants ‘really mean,’ and instead allowed for an exploration of what else happens when children, adults and material environments encounter and open up to one another. Moreover, it dispersed the inquiry in different directions across time and space allowing this study to think-with the different settings, artmaking events, participants, and objects to answer the final research question: What else can thinking diffractively about the web of more-than-human relations across the different early years settings in one community reveal about the intersection of artmaking and educational justice?

This study engaged diffractive analysis not only to inquire about how the different processes-in-phenomena around artmaking get made, how they are constructed and deconstructed, but also how they matter within the early years settings (Barad, 2007; Barad in Kleinman, 2012; Lenz Taguchi, 2012). Haraway (1992) shows that a diffraction pattern does not point out differences. Instead, it points to “where the effects of difference appear” (Haraway, 1992, p. 300). Barad then extends on Haraway by noting that analysing diffractively is “responding to the details and specificities of relations of difference and how they matter” (Barad, 2007, p. 71) and “thinking with and through differences rather than pushing off of or away from and solidifying difference as less than” (Barad in Juelskjaer & Schwennesen, 2012, p. 16). Diffractive reading thus provides a new way of thinking about
productive, im/possible encounters as situated across time, space, and place as entangled rather than isolated.

The significance of diffraction, as Hollin et al. (2017) emphasise, does not just lie in imagining new ways of being and becoming but also in “conceptualizing the precise moments at which things congeal ‘as they are’ by understanding the processes through which particular material properties emerge and other realities are excluded from being” (p.933). Thus, Barad brings in focus not merely the dominant processes but most importantly those which have been marginalised or excluded. “Constitutive exclusions” to Barad (2010) are then “the conditions of possibility for openness, for reworking im/possibilities” (p.268). It is precisely those excluded processes that this study is interested in as these potentially contest and challenge normalised understandings of educational justice in and around artmaking in early-years settings, and thus offer possible directions for new imaginations. Such readings surface interferences, disruptions, and new openings that are enacted within the normative environments of artmaking events. Attending to the iterative reworking of possibilities within more-than-human relations and the new reconfiguring they enact then offers an opportunity, in Barad’s words, to “repattern world-making practices” (Barad in Juelskjaer & Schwennesen, 2012, p. 16).

8.6 Data <--> Instances of phenomena

Attending to data through sense-making and feeling shifts understanding of what data are. In a new materialist way of thinking, neither data nor the researcher pre-exist one another (Barad, 2007). Data and researcher are constituted through a “mutual ‘affection,’” as MacLure (2013) explores further. Therefore, they cannot be thought of as separate entities. Instead, they form a particular entangled relation. Brinkmann (2014) suggests that data cannot be thought of as fixed, stable entities which are ‘given’ or ‘taken’ as they are always co-produced and co-constructed. To that end, Brinkmann (2014) quotes Dewey:

“[A]s data they are selected from this total original subject-matter which gives the impetus to knowing; they are discriminated for a purpose: —that, namely, of affording signs or evidence to define and locate a problem, and thus give a clue to its resolution” (p.721).
To make sense of a phenomenon, lesser focus is placed on data as singular characteristics of a particular group or event, and more attention is paid to data as interrelated ‘instances of phenomena’ (Brinkmann, 2014), or an association of events of becoming together.
9 MAPPING: Exploring the boundaries of a phenomenon

“The life is lived in a zone in which earthly substances and aerial media are brought together in the constitution of beings which, in their activity, participate in weaving the textures of the land. Here, organisms figure not as externally bounded entities but as bundles of interwoven lines of growth and movement, together constituting a meshwork in fluid space.”

- T. Ingold (2008)

The following three findings and discussion chapters (9, 10, 11) that follow are less of a process of discovery and more of a process of thinking-with data, or ‘instances of phenomena,’ (see 4.3 Analysis ↔ Sense-making) as well as thinking-with theories and concepts that emerge in response to such a process of inquiry. This chapter therefore does not intend to capture, document, or represent a phenomenon. Instead, it engages in what Mazzei (2014) calls a “spreading of thoughts and knowledge” (p. 744). The first research question, What processes are enacted in and around artmaking in the early years settings beyond social inclusion and exclusion and what they do?, was formed in response to increasing criticism of over-generalised claims that the arts, and visual arts specifically, have a positive effect on people and communities that have been marginalised (Guetzkow, 2002), as discussed in the Literature review chapter (2.2 Artmaking and social inclusion). To think beyond the notion that visual arts are implicitly good for people (Hetland, Winner, & Veenema, Shirley Sheridan, 2013; O’Sullivan et al., 2018; Ritók & Alapítván, 2012), this chapter explores and develops an in-depth inquiry into the processes that come to matter as a result of more-than-human encounters around artmaking, and thus moves beyond the focus on the effects of the arts on individuals. The aim is to map processes that are enacted in and around artmaking in early years settings beyond social inclusion and exclusion.

To develop a richer understanding of the processes enacted within artmaking events, going repeatedly over data, gathering, connecting, moving, crafting, and composing data, theories, and concepts in this section lead to a particular entanglement and sensing of boundaries of artmaking events in the three early years settings. The first findings chapter therefore engages in sensing the limits or, as Barad (in Kleinman, 2012) writes, in “sensing [...] the edges” of artmaking events, not to define them, but to trouble them and think differently about them in response (Barad in Kleinman, 2012, p. 81). The sensing here refers to “all the different ways of touching and being in touch and sensing the differences and entanglements from within” the phenomenon (Barad in Kleinman, 2012, p. 77). Three separate sections, di/verging, al/tering, and weaving come together in the discussion of the
findings. They propose different ways of thinking-with data about the processes of artmaking events as multidirectional and multidimensional movements that (de)territorialise the phenomenon and through which both normative and non-normative classroom practices emerge. The discussion is then disrupted by three separate cuts that enact both reflective and diffractive exercise and problematise established ways of thinking about how artmaking events are enacted. Finally, the sensing of boundaries brings to light new topologies of the im/possible where processes that cause a break-down in understanding are located. These localities are attended to care-fully as, it is argued here, they present an opportunity to explore educational justice differently.

9.1 Homogenising/heterogenising processes

9.1.1 Findings

Integration and inclusion

The early years settings in this study were very dynamic and diverse places, and therefore it took a while to become accustomed to and become a part of the flow of their daily activities. Nevertheless, from initial observations, many processes within them were quite repetitive and sustained normative practices. Practitioners decided and set up new artmaking activities each day and invited children to participate in them. Children participated in the activities by following practitioners’ guidance while laughing and chitchatting, while others struggled and fought to overcome a range of obstacles, such as accessing materials, dealing with their siblings, or even getting a spot at the artmaking table. Parents contributed to the smooth running of artmaking activities and did not often interfere with the organization or structure of the activities. Objects were carefully stored and treated as valuable, rare resources necessary to stimulate the development of children. Thus, the initial phase of observations, during which moving, connecting, and becoming-with the environment of the settings became central to inquiry, quite quickly brought attention to integration and inclusion as the core processes that play an important role in the artmaking activities.

Integration and inclusion were both processes during which differences in directions, views, interests, or methods were to a different degree supressed by various actors, such as teachers, objects, and even children themselves, to preserve the flow and efficiency of artmaking events. Integration was almost exclusively expected of objects, children, and their parents. A conversation excerpt with the family centre practitioner, for example, shows how important was the integration of parents into the classroom artmaking practice and how it was insisted upon and enacted during each visit:
Researcher: So, the parent is supposed to observe you and do what you do with the children?
Practitioner 1: [Nods] That way they know that they have to change activities rather than just do the same thing with them all the time. They learn to work with their children, and do things with them, pay attention to them. Because when a mother is cooking, she can engage her children in it, no?
R: Sure. But what do you do when the parent does not become involved? How do you try to involve them?
P1: I really try to pull them into the activity because, I say all the time, I am not here to entertain their children. The whole programme is about teaching them how to work with their children and to do things with their children. So, for example, there was [this one mother] who when she started, she always sat apart but I always told her right away ‘Come here. You will be working with us.”
...

P1: What else are these parents here for. Then this programme would be more like an afterschool club. Then the parents would not learn anything. So I think it is quite alright when we are doing colours that I give [the parents] some things to take home, to learn colours at home, and practice with their kids. Not that they come here for an hour, and they think the children will be able to participate.
...

R: Was it difficult to encourage parents to become involved in this way?
P1: No. Later, not anymore. It happened gradually; you know. I always said, when I used to have this one large group coming in, I broke them up into groups and told the mothers ‘Moms will be taking part. You will do this, and you will be here. And I will move among you.’ So they knew they had to since I divided the work up.
...

R: About the parents, can you see that they know [the materials and objects] and are therefore able to help their children, or do you see that they also do not know these things much and that is perhaps why they do not get involved [in helping their children make art]?
P1: No, they don’t know.

[O_aud_2019-03-21_a]

The exchange between the practitioner and the researcher shows that in the family centre parents were expected to work with their children, assist them, and scaffold their learning, and little attention was paid to whether parents themselves have the particular knowledge,
experience, ability, or time to do so. The practitioners and the settings were focused on integrating parents into a quite tightly framed conception of ‘a parent’ who regularly works, engages with, and pays attention to their children individually to help them develop preschool skills specifically. Most parents in the community were not able to conform to or fit the narrow conceptualization of parenting and were therefore viewed as having a deficit and regarded as needing help or needing to be taught to become ‘good’ parents. Integration was therefore a process of repetition of the same and erasure of difference that led to the maintenance of a very specific, deficit conceptualization of parenting and preservation of normative behaviour in and around artmaking.

During inclusive processes children’s emerging differences, such as different ways of engaging with tools or different needs, were recognised, but they were also often treated as a deficit or a ‘gap’ that must be overcome for a child to become the same as others, driven by developmental concerns and expected outcomes. For example, to ensure that everyone works the same and produces the same outcomes, such as a painting of a cloud, the nursery teachers limited the tools they provided children with. They only gave children one type of blue paint to paint with and traced the shape of a cloud on the paper of children whom they deemed ‘less able’ to make a ‘proper’ cloud themselves. Many processes acted towards preservation of normative structure of the artmaking activities. The following exchange, for example, shows that despite some children critically thinking about the colour of clouds and the type of tool best suitable for that (blue or white pencil), they are quickly brought back in line with the programme of drawing blue clouds:

A boy picks up blue pencils provided on the table to draw his cloud: “But clouds are white” he exclaims looking at the sky outside the window.
Another boy next to him looks up from his paper: “No, no, they are blue.”
A girl chips in: “They are blue” she confirms.
The boy still looking out of the window: “No, no, they are white!”
Another girl enters: “They are blue and white.”

[M_obs_2018-09-17]
The following observations at the nursery setting and a conversation excerpt with a teaching assistant illustrate how inclusion is enacted in case of two boys9 with additional needs. The conversation with the teaching assistant highlights the difficulties in enacting inclusion that arises out of ‘othering’ and a deficit discourse in which children to be included in artmaking activities are labelled as ‘less able’ and in need of help and assistance:

Two boys who were assessed as needing additional support to be able to participate, learn, and follow the early years curriculum had a teaching assistant who followed them throughout the day. However, in order to help the boys to participate, or rather finish their projects, in this case during artmaking, the teaching assistant often drew the boys away from the main artmaking table and sat with them at a separate table. To provide a close assistance, which often meant helping the boys to reproduce images requested by the practitioners, the teaching assistant sat so closely next to the boys that her body posed as a large physical barrier that prevented any other interactions with both peers and teachers from taking place.

Researcher: You often bring the children to a different table. In what ways does it help you or them? Is it better than working around the main activity table?
Practitioner 3: I suppose it is good to do it fifty-fifty. I often take them away because, when we sit together with others, the other children are constantly requiring my attention and then I don’t have as much time to pay attention to [the boys] even though they need it. I will be also taking them out of the classroom so that they can learn to focus on work. They cannot concentrate for long. Outside of classroom, it could be better. Though when we just sat outside, I was not able to keep them there for long because I noticed how much [one of the boys] wants to go back.

Both othering and preoccupation with outcomes, led the practitioner to separate the two boys from their peers. She always set them at a separate artmaking table or out of the classroom away from their peers, and even her own body sometimes served as a barrier that

9 While this study acknowledges and respects every child’s right for gender self-identification that is expressed as a spectrum rather than a binary, the traditional language of gender binary is used in the findings section to reflect the strong emphasis on stereotypical notions of gender binary in the three settings because it has fundamental impacted the framing of the classroom relations and ways of being and working around artmaking in these settings.
prevented rather than enlivened encounters around artmaking. Inclusion, much like integration, then did not necessarily improve classroom relationships, nor did it introduce new, more just ways of being and becoming together. Sometimes, as in the case described above, integration and inclusion even led to exclusion. Both integration and inclusion territorialised artmaking events through repetitive enactments of normative discourse and offered no insight into productive, breakthrough encounters that bring about educational justice in and around artmaking in the settings.

**Exclusion and receptiveness**

Despite the dominant presence of homogenising processes that stabilised and territorialise artmaking events, some processes nevertheless diverged, became non-normative and hence opened up new possibilities. Further observations and attention to encounters that generated integration and inclusion also spotlighted in contrast the more subtle and less frequent but equally important moments of exclusion and receptiveness. While exclusion was a process of closing off to and from others, receptiveness was instead enacted as a particular openness to others. Both exclusion and receptiveness were not often immediately ‘visible’ processes, instead manifested most noticeably during prolonged encounters. The following example highlights how, for example, exclusion was often enacted by sustaining relations lacking in response rather than being a volitional action of an individual:

A young girl diagnosed with special needs joined the class to make an Easter wreath. She was given a seat and materials which allowed her to begin her work of tracing egg-shapes onto colourful papers. Her progress was slow compared to others, but she was working and seemed to be happy with her participation despite the lack of attention from practitioners. At some point, the lead practitioner called on her assistant to help the girl cut out the eggs.

Practitioner: How is it going? Ok?
Girl: Yeah.
Practitioner: The assistant will help you cut them out if you like?
Girl: Sure.
Practitioner to Assistant: Here. Sit here. Just cut out a few more eggs. [She] is capable of doing it on her own but you can help her to make the wreath pretty.
[The assistant sits far apart from the girl she ought to help and begins cutting eggs out.]
Assistant to Girl: I will cut them out and you can then glue them.
Girl: [Nods in agreement]

The girl lays down scissors she picked up to cut with. She then patiently waits while engaging with the project by touching objects around her, chatting with others, and looking at the assistant absorbed by cutting. The assistant finishes the eggs and finally returns the wreath to the girl but instead of letting her glue or engage her in gluing together as promised, the assistant glues all the eggs onto her wreath on her own and finishes the project without ever involving the girl again.

[O_vid_2019-04-18]

The exclusion described here starts as a process of inclusion. The artmaking event is open to children of different ages and with diverse needs. Several adults are present to assist. A young girl is seated among ribbons, scissors, and paper which makes her visibly excited. She touches all the materials and observes others at work, smiling. As she is working, however, the lead practitioner becomes preoccupied with the outcome of the girl’s work. The worry is that the girl may not be able to finish her wreath and bring it home with her. The concern for the outcome being the same for all rather than for the artmaking itself, the emergent relations, or the atmosphere of the event, pushes the practitioner to ask another adult to assist the girl. The new assistant, despite her best intentions, however, removes the wreath from under the hands of the girl and finishes it on her own. The adult merely looks up from time to time to assure the girl that the wreath will be beautiful, and she will be able to take it home. The girl participates in the event in her own way, nevertheless she does not get to make or engage with her wreath until the very end. She is therefore not excluded from the artmaking event, but she is excluded from making a Christmas wreath.

Much like exclusion also receptiveness was most often observed during extended encounters when teachers took the time to work with artmaking tools, speak with children, and stay in one place without walking away or doing something else, or when children held, turned, rolled, and experimented with tools they did not know and found interesting. Unlike exclusion, receptiveness was, however, an encounter in which participants opened up to the differences of others and responded to them. Receptiveness and openness to others led to further encounters rather than disengagement and exclusion. Moreover, receptiveness extended relations and brought participants together. How receptiveness was enacted is demonstrated in the following observation in which the drawing of princesses, a practitioner and children come into a relationship of response. The encounter
starts with children asking the practitioner to draw for them, which she does while chatting with them about her own passion for drawing princesses. The relationship of response among the drawing, practitioner, and children led not only to new, intimate relations among them but also to new, improved relations among the children themselves:

Children are decorating paintings of carps in today’s activity. At the main artmaking table, children are embellishing their carp paintings with golden marker. At the peripheral table, children are asked to draw fish scales on a print-out of an outline of a carp. Two girls finished work at the main table and moved on to the peripheral table to finish the other carp exercise. At the peripheral table, they are joined by a boy who observes them for a while and tries to engage with them by looking closely into their paper and then flipping a small toy around the table. The toy lands on the drawing of a girl in a red dress which makes her unhappy and she throws it back at the boy with a frown. The boy then asks the teacher to provide him with a carp outline and begins to draw along with the girls. When the girls finish, they take out additional white sheets of paper to draw as they like. The girl in the red dress turns to the teaching assistant:

Girl 1 [to teaching assistant]: “Can you draw us a princess?”
Teaching assistant: [Nods] “inaudible”

The teaching assistant begins to draw an outline of a princess while chatting with the girl. The practitioner reveals her interest in drawing princesses while the girl praises every line the teaching assistant makes. The interaction between the teaching assistant, the drawing, and the girl is generating excitement. Other children are coming to see what is happening. The boy sitting across from them finishes his carp and moves over next to them.

Boy 1 [to teaching assistant]: “Ms., would you draw a king?”
Teaching assistant: “I don’t know how yet. I would need to first practice it a few times at home.”

The teaching assistant then draws a princess for the boy instead. The boy sits right next to the teacher and their hands touch lightly as he observes her every move carefully and reclines over her drawing with interest. Suddenly, his hands begin to move shadowing the teaching assistant’s gestures as she draws the crown and the hands of the princess. Finally, the drawing is done, and the boy grabs it eagerly. He then joins the girl in a red skirt in colouring the image. They are sitting there silently for a while when suddenly they both look up. The girl looks into the boy’s paper, and he looks into hers. They seem content.
Later, the boy still colouring his picture attempts to sharpen one of the pencils, but the pencil sharpener falls down and all the pencil bits spill all over the table, seat, and floor. The boy seems distressed looking at the practitioners while sweeping the bits up quickly with his hands. The blond girl in the red skirt steps in. She brings a dustpan and brush and helps the boy sweep the bits to clean up before anyone else finds out.

[M_obs_2018-12-19, M_vid_2018-12-19_a-d]

In the observation a boy and a toy are engaging with a girl drawing fish scales at the peripheral artmaking table. Their intrusive presence is however not received well, and they are being pushed away. When the teacher is asked to sit at the table with the children and draw a princess for them, tender relationships emerge. The encounter among the teaching assistant, princess drawing, colouring, boy, and girl is non-normative and heterogeneous as it produces not only drawing but also extends beyond drawing. The event produces moments of intimacy, i.e. chatting, touching, praising, and helping. It draws other children from the main artmaking table towards the peripheral artmaking table. The participants and their roles are changing as they are responding to each other. The teacher is drawing, and her drawing is revealing more about her as a person and as a child. The encounter results in a warm and friendly exchange and better relationships among the children themselves who are now helping each other to clean up messy tables. Both exclusion and receptiveness disrupt, challenge, and deterritorialise artmaking events through an enactment of difference. Exclusion, however, prevents further encounters, while receptiveness leads to more, new, diverse encounters that draw attention and connect to others across artmaking tables and towards new productive ways of being and becoming together in around artmaking in early years settings.

9.1.2 Discussion: Di/verging

The initial analysis brought attention to the emergent processes of integration, inclusion, exclusion, and receptiveness. During integration and inclusion, behaviour in the setting was conforming to normative expectations and therefore territorialised routine practices that promoted internal homogeneity. During exclusion and receptiveness difference was enacted and resulting behaviour differed from the usual, normative behaviour in and around artmaking. Exclusion and receptiveness led to disruption of routine, deterritorialisation of artmaking event, and therefore to internal heterogeneity (Figure 5). The initial observed processes spoke strongly to the axis of same-different.
How differences are made within encounters therefore initially aligned with a social inclusion/exclusion discourse framed around the notions of ‘Othering’ and difference (Foucault, 1977) in which ‘the Other’ is constructed as fundamentally different and requiring disciplining and control to become acceptable or accepted. To become the same meant to become ‘acceptable’ (Jaffe-Walter, 2017), ‘the same as others’ (Abrams, Hogg, & Marques, 2004), and lead to internal homogeneity, or, drawing on Guattari (1995), territorializing force relations.

The findings here resonate with Fretwell (2021) who writes that also in the UK parenting support services function around an increasingly politicised conception of a ‘good parent’ and ‘good parenting.’ This universalizing discourse in practice not only shifts responsibility for social mobility and social problems onto individual parents, but it also maintains a deficit construction of families from disadvantaged communities. Similarly, observations made by Machovcová (2017) reveal that, to Czech teachers, a successfully integrated child is a child that is “stripped off their ethnic characteristics” (p.99), meaning a child that conforms to normative ideals which deepen regulation in and of their life. Rather than generating harmony and cohesion, or positive relationships, as it is often argued (European Commission, 2011), integration alluded to practices of what Jaffe-Walter (2017) describes as coercive assimilation that insist on sameness requiring participants to fit in and conform to expected behaviour. Similarly, inclusion was framed around the importance of sameness, specifically around the importance of achieving the same outcomes (Scheurich et al., 2017). Such processes that participate in and co-construct normative discourses maintained by national policies and neoliberal agendas, as Osgood et. al (2013) write, lead to the repetition of the same and to the erasure of difference establishing a discursive foundation for territorialisation of classroom practices.

Exclusion and receptiveness, on the other hand, were enactments of difference and led to transgressions beyond the boundaries of what is accepted, beyond what is deemed ‘normal’ (Edgeworth & Santoro, 2015). Exclusion and receptiveness created greater
heterogeneity and brought attention to the possibilities of deterritorialising force relations in and around artmaking activities. Manifesting as exclusion and receptiveness, encounters that generated difference challenged normative, routine practices in and around artmaking. However, only receptiveness resulted in continuous reconfiguration of artmaking events while exclusion merely temporarily disrupted the event, and thus led to disengagement or eventual return to normative classroom practice. Receptiveness thus became fundamental to understanding the processes of social inclusion and exclusion differently because it brought attention to the unexpected, new, different relations constantly forming and reforming through the process of differentiation. The notion of di/verging processes then became an important signifier of how artmaking events are made and lived, as it brought together both the processes that are apart or diverge from the norm, as signified by the prefix di-, meaning ‘apart’, and those processes that tend towards the norm as indicated by the suffix -verg, meaning to ‘tend toward’ or ‘turn to’ (Etymonline.com). Moreover, the process of di/verging also suggests particular movement towards and away from normative classroom practices and shows processes in and around artmaking as iterative, ongoing, and in-movement (Barad, 2003).

9.1.3 Cut: Analysis

Before inquiring further about processes enacted in and around artmaking activities, the analytical practice in this study was revisited in order to develop a richer, multidimensional understanding of the processes in and around artmaking that would contribute to a more nuanced understanding how artmaking events beyond inclusion and exclusion. First, to interrogate tacit assumptions and engage critically with practice, Fook and Gardner’s (2012) critical reflection was employed to “unsettle” and “rework” both ideas and actions (p.7). As Fook and Gardner (2012) suggest, several critical events were chosen among recorded observations, and an interrogation of these events was conducted through various theories that came out of discussions with the supervisory team, colleagues, and previous work. This approach created “a space for different and contradictory views” (Fook & Gardner, 2012, p. 7).

Thinking with Hellman and Lind’s (2017) methodology of visual invention provided new ways of expanding inquiry beyond normative, interactional models of classroom encounters and brought attention to “uncertain events” (p. 219). Visual invention encourages new ways of noticing, feeling, acting, and becoming as a core processes when producing an expansive way of thinking. It encourages employing more senses beyond visual
observation to inquire about phenomena. Moreover, it encourages a movement between concrete, situated observations and reflective thoughts on what is becoming possible within and through events. Navigating one’s own understanding of the classroom processes and what came to matter during those processes in the setting therefore played a vital role in shaping initial observations and analysis.

During initial observations, attention was given mainly to strange noises and loud voices as early years settings are full of sounds. Within these encounters, silence, however, reoriented the inquiry as it disrupted commonly held understandings of communication. Not only were some children in the setting non-verbal, but in encounters with adults, children did not often speak at all. Small gestures, silences, or soft noises became a significant part of observations. Subtle gestures, barely audible sounds, or complete silences led to considering the communicative richness in children-object encounters.

For example, one day, children were asked to paint a blue cloud to demonstrate their ability to handle paint, to depict a symbol of a cloud, and develop fine motor skills. One boy that day, unlike the others, began mixing the few blue blobs of various hues of blue the teacher carefully scattered around a shared pallet. While everyone was painting with one type of blue, the boy began moving the paint around the pallet bringing the differently coloured blue blobs closer together while observing their interaction carefully. He then picked up the medley and transferred it onto his paper creating thick layers – “whoosh, whoosh” -- he made lively noises as he watched the paint travel up and down his paper in a response to his brush led by his hand. The encounter transformed the paint, and it transformed the boy who otherwise often refused to participate in adult-led activities. Moreover, the encounter transformed the artmaking practice as the boy-paint-brush-cloud intra-action visibly inspired others who noticed the elaborate assemblage, and soon the whole class had produced colourful, rich, clouds full of marks and dynamic brush strokes. The teacher tried to redirect the children towards painting the ‘correct’ cloud she modelled for them, but there was no going back. A personal understanding of artmaking encounters therefore interconnected with ways of being and becoming enacted in the classroom and as a result developed and became more nuanced and complex. Making sense of one encounter led to developing the direction of thinking in the other.

9.1.4 Cut: Directionality

Thinking with and through the different conceptions of relations from Sameroff’s (2009) transactional model of development and Biesta’s (2012) exploration of educational relations
provided new understandings that enriched further analysis. The transactional model offers similar understanding of relationality as Barad’s (2007) concept of intra-action, proposing that everything is in a relationship of affect in which everyone and everything is affecting while being affected at the same time. More importantly however, it distinguishes between transactions and interactions, and thus presents an insight into classroom encounters and the processes they produce. Sameroff makes a clear distinction between transactions, in which something novel or unexpected happens upon which a change in both actors occurs, and interactions, in which neither system nor the actors change. Human and non-human actors therefore do not grow in complexity during routine encounters and instead reproduce expected behaviour.

On the other hand, during transactions, or communicative encounters, actors challenge normative practices while being challenged in return which contributes to a greater complexity in classroom processes. This is echoed by Biesta (2012) who describes an ideal communicative event as an event always with unpredictable outcomes, and argues that in reality most educational relations are predominantly concerned with “reproduction, reduction and closure” of any gaps rather than in differences that lead to a productive complexity (p.4). Biesta (2012) approaches the communicative event as a creative and transformative practice that leads to a production of a common world that is nevertheless different for each and every entity. He argues that relations should therefore remain open to being examined as more than a practice that reflects one common experience, but rather as practice that is multiple, relational, and multidirectional.

9.2 One-directional/multidirectional processes

In view of Sameroff’s (2009) distinction between transactions and interactions and Biesta’s (2012) multidimensional understanding of communication as a common practice that is firmly rooted in a logic of difference, the analysis became more sensitive to the directionality of the processes enacted in and around artmaking and what they do, the kind of subjectifications they produce. This new approach resulted in an expanded knowledge of how what happens around artmaking is lived differently by the different artmaking participants and produces different subjectivities. Through further analysis, it became more evident how classroom processes are therefore not merely one-directional, in which action is directed from one more-than-human actor to another, but how all the processes enacted in and around artmaking are multidirectional, driven by complex, co-constitutive relations in
which one is not only affecting others but also being affected at the same time (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2016; Clough, 2009).

9.2.1 Findings

Integration and identification

Processes that were first perceived as integration in some instances became understood as processes of identification. Indeed, in moments when children were following a classroom routine, they were at times asked or directed to do so, but other times they identified with the activities and therefore participated without an external encouragement and effort. This is illustrated in the following observation of a girl new to the nursery setting and her encounter with a stencil ruler.

A girl with a big, cautious smile is new to the classroom and after a few days still shies away from other children in the nursery. Upon her arrival she often sits at one of the artmaking tables in the classroom, normally close to the teacher, observing the classroom. On her second or third day [still firmly seated at the main artmaking table], she notices other children independently obtaining their drawing materials, such as a sheet of paper and pencils, to draw. She follows their lead and grabs a paper and a box of pencils and begins to draw by herself. In the days that follow, she notices other children’s interest and love for stencilling. As they sit at the same table, the shy girl leans over to explore their stencils. From then on, stencilling is the main activity that fills most of her mornings at the nursery. She seems happier, and more involved.

Girl [to the researcher, pointing at her stencils]: “This one is for my mommy. Then I will make one for grandma and for daddy too.”

Researcher [to the girl]: “Do you always use the stencil when you draw? Will you draw the other pictures without it?”

Girl [shrugs her shoulders, no response.]

Researcher: “You love these little stencil pictures, right?”

Girl [now more happily]: “Yes! A lot.” [she smiles and looks up]

As the new girl is stencilling other children sit and draw next to her. They do not talk, but they share stencils and bring each other paper.

One day a group of girls joins the new girl at a table without acknowledging her at all at first. They all sit next to each other drawing, not speaking for a while. Slowly, they begin sharing tools, handing pencils to each other, and passing an eraser around. Then they begin looking at
each other and at each other’s work. They still do not speak but they are now growing closer as stencils, paper, and pencils bring their bodies, hands, and sight together in a relationship of response.

[M_vid_2018-12-14; M_vid_2018-12-17; M_vid_2018-12-19_d]

The shy, new girl in the observation is not asked nor told to join the artmaking table every morning. Yet she does, as it provides her with a place nearby the practitioner and gives her a purpose during the day. Instead of having to socialise and engage in the space of others, she joins artmaking activities and establishes her own space around the artmaking table. Later, she becomes interested in the stencilling activity that she has never done before because, as she said, she loves the images it allows her to make. Taking up the stencilling activity brings her closer to other children and helps her to socialise in a way she is comfortable with. Thus, the activities that the children identified with were not always familiar nor were children always comfortable with them or used to doing them. Instead, children were often interested in engaging with activities that were new and grabbed their attention. Participating in certain activities then at times served a particular aim. It helped children to fit in, it occupied their time, it provided them with new experiences, or simply made them feel happy and relaxed.

Inclusion and acquisition

Thinking further about multidirectionality, some processes of inclusion then became instances of acquisition. Family centre practitioners, for example, often tried to help and accommodate unsure parents, yet upon closer observation some parents put an effort into acquiring new knowledge of the social code of the artmaking event and learned how to participate quickly. Understanding and resolving emergent differences, and thus conforming or adjusting to what is normally expected, as discussed earlier, is a central concern to these processes. Inclusion and acquisition describe most of the processes enacted during artmaking events as all participants adults, children, and objects are for the most parts conforming or learning to conform and adjust to what is expected of them during the activities. Not only children, and parents, however, put an effort into learning the rules of normative practices. Also, practitioners at times had to negotiate and learn to work with the constraints imposed by the management, furniture and the space of the setting that shaped the artmaking activities. The lead practitioner at the family centre, for example, struggled to
get proper supplies and furniture to accommodate the type of projects she wanted to
develop with children and their families:

Practitioner [to the researcher]: “The furniture is not great. [The children] often get hurt.”
[pointing at a girl who just bumped her knee] “But, I won’t get new tables.” [she adds with a bit of anger and resignation in her voice.]

While handing out supplies little later, the practitioner points out again [to the researcher]:
“See. I ask for three sets [of hole punchers] and get one!”

[O_obs_2018-05-10]

The practitioner above points out that practitioners themselves are not always fully in charge
or in control of all the aspects of artmaking activities as it may be commonly assumed. Practitioners themselves have to put an effort into including themselves in artmaking activities by learning how to participate in and keep up with the activities as they unfold. Inclusion therefore at times manifested as a process of acquisition as children, adults and objects were adjusting to and moving with the flow of artmaking events. The processes of inclusion and acquisition had a stabilizing character because the behaviour of the participants was circumjacent to the programme of the event. Even objects had to perform or be arranged and adjusted in particular ways that preserved the expected structure and organization of the event. Without inclusion and acquisition, the routine activity either changed or ceased to be.

Exclusion and detachment

Further observed processes that were first understood as instances of exclusion became perceived as processes of detachment. Exclusion and detachment both brought to light how differences among participants are brought about, yet their consequence was elimination of differences and maintenance of normal daily routines that allowed the classroom to function as expected. While exclusion was enacted as a process of differentiation in which some participants were engaged in artmaking activities and others were not, exclusion was also sometimes observed to be a process of detachment from particular situations around artmaking activities. During the following observation, a girl, who is often excluded from the
main artmaking table and from opportunities to participate, suddenly excludes herself and
withdraws from an activity that she believes she is unable to complete.

Practitioner 1 tells a story of three bears to reinforce the name and identity of the class named
Bears. Then she asks everyone to draw whatever they remember from the story on a piece of
paper with little or no further guidance being given. The story is used to reinforce common
classroom identity and to teach good behaviour. The practitioner 1 does not walk around to
reinforce or retell the story. The other young practitioner 2 shows limited interaction with the
children; the teaching assistant is mostly concerned with the two children with special needs
assigned to her.

Practitioner 1 [to three boys standing around] "Go and draw what you remember. Draw
something from the story you just heard."
Boys 1,2,3 "We don't know how!"
Practitioner 1 "Don't be afraid. You will manage. And even if you can't do it then we do not
punish anyone for anything in this class."

A girl who is often unhappy in the settings and often struggles to join in the artmaking activities
is the only girl seated at a table where all the boys are seated today as that is the table with
‘less’ able children. The girl is often unsure of herself, but she is quieter, withdrawn, and less
willing to participate in the nursery setting than in the artmaking activities run by the family
centre, where she seems happier and more at ease.

Girl [to herself] "I don't know how to do it." [to teaching assistant] "I don't know what to do!"
Her comments are met with no response from the teaching assistant who is sitting next to her.
The girl moves her chair away from the table in a gesture of withdrawal and puts a pencil down.

Teaching assistant "You know."
Girl "I don't know." [She looks at the researcher which compels the researcher to step in]
Researcher "What was the story about? Do you remember? What stood out to you in the
story?"
Girl "The house, but I don't know how to draw a house."
Practitioner 2 [enters the exchange] "Like, this: a square, two windows." [The practitioner draws
a house on the girl’s paper with her finger and wait for the girl’s response and then walks away.
Reluctantly, the girl draws a square.]
Girl "I don't know. You draw it." [she rolls the pencil towards the researcher] 

Researcher "That is not my paper though, I can't draw on your paper."

The girl watches others for a while and then picks up a pencil and adds windows to her drawing. She ends up drawing the house, a girl and seven beds with bed sheets while chatting with the researcher about her picture. The researcher encourages the chat as she sees the girl growing happier and confident. The girl colours it all, looking happy and content until the researcher leave the table. When alone, the girl ends the task rapidly and walks away from the table.

[M_obs_2018-09-06]

In the observation a girl is struggling to draw a story of three bears that was read to her moments before by the teacher. She does not know what she is supposed to do or how to complete the activity and receives no help or guidance from the practitioners how to execute the task and comply with their expectations. As a result, she withdraws from the activity. She pushes her chair away from the table. The table screeches, making itself known and drawing attention to the girl and co-enacting her act of detachment. She sets her pen down too with a loud knock. The sound stands out and pierces the mellow sounds of chitchat, laugh, and pencils moving across papers. The withdrawal from the activity, could be viewed as a way of coping with the pressure to produce a particular image. The process of detachment is also an auditory event that disrupts and draws attention. The process of exclusion is therefore multidirectional and complex; it functions as more than a process of normalization. It is as a process of disruption that nevertheless does not change the programme of the artmaking event.

Confrontation and defiance

Only a few instances that could be described both as confrontation and defiance were witnessed in later observations. During confrontation differences among participants were brought to light and positioned some as incompatible with, too much unlike, or as outsiders in the classroom. When taken out of a pocket and laid out on a table, a rock that distracted children and took their attention away from the artmaking activity was immediately sent out of the classroom to be stored away in one child’s personal cubie. Defiance was an enactment of a refusal to conform to the normative classroom practices taking place and participate in the expected programme. Defiance did not lead to alternative ways of doing. Both confrontation and defiance had a momentarily disruptive impact on the setting but were
eventually discontinued, resolved, or forgotten, after which artmaking event returned to a norm. In the following observation a nursery practitioner calls on one of the boys to demonstrate his ‘inability’ to draw a cloud in order to show to the researcher that children are unable to draw a cloud on their own. The teacher’s behaviour is confrontational as she is putting the boy on a spot, in an uncomfortable position, not only by making him work differently than others but also by expecting him to fail in the first place.

Practitioner [loudly to the researcher]: "I draw the outline for them because many of them are simply unable to draw a cloud. After all, you saw the sun [drawings] yesterday. I also wanted to draw the circles for them beforehand, but then I thought, let’s see how they will cope with it. And look!” [points to the sun paintings from previous day]

The practitioner turns around and calls on a shy, warm-hearted boy and asks him to sit at the table near her.

Practitioner [handing the boy a blank paper] "I better give you the smaller one."

Practitioner [loudly and confidently to the researcher] "You know, they struggle to fill up the whole page. And I think that practicing [to fill up a page] gives them the courage to fill up a page during other activities."

Boy [Sitting in front of a blank paper the boy is speaking to himself to encourage himself to begin.] "Ok now, focus. Just do it." [He is looking at others with his head in his hands.]

Practitioner 1 [to the boy]: "Let’s get on with it. Don’t think about it and draw."

Boy "But I don’t know how." [continues thinking]

Practitioner 1 [Smiles and reaches immediately for a larger paper with a traced shape of a cloud she made earlier.] "So, do you want the paper with the outline?"

Boy "Yes" [Nods, which she understands as a confirmation of her believe that he is not able to draw a cloud without her help.]

The boy did not believe that he can make the cloud he is expected to make and was visibly concerned. When given the same task as others, he became more confident and finished his image.

[M_obs_2018-09-18]

The observation is interesting because it shows that a confrontation does not challenge the setting and its practices. Instead, it produces normative subjectification and enactments of normative behaviour. The practitioner becomes overly dominant and pressures a boy to a
point in which he is forced to enact and emulate what is expected which is the notion that children are unable to draw a shape of a cloud. Such confrontations were rare. They momentarily brought an artmaking event to a standstill but most importantly they only led to amplification of normative subjectivities. Indeed, in the above observation, the boy does not draw the cloud proving the practitioner’s argument. Only then she allows the boy to work like others and hands him a piece of paper with a shape of a cloud. The event then resumes and moves forward. Indeed, confrontation and defiance were uncommon occurrences because they took time away from participation in normative activities and disrupted or even halted their regular functioning.

Receptiveness and responsiveness

The only processes that had a more sustained and transformative effect on normative classroom practices were instances of receptiveness and responsiveness during which differences that emerged were attended and responded to. Processes of receptiveness and responsiveness were underlined by relationships of response that were continuous and generative. Receptiveness was a process of opening to others, while responsiveness was a way of relating to normative practices by responding to them in generative and creative ways. For example, receptiveness was enacted in/through/with experimentation and novel encounters among children and artmaking tools. Even though these processes brought forth different, unexpected outcomes, they were embraced by the practitioners who changed their expectations of what was possible and acceptable within that particular event. Receptiveness and responsiveness were therefore an enactment of difference that differentiates and extends normative ways of being and doing around artmaking in the classrooms. This is illustrated in the following exchange between a practitioner at the clubhouse setting and a boy who is drawing superhero characters on a piece of scrap paper.

As I arrive at the clubhouse today, there is a boy quietly doodling small superhero characters on tiny scraps of paper. He sits next to the clubhouse practitioner who is sorting through her paperwork.

Practitioner [to the boy] "Would you like a piece of paper? You can first draw something on a piece of plain paper and then we can even take out a construction paper."

Boy [Nods in agreement.]

Practitioner [Hands the boy a blank piece of paper.]
Boy [Draws large figure of Bart Simpson with an ease. He draws every line with certainty as if he drew that particular image many times before.]
Practitioner [to researcher] "He really draws well."
Boy [Begins colouring the image. After he is done, he folds it as if he is intending to bring it home with him.]
Practitioner [Gets up and pulls out a sheet of quality card paper from a back drawer. She hands it to the boy.]
Boy [Asks for scissors which he is also given. He draws three large boxes onto the card and wants to cut them out.]
Practitioner [to the boy] "Well, at least colour them in first." [She proposes in a concerned voice and closes her folder.]

According to the practitioner, construction paper is only given away if a child is ready to draw 'seriously' and is putting an effort into drawing a 'nice' image. When the boy draws three thick blocks and begins to cut them out and experiments by cutting the shapes further, the practitioners is not happy but does not stop the boy. Paper is a highly valued resource at the clubhouse which is carefully monitored and distributed as not to be wasted.

Boy [Chooses one piece of the piece he cut out and draws an image of a vampire heart.]
Practitioner [to the boy] "And how about colouring it in?" [Still visibly concerned the paper is being wasted unless it is being coloured in.] "Or you want to keep it black and white?" [Asking cautiously, perhaps in response to the presence of the researcher.]
Boy "Sure, I will colour it in." [Answers with confidence and agreeability and colours his picture with colour pencils.]

Boy "Look here. It’s a girl heart." [Smiles while showing his image off to the adults.]
Practitioner [opens her folder again] "Here. Here is a bookmark. You can take it home with you. And look there is another one." [Seems happier now and hands the boy several old bookmarks she found among her papers.]
Boy [Accepts the bookmarks and begins colouring them.]

[2018-09-26]

The practitioner in the above observation notices the effort the boy is putting into drawing superhero characters. She is receptive of the boy’s interest in drawing and supplies him with a new piece of paper to allow him to continue drawing and developing his pictures. He takes the paper, but instead of a superhero, he quickly draws and then carefully colours another
picture, large image of Bart Simpson. His attention to detail is appreciated by the practitioner who praises the boy’s drawing skills. The positive reception seems to encourage the boy in further artmaking and experimentation with scissors. The cutting activity pushes the practitioner out of her comfort zone as the outcome does not conform with her expectations of a ‘nice’ drawing. She urges the boy to at least colour it in. The boy responds to her quickly and colours in the image, which puts the practitioner at ease. Being receptive of the boy’s responsiveness to her request further motivates the practitioner to reach into her folder and reward the boy with a bookmark. The bookmark pleases the boy, and he begins to colour it in. Receptiveness and responsiveness are multidirectional and iterative processes in which differences are generative and productive of new configurations. During these processes, the various participants respond to each other’s differences in a back-and-forth motion. This leads to more than repetition of the same, it results in new topologies in which new ways of being and doing together in and around artmaking are located.

9.2.2 Discussion: Al/tering

Expanding on initial observations, by redirecting thinking and revisiting data, led to a new understanding of social inclusion and exclusion as complex processes that are more than one directional, and besides integration, inclusion, exclusion, and receptiveness, include also processes of identification, acquisition, detachment, defiance, confrontation, and responsiveness. The following figure (Figure 6) illustrates the developed understanding of these processes around artmaking and account for their multidirectional nature. Moreover, the graph also highlights which processes have a routine character and which in contrast have the most potential to transform the artmaking events. Indeed, as shown in the findings section earlier, routine classroom processes homogenise the artmaking events. They lead to no, little, or only temporary change in ways of being and doing in and around artmaking. On the other hand, the transformative processes diversified artmaking events and allowed for new ways of becoming together around artmaking activities to emerge. Transformative processes, namely receptiveness and responsiveness, then contributed to different ways of being and doing together.
Developing a multidirectional understanding of the various processes enacted in and around artmaking challenges normative classroom discourse in which classroom events are often understood as dominated and directed by practitioners, the adults, while other voices, such as the voices of children, are rendered marginal (Spyrou, 2016). Indeed, data in this study show that the various processes are never merely enacted by those perceived as ‘main’ actors in classroom encounters, such as practitioners, but also equally by others, such as children, parents and objects (Jokinen & Murris, 2020). This study suggests that integration and inclusion is more than an action directed by the practitioners, it is an affective encounter, in which the various human and more-than-human actors relate to, or identify with the artmaking events and practices, or are eager to familiarise themselves with and acquire new ways of being and doing around art.

In reality, even practitioners themselves often needed to put an effort into being included in artmaking activities. Thinking with findings, a practitioner in the family centre struggled to identify with the setting and its limitations, as it structured her practice in ways that she was uncomfortable with. A young practitioner in the nursery setting too was unable to structure and take part in artmaking activities her own way because of the dominant presence of her older colleague. The young practitioner was therefore often excluded from participating and co-shaping artmaking events. This study therefore shows that also teachers can be both insiders and outsiders to artmaking events. Thus, the role of teachers in the artmaking events, as this study posits, goes beyond implementation. How teachers enact and take part in the various classroom processes matters. Practitioners are key actors in educational change (Savolainen, Engelbrecht, Nel, & Malinen, 2012), but not merely as intermediates or agents of inclusive policies. Instead, practitioners take part in and co-construct the various processes enacted in and around artmaking as a part of affective encounters with others.

Understanding the classroom processes as affectively charged, in which one is not only affecting others but also being affected at the same time (Massumi, 2015), brings
attention to their complexity and disrupts simplistic understandings of these processes based on binary logic, and instead encourages rich thinking that allows an exploration of what else is there beyond the norm. Indeed, exclusion was in this study a process that was at times instantiated by children themselves as a form of coping with uncomfortable or challenging situations. A girl in a nursery setting detached herself from a drawing activity because she was not sure what to draw and did not receive any help despite asking several times. Her frustration with the activity led to her dropping a pencil and pushing her chair away from a table. Besides serving as a coping mechanism, her moving away from the activity and setting her pencil down changed the programme of the event. It made noise and finally got the attention of the practitioner who was not responding to the girl’s earlier call for help. Thus, exclusion or detachment from artmaking activities was a more complex process that spoke to more than a practice that prevents some children from taking part in daily artmaking activities, following a regular curriculum, or accessing resources. Exclusion in this study became a multidirectional process disrupting a traditional binary of good and bad. Thus, the findings unsettle how social inclusion operates within the dominant narrative of schooling, as a project that repositions those who are ‘excluded,’ into a process of becoming and doing together.

Thus, the findings in this study support the argument that children, parents and physical environment are important and active participants in co-constructing ways of being and doing around artmaking in early years settings and therefore crucial and competent partners to educators, here specifically in relation to educational practices for fair and just classrooms. Such findings align with funds of knowledge scholarship that addresses and counters the still pervasive deficit discourse in which children, and in extension also parents, specifically from economically, linguistically and socially diverse backgrounds, are being “viewed with a lens of deficiencies, substandard in their socialization practices, language practices, and orientation toward scholastic achievement” as Gonzalez, Moll, and Amanti have argued (2005, p. 34). Similarly to funds of knowledge, this study brings attention to the various classroom participants as co-constructors of knowledge and classroom practices. Moreover, this study also shows that objects too are fundamental to processes of inclusion and exclusion in the way they contribute and bring participants together around art. Dropping a pencil therefore becomes more than a gesture of detachment. As the pencil hits a table a sound is produced that draws the practitioner’s attention to the young girl struggling with her assignment. Moreover, a carpet on the floor in the family centre prevents children from making art together in large groups around a single piece of paper. Such
findings align with posthuman scholarship that emphasises and attends to the ways in which bodies, space and objects as well as discourses, all come together in and around artmaking in early years settings (Thiel, 2018).

Building on funds of knowledge and the notion that children’s interests can act as devices for inclusion, this study further argues that more than attention to home practices and funds of knowledge produced outside of school is however needed if meaningful relations that lead to positive classroom relationships and just ways of being and doing together are to be established. In addition to home knowledge and school knowledge, this study proposes that attention must also be given to the knowledge and processes that develop through classroom encounters among children, adults, place, and things in the moment. As found in this study, inclusion was a process during which children identified with artmaking activities that were at first unfamiliar to them rather than a process during which children enacted or turned to familiar practices. A shy, new girl in the nursery quickly took up a new activity of stencilling because it made her feel happy, as she shared, and helped her relate to and connect with her peers. Rather than highlighting children’s differences or attending to how differences are enacted or represented, this study argues for a focus on how differences are brought into productive and creative tensions in moments of unfamiliarity. Indeed, Chesworth (2016) cautions that diverse funds of knowledge can also bring about marginalization as enacting difference may lead to an enactment of different status and therefore to both inclusion and exclusion.

Therefore, to realise the “vast potential of increasingly diverse learning communities” (Rodriguez, 2013, p. 95), more than a process of listening and recognition should be employed to move beyond actions that can be understood as mere acts of good will and towards actions of responsibility, as Biesta (2012) argues. Rather than familiarizing oneself with others and their cultures, which alludes to a position of power, an alternative approach to enacting transformative encounters through receptiveness and responsiveness to what is unfamiliar is proposed here. The findings here show that receptiveness and responsiveness lead to relationships of response in which emerging differences are neither emphasised nor maintained but responded to in productive and generative ways. The instances of receptiveness and responsiveness were affirmative in neo-vitalist sense, as discussed by Braidotti (2006), in which difference that signified a deviation from or disruption of normative practice was transformed into a positive contribution to and restructuring of normative practice. Receptiveness and responsiveness happened when different partners related to each other, and their relationship became, in Braidotti’s (2006) term, “future-
bound” (p.19) as it led to further moments of becoming together-apart (Barad in Kleinman, 2012).

Reconceptualizing the various classroom processes as multidirectional and interconnecting, attention shifted from processes as individually driven actions that originate within individual entities to processes as relational and affective flows that are firmly embedded in particular material-discursive apparatus (Alldred & Fox, 2017; Healy & Mulcahy, 2020; Massumi, 1995). The conception of affect taken up here is posthumanist and derives from the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1988) and suggests, as Alldred and Fox (2015) write, simply “a capacity to affect or be affected” (p.401). Attending to the affective flows among bodies rather than to individual bodies turns attention towards the intensity and types of relations in place, the material-discursive doing and being that constitutes and constantly reshapes the various entities involved in enacting classroom processes. To show the new conception of classroom processes as affective flows, the processes were grouped under a set of five higher level descriptors as shown in Figure 7.

As a result of thinking with Fox and Alldred (2015) through Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of affect, integration and identification are brought under the label conforming. Such a label speaks more clearly to the flux of forces that co-constitute classroom processes. It also alludes to change, the “enhancement or diminishment,” as Healy and Mulcahy (2020, p. 2) put it, of bodily capacities in which becoming the same and erasing differences is a central concern. Adjusting brings together inclusion and acquisition and highlights that differences are being regulated in order to fit in. The notion of separating better demonstrates that processes of exclusion and detachment signify reinforcement of difference during which
artmaking participants step aside and move away from a normative context. Defiance and confrontation become understood as clashing during which differences are brought together in opposition in a relationship of dissonance and discord. Finally, the processes of receptiveness and responsiveness already expressed the productive coming together of differences but grouping them as relating further highlighted those encounters as more than an act of returning to each other in a back-and-forth motion. Relating articulated better the coming together, making connections, and bringing something new into existence. This is evident in the etymology of the word relate deriving from ‘referre’, or carry back, and ‘referren’, to bear or birth again (Etymonline.org).

A more layered and relational understanding of the various processes in and around artmaking highlighted new relationships among them and allowed rethinking of these processes not only on the axis of same – different but also on an axis of routine – transformative. This study suggests that normative practices are reinforced by routine processes, while unexpected and new practices come alive through transformative processes, findings that align with others (Biesta, 2012; Jokinen & Murris, 2020). Such an understanding of classroom processes enacted in and around artmaking shows how fair and just classrooms are made and lived through the process of al/tering in which ways of being and becoming with others either transforms and goes beyond the routine or conforms to norm and sustains it. This study further suggests that routine processes do not attend to difference in a productive, affirmative manner as they tend to erase and regulate them. Other less routine processes are temporarily transformative in a sense that the routine programme of an event is forced to change while differences are being removed or opposed. Truly transformative processes, however, are relational and affect-rich (Healy & Mulcahy, 2020) as they bring differences to work in an affirmative and productive manner. Employing the word al/tering to describe the processes enacted in and around artmaking and what they do highlights how classroom processes encompass both going beyond, or becoming otherwise, suggested by the prefix al-, meaning beyond, and becoming the same by taking the usual course that is not one’s own but of the others, indicated by the suffix -ter, meaning ‘other’ (Etymonline.com).

### 9.2.3 Cut: Agency

Further critical reflection and thinking again with Biesta’s (2012) understanding of communication as a gesture of “being addressed” (p.6) further highlights the issue of directionality of action that reinforces subject-object binary in which self is positioned
against the other. It also further reorients thinking around classroom processes as more than being directed and controlled by individual entities. Instead, processes become affective flows with a connection-making capacity located in particular time and place. During initial observations, the analysis revolved around individual agencies of the teachers, the children, and objects, and what processes they enact. Attention was drawn to how children experiment with art tools, how paint clings to children’s clothes, and how teachers micromanage art activities. Looking at participants, both people and objects, rather than attending to the being/doing/becoming in the spaces in-between them, led only towards framing the various processes around its participants rather than their encounters. Further analysis therefore expanded the understandings of classroom processes as multidirectional and affective paying attention to the movement of forces and to where change happens in and around artmaking. Yet the artmaking participants were still very central to the analysis. This realization led only to more questions: What else is there? How can analysis move beyond what adults, children, objects, bodies, matter are doing as independent subjects and account for what they are doing together while anchoring the extra-individual processes in the final step of the analysis?

Turning to Barad (in Kleinman, 2012) and her notion of intra-action brings attention to the whole phenomenon away from its independent subjects, as it produces a particular material-discursive practice. Barad’s approach moves inquiry away from the individual, a humanist subject that reproduces dominant binaries of othering while insisting on one universal, ideal version of a ‘man’ (Braidotti, 2016b), and brings attention towards materialised and materializing relations. Understanding relations as more than a repeated social experience between two separate agentic entities, then lead to reconsideration of the concept of agency. The ecological approach to classroom encounters bears on a further understanding of agency as a relational enactment, an embodied, social force, rather than an independent exercise of a will (Zembylas, 2007). Drawing on Barad’s (2007) concept of enacted agency that points to acting/living/becoming together directs analysis away from the concern of who has agency and who does not, a common binary, that overlooks and excludes affects produced by those perceived to be ‘less’ agentic, such as children, or not agentic at all, such as objects. A relational understanding of enacted agency as ‘in-between-ness’ (Kuby, Rucker, & Darolia, 2017) rather than an internal human function is inclusive as it extends inquiry to the variety of human and non-human actors in a material-discursive practice.
9.3 Individual/extraindividual processes

Adopting a new conceptualization of agency as in-between the various actors reoriented the observations from looking at individuals and what they do towards looking at what happens in between. Similarly, also Barker (1978) proposes that in order to learn about the ecological environment of an event or a phenomenon, one must “leave the person out of the observations of the environment of molar behaviour” because, as he notes, “our perceptual apparatus is adjusted to see persons whenever we see behavior. [...] But with some effort and experience the extraindividual assemblies of behaviour episodes, objects, spaces, boundaries, and so on that surround persons can be observed and described as assemblies” (p.33). As a result, further analysis of classroom processes began attending very closely to the constantly changing assemblages of objects and bodies and the micro-actions they co-produce. The study became sensitive to the space in-between that Kuby and Crawford (2018) describe as togetherness. Thus, attention shifted to actions and doings, such as drawing, talking, touching, or poking, as ways of being, making and becoming with others. Kuby and Crawford (2018) bring the space in-between, as a coming together in a relationship of affect, alive with their description of Katie’s fingers-glue-paper “coming into work (into composing) together” (p.358). Their example and particular way of attending to the richness emerging in mutual encounters, helped to develop further analysis in this study. The processes observed earlier gained new significance and became a rich site for further analysis.

9.3.1 Findings

Paralleling

Attending to the in-between, the process of integration and identification understood as conforming were reconceptualised as paralleling in which entities come together in place and extend in the same direction across time but never converge. This process is visible in the encounter among a new girl, artmaking table, stencilling, and her peers in the nursery setting, an observation also discussed earlier:

A girl with a big, cautious smile is new to the classroom and after a few days still shies away from other children in the nursery. Upon her arrival she often sits at one of the artmaking tables in the classroom, normally close to the teacher, observing the classroom. On her second or third day [still firmly seated at the main artmaking table], she notices other children independently obtaining their drawing materials, such as paper and pencils, to draw. She follows their lead
and grabs a paper and a box of pencils and begins to draw by herself. In the days that follow, she notices other children’s interest and love for stencilling. As they sit at the same table, the shy girl leans over to explore their stencils. From then on, stencilling is the main activity that fills most of her mornings at the nursery. She seems happier, and more involved.

From the very first day, the new girl chooses to sit next to the practitioner at the main artmaking table and sits there resolutely, rarely abandoning her spot, every day thereafter. She does not hide, nor does she sit separately from others. She not only observes others carefully but mimics or parallels their actions. When other children go fetch their own paper she gets up and fetches a paper for herself too. As days go by, the new girl notices others engrossed in the most popular self-directed activity in the setting, stencilling, at which point she takes up stencilling too. The encounters among the new girl, artmaking table, paper, stencil, peers are in a parallel relationship as the participants continue the same activity over and over. Stencils provide the same set of shapes. The children trace them. The papers move and need to be secured with one hand. The children pass the stencils. The activity does not differ and nor do the encounters among children-stencil-pencils-table-paper. The tools are not particularly challenging, and children do not experiment with them beyond their normative use. The final artworks have their purpose, as all children make them for their parents and other family members. The drawing of the shy new girl will be gifted to her parents and her grandmother. When they are done, drawings are carefully placed in children’s cubbies outside of the classroom and unlike other artworks will travel home with children at the end of the day. During stencilling children and objects entangled in a way that integration and identification became processes of moving in parallel not only among the various actors, but most importantly in parallel with normative classroom practices in which the production of sameness was the goal.

**Engaging**

Applying the same reasoning and inquiring about what happens in-between human and other-than-human actors when analysing the processes of inclusion and acquisition conceptualised as adjusting, a new understanding was formed that translated these processes into a process of *engaging*. Engaging with the normative practices around artmaking for participants meant overcoming differences. Such encounters led to the coming
together and coexistence in a particular place through brief encounters that nevertheless did not transform into further new encounters or new ways of being and doing in and around artmaking. The back-and-forth process of engaging with an artmaking activity and bringing differences into agreement with normative classroom practice is enacted in the following encounter among a mother, a practitioner, the family centre, and a playdough.

The next class, the same reserved mother and her two bubbly daughters came in early. The girls sat down at the small tables reserved for them, while their mother sat down at a big table adjacent and apart from them. She began exchanging some sentences with the practitioner, but her discomfort was not only visible in her body posture, the way she squeezed herself between the chair and table as if unable to move and mould them to her own will, but also in her sharp short sentences. Finally, everyone arrived, and the class started. We all sat on the floor, the practitioner, children, and one other mother. The mother of the two girls remained in her seat at the table. As the activity on the carpet unfolded, the mother of the two girls seemed uninterested, her eyes pointing down at her feet. Then, an unexpected turn in the daily activity happened and the practitioner sent everyone to the large table: ‘Let’s go and let’s sit at the big table so that we can make something out of a colourful playdough.’ Such a turn of events positioned the so far withdrawn mother of two girls at the centre of the activity. The children ran up to the table and sat all around the already seated adult. The other mother stood next to the table observing.

Researcher [to the standing parent]: ‘Would you like a chair?’
Practitioner: ‘Yes, yes’ [interjected energetically] ‘mommies will join us too.’ [Both mothers smile nervously in response while the practitioner swiftly retrieves a box of varied playdough pieces and places them on the table].

The teacher begins to model how to work with a playdough, how to mould it and work it. The mother of two surrounded by her daughters now, waits a moment before grabbing a piece of playdough near her. Her young daughters confidently choose their materials and begin working on their own. All three, the mother and the two daughters, hold their playdough intently, their eyes following their fingers disappearing in the playdough. No words are exchanged. Their lack of interaction stands in stark contrast to the other parent who is constantly speaking to her son, hands him supplies and discusses his ideas with him.

[O_obs_2018-05-24]
In the above observation, a mother of two breaks through her discomfort and reluctance to join the artmaking class as she enters the family centre setting with her daughters. The practitioner has been trying to get the mother to accompany her daughters to the class for a while. By walking into the setting, the mother is engaging with the setting and acknowledging its rules that state that parents have to always accompany their children into the setting, which she has not done in the past. She sits down at an artmaking table, trying to adjust to the space, by making herself a part of the setting despite her obvious uneasiness. The practitioner respects her choice and does not insist the mother joins the welcome circle on the floor. During the circle time, the mother disengages from the activity on the floor and begins staring at her shoes. The practitioner then deviates from her usual pattern and sends everyone to the adult-size table to work with playdough which engages the mother again. It positions the mother on the inside of the activity.

Finally, the playdough is placed on the table. The mother of the two girls sits there without engaging with the activity at first even though everyone is working now. The playdough is sitting in front of her. A few moments later, however, the pile of playdough is in the mother’s hand. She squeezes the material slowly. The playdough gently runs through her fingers. The encounter is tender and continues in a similar manner. The mother engages with the dough and puts it down. The dough clings to her fingers at first and disattaches next. The practitioner speaks to the mother to engage her and then walks away. The differences among the participants and their preferred ways of being in relation to the family centre and the artmaking event are being suppressed as they are putting an effort into learning to engage with each other in normative ways.

Differing

Similarly, the processes of exclusion and detachment, coming together as an act of separating, translated into a process of differing, which further emphasised the coming together of differences. Furthermore, however, it also brought attention to the consequent movement away in separate paths. In the following observation of an encounter among a story, young girl, practitioner, researcher, table, chair and a pencil, the process of differing is clearly enacted during an artmaking activity in which children are asked to draw a story of three bears. A story of three bears is difficult to draw. A young girl does not remember the story and refuses to draw it. The practitioner near her ignores the young girl’s plea for help and refuses to engage with her. Their differences then lead to complete disengagement and movement away from the activity.
Girl [to herself] "I don't know how to do it." [to teaching assistant] "I don't know what to do!"

Her comments are met with no response from the teaching assistant who is sitting next to her. The girl moves her chair away from the table in a gesture of withdrawal and puts a pencil down.

Teaching assistant: "You know."
Girl: "I don't know." [She looks at the researcher who decides to step in]
Researcher: "What was the story about? Do you remember? What stood out to you in the story?"
Girl: "The house, but I don't know how to draw a house."
Practitioner 2: [enters the exchange] "Like, this: a square, two windows." [The practitioner draws a house on the girl's paper with her finger and wait for the girl’s response and then walks away. Reluctantly, the girl draws a square.]

Girl: "I don't know. You draw it." [she rolls the pencil towards the researcher]
Researcher: "That is not my paper though, I can't draw on your paper."

The girl watches others for a while and then picks up a pencil and adds windows to her drawing. She ends up drawing the house, a girl and seven beds with bed sheets while chatting with the researcher about her picture. The researcher encourages the chat as she sees the girl growing happier and confident. The girl colours it all, looking happy and content until the researcher leave the table. When alone, the girl ends the task rapidly and walks away from the table.

The artmaking exercise that children are engaging in is difficult for a young girl. She refuses to draw as she claims that she does not remember the story they are supposed to draw and later she notes that she does not know how to draw a house. Her pencil is also inactive. Her paper is blank. Yet the practitioner, does not react to this emergent difference and continues ignoring the young girl's plea for help. The practitioner turns away to assist other two boys next to her. As she is working with two boys with additional needs, she separates from the other children and the artmaking activity while the young girl pushes her chair away and drops her pencil. The practitioner, the girl, and the objects move away from each other as they take their separate paths away from the main activity. The young girl nevertheless does not give up and turns to the researcher who is more receptive. The girl, the story, the paper,
and the pencil engage again which results in a well-crafted drawing. The moment the researcher walks away, however, the young girl walks away from the activity too. Describing the process of separating as differing further highlights the differences that emerge and how they relate to the normative classroom practices when they lead to a moving away in which the various actors either separate, or are excluded, from artmaking activities.

**Conflicting**

Defiance and confrontation, brought together as processes that allude to clashing, were newly defined as a process of *conflicting* which suggests a particular collision or disagreement that is damaging to ways of being together. Encounters of conflict, however, were also encounters of struggle in which the various actors were more than clashing against each other but were in opposition to the activities and practices in the setting. As discussed, earlier, these processes were not common but when they did happen, they were enacted as unsurpassable differences towards ways of being and doing around artmaking. Such a conflict happened in-between an apple print, bubbly girl, and an older practitioner in the nursery setting.

The practitioner is introducing an apple printmaking project. She is modelling the activity at the main artmaking table surrounded by all the children. She halves an apple, applies red paint, and prints the apple firmly onto a piece of paper.

Practitioner: [picks up the apple to reveal the print]: “See. And this is how beautiful your print will be.”

Girl [to all]: “Though, it’s not that beautiful.” [children giggle]

Practitioner [to girl]: “You constantly have to comment, right? You are such a smart aleck. Always critical.” [looks at her strictly]

Girl: [smiling]

Practitioner [to all]: “So, you have to place the apple down like this. Put your hand on top and press. And if it doesn’t transfer paint everywhere it’s ok…”

Girl [to practitioner]: “I have another comment to make” [giggles]

Practitioner [looks up slowly at the girl with a stern expression]

[Silence. Pause.]

Practitioner [to girl]: “Keep those technical comments to yourself.”

Practitioner [to all]: “Tomorrow you will be able to use markers to trace your apple prints.”

Girl: “I don’t have any markers.”
Practitioner [Stops demonstrating and faces the girl.]

[The classroom is interrupted by the headteacher who came in to observe. The practitioner stops modelling and invites several children to stay at the artmaking table and make their own apple prints.]

[M_obs_2018-10-01; M_360s_2018-10-01]

This observation of printmaking activity is important as it demonstrates how enacted processes were always related to the artmaking activities. The bubbly girl does not question the practitioner directly, instead, she is critical of her apple prints and comments on her modelling of the activity. Differences are then enacted in relation to normative classroom practices and to what is expected rather than in relation to other actors. Indeed, the practitioner emphasises how important it is to place plenty of paint on the apple and to press it firmly against paper in order to get a beautiful print, which she expected from others, but was not able to achieve herself. The practitioner and her actions then differ from what she herself sets as expectations and the bubbly girl points it out.

The differences that are produced clash as they conflict with normative classroom practices. Such a process cannot be directly understood as exclusion, but it leads to an abrupt stop in the activity and hinders its progress. Indeed, the practitioner stopped modelling a couple of times and at the end stops the modelling activity completely which is in part due to the headteacher entering the classroom. Conflicting leads to a standstill in which the activity is disrupted and does not move forward. As a result, no one can participate and that is why such situations get quickly resolved, or ignored, for the sake of the continuation of the activity, as is demonstrated by the practitioner trying to move on despite the bubbly girl’s disruptive comments. Nevertheless, such encounters of conflict are important for further developing and extending an understanding of social inclusion and exclusion as complex, multidirectional, and relational processes.

Entangling

Finally, entangling substituted relating, a process bringing together receptiveness and responsiveness. Entangling epitomises a process in which coming together of differences results in convergence and co-constitution of one another across place and time. Moreover, it leads to a transformation of normative practices and ways of living together. Going back
to the observation of a mother and her two daughters in the family centre, an interesting contrast can be made between processes of engaging and entangling, with the former being enacted as overcoming differences around normative practice, and the latter being enacted as differences coming together into a productive relationship that transforms practice. This is exemplified by the affect-rich mutual encounter and coming into work of a mother and a playdough.

The teacher began to model how to work with a playdough, how to mould it and work it. The mother of two surrounded by her daughters now, waits a moment before grabbing a piece of playdough near her. Her young daughters confidently choose their materials and begin working on their own. All three, the mother and the two daughters, hold their playdough intently, their eyes following their fingers disappearing in the playdough. No words are exchanged. Their lack of interaction stands in stark contrast to the other parent who is constantly speaking to her son, hands him supplies and discusses his ideas with him.

The mother of the two girls sits silently, looking merely at her hands moulding a yellow piece of malleable goo. First, she seems unsure [to me], or maybe even disinterested, ripping her playdough into pieces but then her hands began moving with intent. She rolls the playdough and shapes it softly with her fingertips. Then a concrete form begins to emerge as she seems more confident, involved, and content to shape the unruly mass. This back and forth of playdough-fingers-playdough-fingers-shapes-table-playdough-arms loosening, softening, and relaxing into one another goes on for a while.

Practitioner to the older daughter: ‘Look, honey, what your mom is making.’
Older daughter: ‘She is making a sun!’ [Exclaims with excitement and perhaps even surprise.]
Younger daughter: [Leans in to see for herself and smiles.]
Practitioner: ‘You have one nifty mommy.’
Older daughter: ‘I am also going to make a sun like mommy.’
Practitioner: ‘Sure. Go ahead. You are just as nifty as your mommy.’
Mother: ‘No, no.’ [Replies smiling timidly and looks at her daughters.]
Older daughter: [Happily observes her mother and her hands attempting to mimic her movements to mould and shape her playdough.]

[O_obs_2018-05-24]
The observation shows that a mother who engaged with an artmaking activity despite her reluctance does not work in a manner expected of her. Indeed, parents are asked to assist, guide, and help their children rather than make their own art, as always. The encounter among the mother, the event, and the playdough, however, is affective as they relate and respond to one another. The playdough surrounds the mother’s fingers as she moulds and pushes the playdough back and forth. The mother, the playdough, the activity, and the setting are entangling with each other and the affect-rich encounter, continuous in a sustained responsive manner in which the playdough, the event, and the mother change as they begin composing each other. The mother’s at-first disinterested approach turns into a very deep involvement, and the playdough turns from a small piece of lump into a concrete shape. The encounter is unusual, non-normative, sustained, and affective. What is more, the practitioner praises the non-normative encounter and positions the mother as an expert her daughters can learn from and be proud of. Suddenly the parent is no longer an outsider in need of being drawn into the artmaking event. The dough is being admired by other children. The parent becomes an insider that together with the playdough, daughters and practitioner opens the practice up to new ways of being and doing around artmaking in that setting. In relation to the processes of social inclusion and exclusion, entangling processes reorient thinking around artmaking and educational justice, and draw attention to the affective, relational, and more-than-human micro-actions that, as this study suggests, “constitute the beginning of social change” (Hickey-Moody & Crowley, 2010, p. 401).

9.3.2 Discussion: Weaving together

Attending to the space in between the various actors in the research assemblage, in a move away from human-centred towards ecological inquiry, generated new ways of thinking about inclusion and exclusion around artmaking as entangled processes of composing together, meaning coming together in a productive relationship of response. The new conceptual understanding of the different processes traced in and around artmaking activities as *paralleling, engaging, differing, conflicting, and entangling* spoke to new assemblage of people-objects-practice-place-time on the meso scale (Delanda, 2006) and was brought out in relation to further data analysis (Figure 8). The composing together became understood as more than a process in which participants are co-constructing classroom practices but also as a process in which normative classroom practices shape participants and their way of being and doing around artmaking. The renewed understanding then generated new thinking about various processes and helped to define the new terminology:
1. Integration and identification with a classroom practice became better understood as parallel in which participants and classroom practices moved in parallel, and thus enacted sameness.

2. Inclusion and acquisition became processes of engaging with normative practices by overcoming differences and becoming the same.

3. The process of differing brought together exclusion and detachment while highlighting how exclusion and detachment are enacted as difference that leads to a movement away from normative practices.

4. Conflicting, or confrontation and defiance, meant clashing of differences with normative practice that led to a standstill in which artmaking event ceases to move forward.

5. Finally, relating became entangling, encompassing both receptiveness and responsiveness, which was revealed to be the most productive processes because it brought differences into productive relationships that allowed normative practices around artmaking events to develop and change, and generated new ways of being, doing, becoming around artmaking beyond social inclusion and exclusion.

The renewed understanding of classroom processes brought attention to the importance of difference, not as an internal or inherent quality, but as an external, co-constructed way of becoming in and around artmaking that is essential for new ways of being, doing, and becoming in early years settings.
The turn towards classroom processes, the making, working, moving, doing in and around artmaking events, allowed the analysis to step away from human-centred inquiry and focus instead on the phenomenon as an event in movement. Indeed, Barad (2007) proposes that nothing in the universe stays still. The analysis therefore turned away from attending to processes as particular events in time, and towards processes as a particular movement, the becoming together of various entities. The attention shifted from cause-and-effect encounters to affective flows that represent a multi-directional and non-linear movement of forces among entities to reflect the new attention to the materializing human and non-human relations as a common process of becoming/doing/living together/apart. The space in between the intra-acting entities became a space of multiple orientations in which a) the coming together of the various participants (human, other-than-human, time, place), b) the direction of their encounter, c) the outcomes of those encounters as well as d) the resulting positionality of the entities in response to their action became all entangled and essential to understanding what else happens in and around artmaking beyond social inclusion and exclusion (Figure 8). Thus, instead of focusing on processes as a gesture from one subject to another and attending to their effect, such as paying attention to the effect of teacher’s gesture towards a child, the analysis shifted towards focusing on the processes of becoming together. The process of becoming was understood as a process of making and being made.
through encounters, in which meaning and knowledge emerge through the constant exchanges among children-adults-objects-place-time-practice.

Inquiring about processes, not merely in a movement that is traveling in a linear direction (Braidotti, 2006), but instead as a movement, or a development, brought attention to the complex entangling, the becoming together, of macro and micro scales, the weaving of human and more-than-human trajectories, the movement between right hand, slime, left hand, glue, paint, rules, sensation. Similarly, Hickey-Moody (2005) describes encounters as an enmeshment of moving trajectories when she writes that “[b]ecoming is constituted in the movement beyond category, in the critical enmeshment of states of newness” (p.171).

To understand classroom processes as a movement is to understand their locality, the place they are enmeshing with, as also on the move (Massey, 2006). As Massey writes, even rocks are always on the move demonstrating that even place co-constitutes events as it moves, shifts, and constantly emerges as an ongoing product of the intertwining human and other-than-human trajectories. To focus on processes as a movement flowing among children, adults, space, place, and artmaking is to attend to the materialization of classroom processes in and around artmaking. Understanding classroom processes as movement then allows the analysis to keep away from representing the phenomenon as a set of interactions. Instead, such an understanding proposes thinking about the phenomenon as being iteratively constituted through a complex network of connective material-discursive enactments.

Thinking about classroom processes as a movement reorients analysis towards the conceptualization of the coming together of these processes as weaving, moving from one place to another, from side to side, twisting, turning, and arranging, rather than processes as separate events (Figure 9). Inter-weaving of the various processes draws attention to the
dynamics of these processes as a “the complex, life sustaining web” (Tronto in Puig de la Bellacasa, 2012, p. 198). Such a web is described by Puig de la Bellacasa (2012) as “webs of relatedness that compose a world” (p. 201-202). The complexity of the web constituted by the various processes highlights that focusing merely on relations, as Biesta (2012) argues, is limiting: “by focusing too much on the relational dimensions of education, we lose sight of the gaps, the fissures, and the disjunctions, the disconnections, and the strangeness that are a part of educational processes and practices as well”(p.1). Attending to classroom processes as a web, it is argued here, allows an analysis to account for the gaps that Biesta (2012) describes as practical hesitations, “the subtle moments where we hold back, where we do not want to know, where we leave space for something to happen that is fundamentally beyond our intentions and control” (p.1). These moments are found after and before, and in the in-between. They point to more than doing as a common endeavour, they highlight the effort, the energy residing in an affective response to difference, that challenges the old and constructs new ways of being and doing together.

9.3.3 Cut: Trans/formative encounters

Having generated a topology of the various processes in and around artmaking, the analysis and thinking around social inclusion and exclusion turns to the analytical process of (wonder)ing-with data (see 8.5.2 (Wonder)ing-with data). Entangling, becoming, and relating to instances of phenomena in a mutual affective way, as highlighted in Figure 10 Transformative encounters, further challenges normative understanding of classroom processes, and expands thinking beyond what is obvious by bringing attention to instances of the phenomena that produce a “breakdown in understanding” (Brinkmann, 2014, p. 722). Such an approach leads to locating knots in the trajectories of becoming, that Biesta (2012) refers to as spaces “beyond our intention and control” (p.1), and what MacLure (2013), now famously, calls ‘moments of wonder’. Such moments in this study are not understood as answers, but instead present a challenge, an opening that leads to questioning: where next? Thus, the aim of the following inquiry is not “to solve problems, but to overcome difficulties of orientation, i.e., to find ways of ‘going on’ together with the others around us within a practice” (Shotter, 2014, p. 321).
The entangling processes, highlighted in Figure 10, in which children-adults-objects-place converge and become otherwise in unexpected ways that not only transform their ways of being together, but also introduce new ways of being together around artmaking activities. Such entanglings are not frequent processes but imprint strongly on the settings and ways of being together by producing ruptures that are well described by Hamon (2010) in his blog as “processes students employ to avoid being just students, that classrooms use to avoid being just classrooms, that content uses to avoid being just subject matters, and that teachers use to avoid being just teachers.” Barad (2015) describes these ruptures as ongoing re(con)figurings, or iterative reworkings during which transformation “is not a matter of changing in time, from this to that, but an undoing of ‘this’ and ‘that’” (p. 411). Thinking, engaging, and entangling-with trans/formative encounters by reading them through one another presents new challenges to what is thinkable around artmaking and leads to more questions and thinking about what else is there. Inquiring about the various trans/formative encounters presents the opportunity to attend to the deconstructions, or as Barad (2015) writes, possibilities of subversion, of normative classroom material-discursive practices, as they are opened up to new imaginations and new ways of being.
10 WONDERING-WITH: Attending to the impossible

“This chapter engages with the second research question: How can inquiry into the impossible reorient thinking about educational justice in and around artmaking in early years settings? Here, the concept of quantum tunnelling is employed, drawing on Mazzei’s thinking with concept (2017) and Colebrook’s concept as method (2017), to provide an “intensive and creative orientations for thinking” (Mazzei, 2017, p. 675) and develop an inquiry that opens up the possibilities for inquiring differently. Through (wonder)ing-with entangling processes and thinking with quantum tunnelling paradox about trans/formative encounters, this study proposes new ideas around encounters and ways of being together that lead to responsive and response-able relationships for fair and just education. Attending to macro scale encounters through micro scale encounters of nano-size as discussed earlier (see 8.5.2 (Wonder)ing-with data), is not unproblematic nor straightforward (Selberg & Hinton, 2016). Nonetheless, it offers an opportunity to think differently about encounters in and around artmaking in early years settings and how they matter in relation to issue of educational justice. Thinking with quantum tunnelling theory challenges, disrupts, and broadens normative understandings of educational justice. It allows for reconceptualization and reconsideration of the barriers and forces within trans/formative encounters in and around artmaking and exteriorises how normative practices are destabilised and resisted in/through/within such trans/formative encounters.

The coming together of the human and other-than-human within the inquiry in this section entangled with quantum tunnelling paradox, allows for a fundamental shift towards not only what is made possible, but towards the impossible. Thinking about the encounters within the process of artmaking events through quantum scale is not merely imagining encounters in and around artmaking as particle interactions but also attuning to the conditions of im/possibility. It opens up an opportunity to shift away from human-centred inquiry and attend to more than humans by paying attention to the way processes and practices are being co-constituted with/in the inhuman/more-than-human/other. Indeed, Barad (2012) writes, “What if it is only in the encounter with the inhuman [...] in all its liveliness, its conditions of im/possibility, that we can truly confront our actions lacking in
compassion [...]? How would we feel if it is by way of the inhuman that we come to feel, to care, to respond [emphasis added]?” (p.8)? Thinking-with quantum tunnelling paradox can then help one think differently about fair and just ways of being, doing, and becoming in and around artmaking in which what appears impossible is not only possible but a fundamental process of life.

10.1.1 Findings

Barrier

The barriers to trans/formative encounters across the three different settings in the community in this study varied substantially as they not only arose as a result of specific personal and institutional conditions, but they were also generated by the community as part of their situated knowledges shaped by the social, cultural, and historical factors specific to that particular place (Haraway, 1988). Thus, barriers to trans/formative encounters reflected the particular conditions in which they were produced. For example, adults and children often used various categories and names to differentiate themselves from others in their conversations (e.g. ‘white’ Roma, ‘rich’ Roma, and ‘poor’ Roma, or Zigan). The different names, some positive, some negative and some derogatory, were used to label or describe both Roma and non-Roma children and adults. The differentiations constructed by the community then impacted on the type of relationships and ways of being together around artmaking in the early years settings, as conveyed by one of the clubhouse practitioners:

Practitioner [speaking to the researcher pointing at children seated in different groups around artmaking tables]: “See. They stick to their different groups, and they don’t play together. One group are the poor [Roma children] and they have a conflict with the richer [Roma children]. Overall, the two groups do not get along. When they then come to the clubhouse they argue, and we can’t work then.”

[D_obs_2019-03-22]

Similarly, very specific barrier was enacted by older children and older siblings who considered younger children incapable of working on their own and doing the same things as older children do, and therefore needing a lot of help. These views of young children were closely related to the way older children were often entrusted by their families to care for and help the younger children. Indeed, the older children spent large portions of their day
looking after the young. The early years settings often had to change their way of working to respect the caring responsibilities of older siblings. The nursery structured their classes as mixed age to allow siblings to stay together; the clubhouse allowed older children to bring their very young siblings into the setting if they needed to; and the family centre permitted children to attend artmaking classes if accompanied by their older siblings, as one family centre practitioner explained, “Actually, this boy that came in to draw the other day came with his sister. The sister accompanies them because their mother is working. That is fine. I take it, that they come here with their sister. However, if their mother does not work, she should be here with them” [O_aud_2018-08-10]. Older children then frequently regarded young children in terms of deficit. They enacted caring responsibility by taking over the work of the younger children, doing work for them, or even preventing them from doing anything at all. Their approach, not always, but sometimes, impacted the young children’s participation in artmaking activities. Such an encounter between siblings is illustrated in the following observation of a shy, young boy and his older sister in the clubhouse setting:

A young, very shy boy arrives at the clubhouse with his sister. They join the others at the artmaking table silently. The older sister asks for a piece of paper and begins to draw like the others tracing images and characters from children’s books provided by the practitioner onto her paper. The boy, on the other hand, observes the setting silently without getting involved in the activity or interacting with anyone. None of the practitioners attempt to involve the boy.

Researcher [after a long while, turns to the boy]: “Would you also like to draw something?”
Boy [nods yes]
Practitioner [hands him a piece of paper]
Boy [lays the paper on the table in front of him and continues observing others]
Girl seated next to the boy [to researcher]: “He doesn’t know how to do it.”
Boy’s sister [to researcher]: “I will do it for him.” [she traces an image onto a paper and continues drawing onto her brother’s paper]
Researcher [to the girl]: “Did you forget to give it back to him?” [jokingly]
Boy’s sister [to researcher]: “He doesn’t want it.”
Boy [nods yes]
Boy’s sister [returns the paper to him]
Boy [slowly begins to make marks on his paper while carefully observing others rather than looking into his own paper]
In the observation, a shy, young boy faces several obstacles, or barriers, that prevent him from interacting with the artmaking activity, the children, and the objects in the setting. Most of these barriers are a result of his own sister’s deficit understanding of the boy’s abilities and her eagerness to do the work for him. Such an attitude was very common and prominent, yet it was not the only one.

Another barrier, specific to the community in this study, that was created and repeated in various internal documents, by all the practitioners across the three early-year settings, as well as by some parents when talking about others, was the notion that parents do not want to spend time with their children, and want to use the early years settings, specifically, as a babysitting service. This attitude was articulated by a family centre practitioner talking to the researcher about a mother of five children in the following observation:

A mother of five came in [to the family centre] to make kites with her children. The practitioner invites her to sit at the adult artmaking table. At first, she is unsure as she has a newborn in a stroller with her, but soon she takes the baby out and sits at the artmaking table with the baby in her arms. Her other children are exploring the classroom in the meantime. Soon, however, one of her children has a pee accident. As the mother struggles to take out a fresh change of clothes while holding her newborn, the researcher offers to hold her baby. The baby seems comfortable in the researcher’s arms, and the mother is able not only to help her other child in the bathroom but also to actually start making kites like the other parents. The researcher is happy to hold the baby while the mother is eagerly making not one but several kites for all her children.

Practitioner [to researcher]: “So, I see she has already casted her child aside.”
Researcher [attempts to explain the situation to the practitioner]
Practitioner [interrupts the researcher]: “We are not here to babysit. This activity is for parents and their children, so that parents can learn to do something with their kids.”

[O_vid_2018-09-27_a-d]

Many more barriers to transformative encounters, that reflected not only personal beliefs and dominant cultural views but also local, social, and cultural understandings, developed over time, were materialised daily in the early years settings and around artmaking activities. For example, graphite pencils were deemed to be an inappropriate tool for drawing in all three settings, yet pencils were commonly on offer and children often used them and enjoyed working with them. Practitioners however constantly pushed children to use colour pencils by arguing that the image should be ‘happy’ and by displaying only colourful images
on the walls. These barriers then shaped and impacted on classroom encounters and ways of being and doing around artmaking. Nevertheless, these barriers were not static nor impermeable, as the instances observed around artmaking in this study also show.

Barriers to trans/formative encounters were always present in some form, but they were also flexible and permeable. Moreover, barriers were more of a verb than a noun, as they were a part of the iterative and mutually constitutive ways of being and doing together around art. Barriers were not only co-constructed by multiple entities and discourses, but also co-constructed within more-than-human encounters. The making of barriers was therefore an iterative process during which not only the barriers but also the various entities changed until new ways of being and doing around artmaking were configured. Returning to the encounters among a young, shy, silent boy, his sister, the researcher, and a piece of paper, an observation discussed earlier, a new inquiry beyond normative conceptions of barriers brings attention to the doing, making, and being made, the iterative reconstruction, of barriers and entities within trans/formative encounters, as materialised in the following observation:

A young, very shy boy arrives to the clubhouse with his sister. They join the others at the artmaking table silently. The older sister asks for a piece of paper and begins to draw like the others tracing images and characters from children’s books provided by the practitioner. The boy, on the other hand, observes the setting silently without getting involved in the activity or interacting with anyone. None of the practitioners attempt to draw the shy, silent boy in.

Researcher [after a long while, turns to the boy]: “Would you also like to draw something?”
Boy [nods yes]
Practitioner [hands him a piece of paper]
Boy [lays the paper on the table in front of him and continues observing others]
Girl seated next to the boy [to researcher]: “He doesn’t know how to do it.”
Boy’s sister [to researcher]: “I will do it for him.” [she traces an image onto a paper and continues drawing onto her brother’s paper]
Researcher [to the girl]: “Did you forget to give it back to him?” [jokingly]
Boy’s sister [to researcher]: “He doesn’t want it.”
Boy [nods yes]
Boy’s sister [returns the paper to him]
Boy [slowly begins to make marks on his paper while carefully observing others rather than looking into his own paper]
After a while, the shy silent boy notices a blank piece of paper laying around. He grabs the paper and begins to draw on his own image. He is now solely focused on the artmaking, watching his hands, the colourful graphite, and the pigment changing the white surface of his paper. He is careful and so involved in the making that he ignores the practitioner’s call for clean-up time. Other children are removing tools from the table, but the boy is holding to his pencil and paper tight and keeps working long after everyone has put their work away.

Revisiting the same encounter here demonstrates this study’s commitment to inquiry as a process of thinking-with-the instances of phenomena which allows a more in-depth and generative exploration of events, and points to the ways inquiry is always in the process of becoming. Indeed, attending to the observation anew highlights not only the changing nature of the barriers as they are being reconfigured but also the becoming with barriers in which barriers, place, and participants mutually constitute each other.

In the observation in the clubhouse, the shy, silent boy is watching others making art while his older sister has already asked for a piece of paper and is participating in the artmaking activity. Seeing that the practitioners are not involving the young boy, the researcher turns to the boy and attempts to draw him into the artmaking activity by handing him a piece of paper. The researcher and the paper stretching towards the boy are trying to help the boy to overcome the barriers that prevent him from participating. The boy accepts the paper but does not set out to draw. His sister steps in and takes away his paper to start the drawing for him but forgets her intention and continues working on his paper. The paper is gone which exacerbates the barrier between the boy and the activity. The researcher steps in one more time and asks the sister to return the paper to the boy. She refuses noting that he does not want the paper because he does not know how to do that activity anyway. Finally, the boy gestures and shows interest in the paper and his sister gives it back to him.

He begins to draw slowly into the image she sketched out pushing against the barrier his sister and paper enacted. The boy is now working on his own when he notices a white, blank piece of paper right in front of him. He grabs it and begins working on his own, new picture. He is careful and attentive as he layers different colours and shapes on to the paper. The boy, situated knowledge of a younger sibling, the sister, the researcher, and the paper continuously co-construct and reconstruct the barrier to ways of working together around artmaking until the barrier is surpassed, not as a result of an external input (e.g. the practitioner including the boy), but as a result of iterative, collective reworking of ways of
being and doing together which allowed for the barriers to change and for the participants and the barrier to permeate, pass through, and become with each other.

**Force**

To move beyond a barrier, an internal rather than external energy, was needed. Such an energy, or force, as a particular agency, was generated by situated encounters rather than specific, inclusive practice, a particularly creative and open-minded practitioner, or even participants’ own volition. Indeed, in the instance discussed above, in which a mother of five is being judged to be a bad parent who does not care about her children for setting her baby aside, the same mother during the same activity moves beyond this stereotype. She not only completes several kites for her children, but she also turns into an expert and a teacher herself as she helps other parents to build a kite.

The family centre practitioner provides only brief instruction on how to make a kite as she is not quite sure how to construct the kite herself. In fact, she has put the activity together a few moments before the arrival of the first family, and in that time did not manage to construct her own kite. Though a bit reluctant the parents begin to experiment with the string and two skewers. Making a kite is not an easy task. They struggle.

A mother holding a baby is invited to sit at an artmaking table. While she feeds her newborn, the mother is chatting with another mother who is struggling to make her kite. When the mother with newborn notices that the other mother is struggling she stops talking about house chores and begins advising the other mother on how and where to tie a string while encouraging her to keep going. In effect she has taken a role of an expert or a teacher who is helping the other mother to finish her kite.

Other Mother: “I can’t do it at all. It’s just constantly coming out wrong somehow.”

Mother of five: “*Not at all, now it’s ok.*”

Practitioner: “It’s ok now.” [practitioner confirms]

Other Mother: “It doesn’t seem like it to me. It seems crooked.”

Mother of five: “*No, like this now, attach the string.*”

Practitioner: “You are robbing your children of the kites [if you don’t make one].”

Mother of five: “*So, you better make an effort.* [jokingly] “*Or they will cry.*” [smiles]

Other Mother: “A strong wind will make a hole in this right away anyways [inaudible]”

Mother of five: “*Then we will take shopping bags and turn them into kites. You can fly those too.*”
The mother of five does not change the practitioner’s view of her. Together with the practitioner who is failing at teaching others to make kites, the kite, the other struggling mothers, and the researcher holding her baby, the preconception which poses a particular barrier is surpassed and new subjectivity is enacted. Moving through and together with the barrier, the mother becomes a knowledgeable, caring, and attentive parent and teacher. Her new role is also recognised by the practitioner who supports the mother’s recommendations to others. The kite, the mother of five, the researcher holding a baby, the other mothers, and the struggling practitioner generate conditions in which the mother of five is not only an active participant but also a knowledgeable other at the centre of an artmaking activity. Such observations then draw attention to new aspects of agency as enacted and exteriorise how trans/formative encounters are fundamentally entangled with barriers and a part of iterative reconfigurations of ways of being and doing together, extending understanding of trans/formative encounters beyond social notions of inclusion and exclusion.

10.1.2 Discussion: Beyond equality, equity, and liberation

Thinking with the quantum tunnelling paradox, a model of reasoning that foregrounds uncertainty and conditions of im/possibility as fundamental part of a phenomenon, challenges our understandings of educational justice and what is made possible in and around artmaking activities. Utilizing a quantum tunnelling paradox as a provocation reorients inquiry towards new topologies of the impossible and allows imagining just encounters differently as it opens a space for reframing the notion of a barrier and force. Quantum tunnelling provides an affirmative understanding of barriers that are normally perceived as an impasse to relationships (Holmes, 2015). The quantum paradox shows that even a barrier, or a gap, can become a region of transformation. For example, Kolesnikov et al. (2016) in their study show that a water molecule is modified by tunnelling in the tunnelling phase. Also, Trixler (2013) writes that quantum tunnelling is an important source of DNA mutations essential to evolution of life. Thus, similarly to this study, their work demonstrates that a barrier does not merely constitute an impasse and instead can be thought of as a productive site of dis/continuity (i.e. both continuity and discontinuity) that Barad (2010) describes as a fundamental un/doing (i.e. both doing and undoing) of identity.

Barriers, as the instances around artmaking discussed above reveal, are productive rather than a destructive entities and fundamental elements of relationships. They emphasise the importance of both the coming together in a relationship of affect as well as
the gaps where trans/formations happen. The significance of barriers, or gaps, as productive sites aligns with Biesta’s (2012) argument that gaps are where “possibilities open up” (p.6). Such findings therefore expand understanding of trans/formative encounters as encounters fundamentally shaped by barriers, a particular place where the impossible can happen.

Moreover, unlike in classical physics, quantum physics, and specifically the processes of quantum tunnelling make it think-able that particles can simply appear on the other side of a barrier (Figure 11), or permeate through it, using only a minimum amount of energy (Barad, 2007; Trixler, 2013). Thus, quantum tunnelling opens up new pathways for particles to come together and develop ways of being together that which would otherwise not occur. As quantum research also shows that quantum phenomena are not only a fundamental part of microscopic systems but also of macroscopic ones (Liang, 2013), it opens up the possibility that more-than-human encounters on the macro-scale can do the same: to make the impossible possible.

![Figure 11 Thinking-with quantum tunnelling paradox](image)

Furthermore, it becomes conceivable that different possibilities for living justly, that would not have happened otherwise, can emerge without external input. Indeed, as Trixler (2013) explains, during quantum tunnelling, in which particles and a barrier interact, a different, alternative source of energy is generated which allows for “a highly advanced complexification” of ways of being and doing to emerge (p. 1768). Tunnelling, or the moving through barriers by harnessing this energy, is not random or accidental, as Trixler (2013)
shows, it is absolutely fundamental “for the origin and evolution of life as it maintains its processes” (p.1768). Thinking with quantum tunnelling brings attention to the need to turn to the enacted, affective forces, or agencies, that emerge during more-than-human classroom encounters and during which new possibilities for fair and just encounters in and around artmaking materialise.

Tunnelling also opens up the possibility of thinking about life-sustaining changes and ethical transformations as created by more than sheer volition, as Braidotti (1994) also argues. Tunnelling could then be understood, drawing on Braidotti, as “an intense desire to go on trespassing, transgressing” which, as she proposes, is the only way to transform reality (p.36). Trespassing and transgressing, similarly to tunnelling, is a non-habitual and extraordinary event that defies common sense and opens a path towards encounters with difference rather than sameness. Drawing on Guattari’s concept of transversality, Goffey (2016) argues similarly that only non-habitual encounters lead to the overcoming of barriers, and at the same time, to learning new ways of building common worlds together:

“In so far as subject groups do not ‘cultivate their symptoms through rituals’ they are susceptible of risking a ‘face to face encounter with nonsense’, which encounter facilitates the lifting of individual impasses in relationship to the unconscious and makes it possible for that group to take the initiative in respect both of themselves and of others” (p.42).

Thinking with the tunnelling paradox (Barad, 2007), Braidotti’s (1994) nomadic theory, and Guattari’s transversality (Goffey, 2016) challenges the contemporary obsession with external guidance and standardisation that only produce habitual practices and routine ways of working towards educational justice. Habitual practices constrain the susceptibility of early years encounters to difference and productive, new ways of being and doing together. The tunnelling paradox enriches understanding of trans/formative encounters because it points to the importance of the collective, affective powers that trans/form classroom realities by opening up new possibilities for productive encounters with difference. The tunnelling phenomenon therefore reorients thinking around trans/formative encounters by highlighting the possibility that non-habitual, non-standard, encounters do not only lead to new ways of being and doing together, but that these are essential for new, fair, and just processes to emerge.

Conceiving of barrier and force differently also expands understanding of educational justice beyond the well-established concerns for equality, equity, and liberation in education.
The main tenet of equality, equity, and liberation, similarly to classical physics, is the presupposition that entities, or particles, are not able to overcome a barrier without sufficient amounts of external energy invested in them. The classical thinking presumes that they do not generate that energy themselves. Only external energy then allows particles to either roll over the barrier or removes the barrier all together. The premise of equality is that the same amount of opportunity and assistance must be provided to everyone in the society. While equity considers context and circumstances of disadvantage, it also treats justice as a matter of an individual who must receive various degrees of external support for fairness and justice to be achieved (for more discussion of equality and equity see Takeuchi, Dearing, Bartholomew, & McRoy, 2018). Liberation, as conceptualised by Freire (1994), is central to critical pedagogy, a philosophy that approaches education as a way of transforming oppressive structures (Giroux, 2020). It challenges and sets out to reverse the effects of structural oppression in society by educating individuals about their oppression and empowering them to overcome barriers and dismantle oppressive systems (Ford & Porfilio, 2015).

Equality, equity, and liberation then frame justice and fairness around equalitarian justice theories based on neoliberal principles of individualism that focus on empowering individuals and strive for individuals or individual groups of people to achieve a certain state of equality (Figure 12). Distributive equality proponents, for example, call for equality of outcomes, such as welfare, access, or opportunities (Voigt, 2017). Relational equality proponents, on the other hand, call for equality of status and membership in society (Voigt,
2017). Finally, critical pedagogy is concerned with alleviating oppression and human suffering (Ford & Porfilio, 2015).

The conceptualization of justice around equalitarian theories, however, has been challenged by diverse Indigenous and feminist scholars who find issues with universalizing ideas of common truth that mostly privileges white men. Elsworth (1989), a feminist post-structuralist scholar, argues that key assumptions, goals, and practices of critical pedagogy, such as ‘empowerment,’ reproduce repressive relations as they suppress diversity. Indeed, to second-wave feminists, liberation was finding freedom to assert difference from the lives lived by men (Walters, 2005). Black feminists, notably bell hooks, have insisted that difference is in reality a position of strength if it is enacted as a site of resistance (Hooks, 1990). Liberation therefore became more than striving for equality, it was framed as a fight for the freedom of choice and self-determination and for constructing new spaces outside of normative discourses that call for equality.

Also, Indigenous scholars challenge the ideals of universality, and universal truth and reality in equalitarian thinking in education (Martin et al., 2020), one of the reasons being, as Altman (2009) writes, that “the pragmatic politics of equality is over-determining Indigenous affairs” (p.13). Teisina (in Martin et al., 2020), an Indigenous scholar, then proposes moving beyond universalizing thought and highlights reciprocity as a way forward in building new shared spaces. Such ways of being together, however, Mika (in Martin et al., 2020) argues, must derive from new ontological and epistemological origins. Thus, the Indigenous scholars turn attention from the self to others, both human and non-human, especially those from majority, when extending their invitation to build relational and new ways of being and doing for co-creating educational justice together.

This study, together with feminist, new materialist and posthumanist scholars, responds to the Indigenous scholars’ call for generating new ways of being and becoming together when thinking about ways of enacting justice as a relational, more-than-human process rather than a specific outcome, such as equality, equity, or liberation. Thinking with quantum tunnelling theory in this study therefore becomes an important mode of reasoning. It brings attention to the impossible possibility of trans/formative, more-than-human encounters and to doing things differently. Thus, quantum tunnelling paradox further enables rethinking of the possibilities for educational justice by situating the possibilities of mutual response, the ethical ways of becoming together through response-ability at the beginning of the (im)possible encounters. Barad’s (2010) concept of response-ability, centred at the core of posthuman ethics and justice, refers to the possibilities of responding and responsiveness as
implicated in and emerging within relations rather than something imposed by policy, rules and regulations, or driven by individuals:

“The very nature of matter entails an exposure to the Other. Responsibility is not an obligation that the subject chooses but rather an incarnate relation that precedes the intentionality of consciousness. Responsibility is not a calculation to be performed. It is a relation always already integral to the world’s ongoing intra-active becoming and not-becoming. It is an iterative (re)opening up to, an enabling of responsiveness. Not through the realisation of some existing possibility, but through the iterative reworking of im/possibility, an ongoing rupturing, a cross-cutting of topological reconfiguring of the space of responsi-bility” (p. 265).

Figure 13 Illustration: Equality, equity, liberation, and response-ability (adopted from © 2014, Saskatoon Health Region illustration of equality and equity)

The notion of response-ability, or responsi-bility, as Barad (2010) writes, argues for ethics and justice as more than a universalising truth that structures more-than-human encounters, but as justice that is a part of the conditions of possibility for the iterative reconfigurations of relationships. Drawing on Haraway (2016) who defines response-ability as a particular co-presence and co-suffering, Barad’s responsibility points to ethics that is more than situated, it is always already there, and thus fundamental to more-than-human relations as it precedes any subjectivity (Christie, 2020). Relations to others are always relations of response-ability that constitute the condition for the possibility of reconfiguring relations through which just processes may emerge. Thus, it can be argued that seeking alternative relationality is inherent and essential to life. Realizing that each and every one is already response-able to others, reorients thinking around practices of social inclusion and exclusion, and allows
different understanding of educational justice based on response-ability to emerge (Figure 13).

Not all more-than-human encounters are however ethical, or just, even if they are embedded in relations of response and response-ability. Thinking-with Barad, Mauthner (2018) writes that more-than-human encounters “are never innocent or without consequences, and all configurations of the world necessarily entail exclusions and injustices” (p.67). What kinds of processes emerge therefore depends on the cuts, or specific intra-actions, and what is made to matter during more-than-human encounters. According to Barad (in Kleinman, 2012), agential cuts “enact a resolution within the phenomenon of some inherent ontological indeterminacies to the exclusion of others” (p. 77). Baradian posthuman ethics therefore shows that in order get an insight into trans/formative encounters that constitute the beginning of social change, this study must inquire first about “how differences are made and remade, stabilised and destabilised, as well as their materializing effects and constitutive exclusions” in places where the possibilities for mutual response materialise (Barad in Kleinman, 2012, p. 77).

The next section, and hence the last research question, then inquires how educational justice is or can be enacted by locating and attending to the situated conditions of trans/formative encounters in their process of becoming rather than attempting to describe, or represent them as concrete, finite entities. Thus, this study argues that posthumanist justice embedded in response-ability and more-than-human relationality, develops, and enriches understanding of educational encounters around artmaking, and helps expand thinking beyond humanist ethics that promote equality, equity, and liberation, by enabling, empowering, and stimulating individuals. Posthumanist, Baradian ethics promote justice and fairness, by attending to relationships of response. In such relationships, this study suggests, exposure to difference, to the ‘other’, leads to the harnessing of enacted agency for the transgression of boundaries, and the emergence of new im/possible ways of being and doing together. Relationships of response, as found here, help build common worlds and more fair and just educational spaces.
In this last findings and discussion section, the third research question is care-fully attended to, this asked: *What else can thinking diffractively about the web of more-than-human relations across the different early years settings in one community reveal about the intersection of artmaking and educational justice?* In this chapter, a diffractive inquiry is being utilised as a new mode of attention in which data, concepts, and theories are to be read “through, with, and in relation to each other” (Mazzei, 2014, p. 744) in order to construct a process of thinking with. St. Pierre (2016) writes that in such an inquiry the various elements, the data, concepts, theories and the researcher, are not isolated entities, but instead weave or thread through one another. Diffractive reading of data therefore presents rich, multiple readings that fold and unfold in relational movement that Springgay and Truman (2018) describe as “coupling and comingling” (p.209). Finally, the last section pays close attention to the various more-than-human encounters across three different early years settings to diffract and gain new conceptualizations of the intersection and the becoming of artmaking and educational justice. The last section then begins to expand the notion of response-able practice by tracing trans/formative encounters and configuring new entangled topographies manifested through the enactments of proximity, creativity, and multiplicity.

To locate the conditions of trans/formative encounters and attend to how they emerge, the study became attuned to the importance of the various more-than-human encounters in and around artmaking across the three settings in co-constructing a web of relations that entangle across place and time. Diffracting the various trans/formative encounters across different artmaking activities in one community, the analysis became entangled with posthumanist understanding of *spacetimemattering*. Trans/formative encounters became understood as space-time (re)configurings that Barad (2010) describes as “entanglements of here and there, now and then” and speak to the ways encounters are both continuous and discontinuous, or dis/continuous, as well as situated in time that is not linear but rather dis/jointed. In this sense, trans/formative encounters, to use Barad’s (2010) words, “never rest, but are reconfigured within, dispersed across, and threaded through one another”
(p.245). Attending to the becoming of just classroom processes and practices became more clearly a process related to movement across places and time. This allowed the analysis to move around and situate the conditions for trans/formative encounters around artmaking in the different early years settings in the entanglements of being and doing together.

The way the slime and children in the clubhouse bonded and changed became important and resonated with thinking about the way a parent and a playdough could not move apart in the family centre. The analysis, however, engaged with these trans/formative encounters as more than signifiers or representational cues of particular community practice, and became engaged in thinking-with (see 7.2 Participants <-> Research Assemblage) these encounters, through their differences and similarities, and through asking what they do. Learning that children in all three settings were discouraged from working with black graphite pencils even though they were keen on working with them and often used them, the analysis focused less on practitioners’ arguments that black is a sad colour, and that graphite pencils are not appropriate early years art tools. Instead, the analysis turned attention towards how children and graphite pencils come together in the different settings and what happens next as children—pencil—sadness—paper—appropriateness—tools—practitioners come together.

Barker’s (1978) concept of standing behaviour patterns is particularly useful here in understanding how the early years settings, participants, artmaking objects, place and time of the artmaking events, produce particular kind of trans/formative encounters that can be understood as more than individual gestures that transform practice and instead draw attention to extra-individual behaviour. According to Barker (1978), a standing behaviour pattern is a persisting, extra-individual behaviour phenomenon, such as shopping, cooking or, in the case of this study, artmaking. Trans/formative encounters within the extra-individual activity of artmaking can therefore be understood as common actions that rest in the processes of becoming in the world together. Extra-individual behaviour, or a collective way of being and becoming, then refers to the processes of doing, being-with, and making of common grounds, or enacting the world collaboratively.

Understanding how the common is made or materialised in relation to time, place, matter is fundamental to understanding just ways of being together beyond inclusion and exclusion. It can encourage thinking differently about justice as a collective doing of response-ability. Taylor and Giugni (2012) argue for the idea of common worlds as a generative framework that can help reconceptualise normative understandings around childhood and early years practices. They write that “communities are constituted via the
commonalities of their members, through the sharing of lives, mutual interests, cohabitations and common experiences” (Taylor & Giugni, 2012, p. 108). DeLanda (2016) also argues for the importance of extra-individual behaviour through the discussion of the concept of the emergent property of a whole. He argues, and further extends the argument here, that if communities, groups, or organizations have emergent properties brought about by the encounters of its members then the events cannot be reduced to individual doing, which opens research up to the meso-scales.

Rather than focusing on how individuals contribute to building fair and just classrooms, it is more important to begin considering how whole communities participate in shaping ways of being together and as such play a fundamental role in the advancement of educational justice. Nevertheless, thinking with Haraway (2007b), to attend to the emergent properties of a particular community, to what is made in common, is not to focus on sameness, how children-place-adults-objects develop, or, worse yet, find a practice, language, or ways of being together they have in common. Rather, it means to attend to differences that are made in relation to others, or together with others. Paying attention to collective being/making/thinking is to focus on differences, or “thorny relations” as Puig de la Bellacasa (2012, p. 205) calls them, as they are constantly being made and remade, and what they do.

11.1 Proximity

11.1.1 Findings
Care-fully attending and attuning to trans/formative encounters in and around artmaking observed across the three different early years settings brought attention to proximity as a function of trans/formative encounters. What became significant was not only the closeness in place, time, or relation but also the distance among entities across the three settings. Thinking-with a radically expanded notion of proximity developed new thinking around processes of social inclusion and exclusion and how (dis)stancing, that is both standing together and apart, functions as an element of just educational relations. (Dis)stancing was not only a fundamental element of human-and-more than human encounters in and around artmaking, but it was also an important aspect of the encounters among the settings and among the people and these settings in the community.

The role of (dis)stancing evident in the location of the three settings. All three settings occupied space in the heart of the community not too far from each other yet far
enough that they were not fully aware of each other (Figure 14). A nursery was situated on the bottom of a hill while the clubhouse was located right above it on the top of that hill overlooking both the nursery and the family centre. The family centre, as mentioned earlier (3.3 Place), was set up on a ground floor of one of the apartment buildings in the residential area, and together with the clubhouse and the nursery embraced

![Figure 14 Map: *all three early years settings in a community*](image)

the space in the centre of the community with a playground, work-out area, and playing fields where children and adults in the community spend most of their time. The location of the settings was important. Being close to the people in the community was fundamental to the work of the three settings because children and families were more likely to come in and take part in the organised activities. Moreover, by establishing the settings close to each other, the settings were able to create a particular space that defined the heart of the community. At the same time, however, the settings were far enough from each other that some practitioners did not even know where the other settings were exactly located, who the other practitioners were, and what their programme was. The practitioners both from the nursery and the family centre could not locate and have never been to the clubhouse. Also, the clubhouse practitioners were not sure of the exact location of the family centre. While putting some effort into developing partnerships around particular projects (e.g.
Children’s Day festivities), or community concerns (e.g. children’s safety), they also recognised and valued the need to exist separately, as evidenced by the assessment of the relationship between the three settings shared by the family centre’s director:

“What connects us is that we all (the different settings) want the children here to be successful and be doing well in general. This includes doing well in life, at school, or simply at home, it does not matter, what matters is that they are doing well. And for that we are trying to make the right conditions here even though we are all in some ways constrained. Some of us are constrained by law, some by funding, others by staff. So, the reason why we are all doing this is for all of us the same, I think. Only each of us is just moving in slightly different lanes.”

[O_aud_2019-03-21]

Slime—children—practitioners—place

In the clubhouse, concerns with proximity shaped not only their programme but also ways of working. The director argued that the most important role of the clubhouse is to help children to travel out of their community, to literally bring them closer to mainstream opportunities that the director felt children and families in the small town were disconnected from (e.g. theatre, cinema, clubs, swimming pool). Indeed, the director looked for opportunities to sign up children for art competitions and art exhibitions to not only show off their work, but to provide children with a chance to leave the community. To leave was indeed not easy. The nearby town was only five minutes away by bus, but the bus service was infrequent and there were no clearly marked public paths one could use to walk to the city. Proximity was also an important element of the relationship between the clubhouse and its members. Children living around the clubhouse became members quickly and visited often. Children that lived further away were less likely to come. Nevertheless, children moved around the town freely, and the practitioners often had to ask children from housing estates further away to go back home so that they are not missed worrying that parents may be looking for them closer to home. The relationship among practitioners, parents, children, and the setting, was therefore closely connected to the doing and undoing of proximity. Becoming with/in/through proximity, or (dis)stancing, enacted productive tensions, and new emergent ways of doing and becoming which come alive in the clubhouse setting during a slime-making activity.
Slime-making was one of the most popular activities in the clubhouse. On the slime-making day, many more children came to the setting than on any other day. Slime was not only popular among children in this one town but was a hit among children across the country. Indeed, slime was readily available and sold in most shops in the city nearby but was not available in the small town where the children lived. Most children therefore could not buy the slime but could see it on their mobile devices, on television, and in newspaper adds. To make slime was not easy and it was also expensive due to its long list of materials (i.e. shaving cream, lotion, glue, water, washing powder, tempera), and thus it was not something many children could make on their own at home.

In order to get slime, children had to make it. In order to make it, children had to persuade the clubhouse practitioners, request the right supplies from them, and organise the activity themselves. As the practitioners did not know how to make slime and did not seem eager to learn, the experienced children who have made slime many times before took up the roles of teachers during slime-making activities. They helped practitioners distribute supplies, pour the appropriate amount of glue into children’s cups, and make sure everyone had the right tool to stir the mixture with. The slime-making activity was in reality a complex chemical experiment that did not always work out. Depending on the dosage of the various ingredients, the slime could be too runny and sticky clinging to children’s hands and staining their skin, or it would become too dry and completely fall apart. The following observation illustrates these transformations taking place.

T1 "The children came up with it, the slime-making. They love slime. And they want to keep making in it and take it home."
Researcher [to G1] "And what are you going to do with your slime?"
G1 "I am going to take it home."
All [Are excited and eager when talking about the slime.]
All "We want to make the slime already."
T1 "Let us wait for everyone."

There is an immense sense of connection during the slime-making activity. The slime is sticky, and children are helping each other to remove slime from each other’s hands. They are also helping each other to stir the slime mixture rolling it around in their plastic cups. It is physically demanding and takes a long time to bring all the ingredients together, to connect them. Children are so much more interactive today than on other days. Normally they draw in small groups or for themselves. Making the slime is challenging and children seem to be very
engaged by the challenge. Children are turning to each other and communicating their needs. Those children that are slightly ahead are now showing the next steps to others.

Girl 3 [to neighbour] "How much water should I put in?"
Girl 4 [shouting into space] "What else do I need to add?"
Practitioner 2 "I don’t know. Ask Girl 1. She knows it well."
Girl 5 [struggling] "Mine has clotted." [Unsure of what to do next.]
Practitioner 2 "So try to add some more water." [Unconvincingly tries to help.]
Girl 5 [Adds water and begins mixing her slime vigorously.]
Girl 6 "What else?"
Girl 7 "Why isn’t it getting thicker?"
Girl 1 "You have added too much washing powder, probably." [Notes calmly in a disinterested manner.]
Girl 2 to Girl 7 "You have too much shaving cream. Your will not thicken anymore."
Boy 1 "Look at the colour of my slime."
Girl 3 [to all] "Look, his colour is the best!"
Boy 1 "I will add some red."
Researcher to B1 "It may turn brown."
Boy 1 [Shrugs shoulders and seems to ignore the comment. His colour turns purple.]
B1 "Awesome." [Picks up green and adds it to the mix. Keeps experimenting with colour mixing.]

Even the youngest girl speaks to the older children today even though on other days she normally stays rather quiet. A very shy and usually quite boy is also asking for an advice and has spoken already several words to a girl sitting next to him. Children are more communicative. They are also moving around the space as opposed to sitting down as they normally do. On most days, children stay in their seats close to their own group and keep distance from others depending on their relationships. This time children are moving around the space looking at each other’s work. Younger siblings sit next to their older siblings who help the young ones to make their own slime with quite a dedication and patience.

Girl 2 "I want little pebbles in it." [Exclaims towards the practitioners.]
Practitioner 2 "Wait, I will bring them."
Practitioner 2 to Researcher "They came up with it themselves. They noticed that I have those Styrofoam balls there and they wanted to add it in the slime."

[D_obs_2018-09-07]
The (dis)stancing, the coming together/apart in proximity, among slime, the children, objects, adults, places brought forth new ways of working/being/becoming. Children arrived at the club house in greater numbers and organised the activity for themselves. The various ingredients became the centre of everyone’s attention. The children-glue-shaving cream-washing powder-cups-paint, became the teachers and slime-making experts while the practitioners firmly seated in their chairs became passive and inexperienced observers. Suddenly it was the children and objects rather than the practitioners, who moved around the clubhouse space engaging with various participants. Children were crossing the room to see the work of others. Objects migrated around the room as children distributed supplies, shared tools, and pushed furniture around to protect it from slime dribble. Children who were normally silent, now communicated more often as they posed questions, called out for help, or taught others. The encounters with objects became challenging. The space became dynamic, and the air became warmer. Suddenly, it did not matter that the heating was broken. The room became cosier, filled with new, emerging, intimate relationships among children—shaving cream—lotion—table—chair—cups. The slime—children—practitioners—place encounters were not unproblematic. Children struggled to make slime and adults struggled to help. Indeed, not all slime was successful. The slime was drying out or remained liquid. Unsuccessful slime-stained chairs while successful slime retained its colours. Successful slime travelled home to be kept next to children’s beds and to playgrounds to be played with.

The relationships were demanding and tricky while at the same time productive, they led to an externalised manifestation of the becoming together in/with/through proximity.

*Brushes—boys—hands—tickle*

Proximity played a central role around artmaking also in the nursery setting. The artmaking activities were always set up around two artmaking tables, the main table, and the peripheral table. Children considered ‘able,’ ‘smart,’ and ‘skilled’ were almost always seated at the main artmaking table and children considered by the practitioners ‘less competent’ and ‘needing help’ were most often seated at the peripheral table or asked to wait their turn at the main table. The ‘less competent’ children as practitioners kept pointing out were ‘Roma’ boys. At the main table, children were accompanied by the teacher who encouraged them, followed, observed them, and sometimes even helped them to finish their projects.
At the peripheral table, children often sat alone and received very little guidance, support, or any supervision, except for two boys diagnosed with additional needs who had their assistant always seated next to them. The peripheral table was therefore positioned on the ‘outside’ of the activity. The teaching assistant, who worked with the two boys with additional needs almost always brought them to the peripheral table. Even the way she seated herself, her body acted as an actual physical barrier that shielded the young boys from others. The composition of practitioner—table—boys not only separated the boys from other children but also from the art supplies because the assistant frequently acted as a mediator between the boys and the activity. She handled the art tools, cleaned them, positioned them, and removed them from the boys according to her own judgement. The teaching assistant tried to explain that asking the boys to work apart from others was better for their learning, but acknowledged the tension it creates, and how the boys constantly work against it:

Researcher: “I noticed you often bring the boys to work at this table. How is sitting here in particular helping you or them with the work they are doing? Is it better than working with others?
Practitioner: “I think it is probably better to do it half and half. I take them away because when they sit at the common table, the other children are constantly requiring my attention, and I am then unable to pay as much attention to the boys even though they need it more.

“..I will be taking them a lot out of the classroom too, to help them learn to focus. They cannot focus for a long time you see and begin to look around the classroom, they just cannot stay focused. Outside of the classroom, it can get better [...] Though today, when I took them outside [the classroom] I did not keep them there for long because I could see that they want to go back to the classroom.”

[M_obs_2018-10-01]

The main activity table and the peripheral table were, nevertheless, not only two sites of inclusion and exclusion, but at times, also important sites of trans/formative encounters during which new relationships and new ways of being and doing emerged around artmaking, through the doing and undoing of proximity, that is through (dis)stancing. Though only a handful of children were allowed to work at the main activity table, many other children lingered around, leaned on it, walked around, peered over the shoulder of their peers waiting for their turn. Practitioners often tried to send the children away, but
they always came back talking to those who were painting or drawing at the moment, commenting on their work, and claiming their soon-to-be seats. Similarly, children engaged with the peripheral table in new and unexpected ways. While children were waiting to get their turn at the main table, the peripheral table sometimes became a site where children were (dis)stancing, or standing with or away from, an artmaking activity as illustrated by the encounter among the peripheral table—boys—practitioner—paper—brush below. Together with the peripheral table and objects laid out on the table, a group of boys extended the artmaking activity by developing new encounters which allowed them to not only become a part of the activity but also to change its course.

Three boys are standing around the tornado-painting activity, chatting, smiling, wiggling in excitement. They were asked to wait their turn at the main table, but they do not seem to want to wait today and walk over to the peripheral table to ask the teaching assistant, who is working with her group of two boys there, for a piece of paper.

Boys (1, 2, 3) [Sit down at a table where practitioner 3 is working on the activity with the two boys assigned to her. They continue asking to join the activity.]

Practitioner 3 "You have neither a paper nor a brush. Just wait. We will finish and I will bring you your paper."

Boys (1, 2, 3) [Suddenly jump up and go fetch their brushes from the supplies table near the main artmaking table.]

Boy 1 "Look at my brush!" [Happily touching soft bristles.]
Boy 2 "I also have a brush!" [Touching each other with brushes.]
Boy 3 "I have a huge brush!" [laughing]

Practitioner 3 to Boy 2 "This one is too big. Let me, I will change it for you."

Practitioner 3 [Despite not having finished the tornadoes with her group of boys, she brings the others their own paper and heads into the bathroom to get clean water for everyone.]

The boys are not waiting for the practitioner to bring water. They start reaching over the table towards the watercolour pallet used by the boys already working there. They get some paint on their brushes and begin to paint energetically in round, spiralling motions.
Practitioner 2 [While working at the main table she now notices the boys began the activity at the peripheral table. She walks over and encourages them to use multiple colours thus acknowledging them being a part of the artmaking event as they have been asking]
Boys (1,2,3) [Begin experimenting with colour mixing.]

[M_obs_2018-09-24; M_360s_2018-09-24; M_vid_2018_09_24]

The boys in this observation were not only being proactive, asking to be included, they also grabbed their own brushes and developed a new playful encounter in which they assessed the size of each other’s brush as they felt the bristles tickling each other’s hands. The small brush—fingers—palms—big brush—swinging back-and-forth made them laugh and bond and consider new ways to paint as they reflected on the kind of mark a large brush would make. The brushes—boys—hands—tickle changed the assistant’s practice and attitude as she got up and brought the paper that the boys need to begin to paint. Also, the practitioner at the other table turned to the boys and offered them guidance. The boys—practitioners—brushes—paper—laugh changed the peripheral table to another main activity table.

Indeed, the peripheral table was not only a place of exclusion, but it was also a place used by children to draw with their friends away from adult supervision. The table served as a kind of sanctuary. When children sat there, they were most likely to get almost no attention from adults there. It became a space in which children were able to be intimate and playful, sharing their likes and dislikes, and construct joyful, funny, or heartfelt images that they then shared with their friends or were able to take home. This was in contrast to the practitioner-led art projects which had to remain at the nursery until the end of the school year to decorate the classroom and serve as an evidence of learning development. The following observation shows what the doing and undoing of proximity in and around an artmaking table peripheral to the main artmaking activity does.

Two boys have finished the main art activity of the day but instead of moving on to a different activity or play they fetched their own paper and pencils and sat down at the ‘other’ table while chitchatting and discussing energetically. They are now seated at the peripheral table alone with their back to the practitioners at the main table. All three practitioners are focused only on the ‘main’ table. One of the boys positions both papers in front of him. He is drawing on both papers while the other boy watches him work.

Boy 1 to Boy 2 "It’s there already."
Boy 2 [Points to Boy 1’s paper in which he drew several superheroes] "This one too, and this one." [Boy 2 is asking Boy 1 to also draw the various superheroes onto his paper.]

Boy 1 "Sure, I know. I am going to draw them for you. But I will use this red colour. Do you want this Ironman? Here he has this think. I am going to colour him for you."

Boy 2 "Draw Spiderman too. Is this spiderman?"

Boy 1 "No, this is Ironman. If this was Spiderman, then it would not be Ironman. Here is this circle. Ironman has always a circle there. Here is a circle for your Ironman. I am also going to colour it for you. No worries, I will colour it in for you. The circle too. It should be yellow.

Boy 2 [Stands up and seems to be interested in something else that is going in the back of the classroom.]

Boy 1 "Come! You wanted me to draw these for you, so I will draw them for you."

[continue chatting and drawing other superheroes, such as Batman, Flash, and so on.]

Researcher [Sits next to the boys and begins asking about their drawings. The first boy is happy to chitchat with the researcher, but the other boy seems less comfortable with the researcher entering their artmaking interaction. He gazes away from the researcher and then back to his own paper. He also does not engage with any of the questions the researcher asks. The dynamic between the boys—superheroes—paper—pencils changes. In the meantime, the discussion, and the attention the researcher is giving to the boys draws attention of several other children disrupting the initial play even more. The researcher notices the disruption caused, stands up and leaves the table to give the boy their space again.]

Boy 1 and Boy 2 [Continue chatting sustaining their artmaking interaction.]

Boy 1 "What else do you want?"

Boy 2 "[unknown and inaudible word]"

Boy 1 "That, I don’t know."

Boy 2 [Attempts to propose another character but the name is unclear.]

Boy 1 "I can’t do that."

Boy 2 "Then one more spiderman."

B1 "OK, the black one. The black one has a tongue. Look at that tongue."

[Chitchat continues as boys are huddling together around their drawings. They are speaking softly and slightly touching arms while looking directly into each other’s eyes from time to time. Soon a third boy joins them, and they continue drawing superheroes and chatting. When the activity is over, they all put their drawings in their cubbies to take home with them and keep it in their bedrooms.]

[M_360s_2018-10-01; M_obs_2018-10-01]
This short encounter around superhero drawing reveals more about the role of proximity in relation to the other participants. It shows that adults, specifically practitioners, are not always a contributing force nor are they central to trans/formative encounters and ways of being together. Indeed, neither the main table nor the teachers were at the core of trans/formative encounter there.

Fair and just classroom encounters do not therefore require a proximity of an actor to the centre of an activity. It is the trans/formative encounters that energise, reshape, and reinvent the event while activating and setting in motion other more-than-human encounters. Fair and just encounters are therefore not a result of an individual effort. The study shows that proximity is the (dis)stancing of both human and more-than-human others and therefore is more than an individual doing, instead it is a doing and being that is an emergent and specific function of fair and just classroom encounters.

*Boy—floor—wall—space*

While conveniently located in the heart of the largest housing complex in the community, occupying a space of a first-floor apartment, the family centre is easily accessible directly from the street yet difficult to find. There is only a small sign at the door that indicates that the centre is located in the building. Otherwise, the family centre looks like any other apartment in the building from the outside. Inside, the centre also looks less like a formal setting and more like an apartment. There is a carpet laid out in the main room that is being used for community events and the artmaking activities. The practitioner organizing art activities for the family centre revealed that the carpet caused a heated discussion over the purpose of the setting. Some were arguing that the carpet makes the space more homely, and others were arguing that the carpet was impractical in an artmaking space. Indeed, the family centre practitioner had a difficult task of balancing families’ difficult relationships with institutional learning by providing learning opportunities in an environment that would appear different. The centre was established to provide educational opportunities for families with young children who do not attend day care settings. Despite its location and the effort that the centre put into engaging with families and drawing them into the setting, it was not easy or straightforward to get families involved. Proximity was therefore also central to artmaking encounters in the family centre setting.
First, the main policy of the centre was that children have to attend its activities with an older family member, preferably a parent. However, children spent large parts of the day without adult supervision while their parents were working or taking care of their many other children. Thus, sometimes children were not allowed to come into the centre and participate in artmaking activities without an adult coming along. The practitioners also struggled keeping in touch with families as the community was impacted by housing instability due to substandard living conditions and high rents. It was also difficult to draw families into the settings on specific days and at specific times, as families’ schedules and availabilities were being constantly impacted upon by major life changes, such as job loss, health issues, and new caring responsibilities for elderly, distant family members, and new-borns. The practitioners were therefore constantly changing the yearly programme, the frequency, and types of art activities to be done on set days. At one point, an artmaking activity was scheduled for the full day, and individual families were encouraged to come and go at times most convenient to them. The following observation illustrates that remoteness, as one aspect of proximity, is a significant contributing factor to the shaping of classroom relationships and classroom practice as much as closeness is. Moreover, the following observation also shows that proximity as merely a nearness may not always be desirable as closeness may be perceived as a contentious and unsafe position. Thus, distance, at times, also had a generative and affirmative effect on classroom relationships as seen in the following observation of a boy in the family centre setting.

A young boy has been coming into the family centre with his mother and sister regularly for over half-a-year but has never gotten involved with the artmaking activities. As he enters the room confidently, he does not greet the practitioner like others, nor does he look at her. He moves himself to a side and enters the classroom by walking energetically along the wall at the far end of the room. He continues moving his body around the space far away from the practitioner and the artmaking table, while looking around eagerly, until he reaches a toy corner.

Practitioner 1 [to the researcher] “He doesn’t join in. I try different things but it’s hard. He does not want to do anything with us. So, I am leaving him alone. Maybe he will join us someday.”

Suddenly the practitioner calls everyone to sit on the floor to begin the class with a welcome circle. The boy refuses to participate and sits apart from others in the toy corner. During welcome circle, the practitioner welcomes everyone by saying their name, shaking their hand,
and asking them about the day of the week and season. The practitioner tries to engage with the boy again, but he does not want to shake hands nor say his name. The practitioner does not insist.

After the welcome circle, the practitioner begins setting the class up. The children are free to do as they wish. Quickly, toys carefully arranged along the wall attract their attention. The boy and his sister begin to play as they explore the toys and arrange them on the ground. After a while, the practitioner interrupts this play and asks children to join her at a table of their choosing. All children jump up and run towards the big artmaking table, even the boy who never participated before. The teacher shows her surprise and happiness as she nods and smiles at the researcher.

The children begin using crayons and pencils to draw a field of flowers to signifying spring. The boy is also participating and working on his picture. The teacher, restraining her excitement, comes over to the boy and they begin to discuss his drawing. The boy is being silly engaging with teacher jokingly. The practitioner laughs in response and taps the boy’s head with a plastic lid she has been holding in her hand. A familiar gesture nevertheless suddenly turns into a gesture of punishment as the boy’s happy expression quickly changes to an expression of concern and angst. In response to the tap, he swiftly stands up and leaves the room. The practitioner does not notice so the researcher takes her aside to reveal to the practitioner what was observed. After a while, the boy now shyly returns to the classroom looking less concerned but still not behaving in the same confident, bubbly manner as before. The practitioner approaches him swiftly and welcomes him back by lightly stroking his shoulder.

Practitioner 1 “You know I would not hurt you?” [She smiles caringly.]
Boy 1 [Nods looking down at the ground and walks back to the table to continue the activity]

While the practitioner in the above observation expressed that her success lies in having the boy finally make art, the observation also shows how important it was that the practitioner did not insist on having the boy seated at the artmaking table. Encounters with the room generated new opportunities and new ways of being in and around artmaking as the boy jumped, rolled, and moved around the space instead of drawing at the table. The initial encounters among the boy—floor—walls—space led to closer encounters with toys in the corner of the room which in turn led to making art at the artmaking table. Thus, the
boy—floor—walls—space encounters brought about the boy—art-table—artmaking—practitioner encounters. Indeed, close relationships with other children and the practitioner were unsettling and troublesome for the boy who did not want to sit close to others, did not want to shake their hands, and became very upset when the teacher jokingly tapped him on his head with a lid.

The boy—floor—wall—space encounter then highlights the fundamental role of distance in trans/formative encounters, in which distance, similarly to closeness is a productive site where trans/formative encounters emerge and thinking beyond inclusion and exclusion begins.

11.1.2 Discussion: Touching

How human and more-than-human participants come together in space and time around artmaking in three different early years settings, opens up new understandings of educational justice framed by renewed thinking around the notion of proximity. The concept of proximity here then refers to proximity in relation that is situated. Proximity in relation rather than merely in location opens just education up to understanding justice as more than a relation of closeness but also a relation of distance. Drawing on DeLanda (2016), proximity as both relation of closeness and distance speaks to the generative role of dispersion that deterritorialises phenomena and as such decentres, opens, and expands the boundaries of social inclusion and exclusion. Thus, as this study proposes, a developed understanding of proximity probes and challenges normative discursive production of difference and asymmetry between centre and periphery (Körner, 2019). A new framing of proximity disrupts the traditional construction of spatial hierarchies by highlighting the multi-centeredness of phenomena in which neither practitioners, nor the dominant classroom practices, are at the centre of just encounters. Moving beyond the language of centre and periphery towards multi-centredness is then fundamental to rethinking educational justice as a relational rather than an individual effort in which not one but multiple hubs, where coming together with/in/through proximity generates trans/formative ways of being and becoming.

Thinking-with the instances entangled with/through/in proximity in the family centre, the encounters between the boy, floor, walls, and space of the centre are just as significant in co-constructing fair and just educational futures as much as the artmaking at the main
artmaking table is. Indeed, response-ability, or the (im)possibility of mutual response, is not merely located in the practitioner, or in an artmaking activity, it is materialised and emerges through proximity, that is the (dis)stancing, in and around artmaking. Such an approach to educational justice then further highlights the effort, over a simple formula, it takes to cultivate and care for “the unavoidably thorny relations” (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2012, p. 205).

The coming together with/in/through proximity creates a site of tension, as the above observations suggest, that materialises in the enactment of touch. Touch has long been positioned as central to conceptualizations of care in education and there has been a growing interest in the role of touch especially in early childhood education (Aslanian, 2018; Cekaite & Bergnehr, 2018). Touch in and around artmaking in the three settings in this study was both desirable and undesirable, caring and punishing, bringing participants and settings together as well as pushing them apart. Touch here became a particularly charged territory in which touching was more than the lack of distance between bodies, but both a process of coming together and apart (Barad, 2012). The encounter of fingers and slime was understood as both a site of exchange and co-presence as well as difference and strangeness. Similarly, the proximity of the three settings to each other in the community filled existing gaps and created new ones.

Developing the notion of proximity and (dis)stancing by drawing on Barad’s (2012) conceptualization of touch and thinking-with posthumanist employment of the concept of ‘touch’ (Boyd & Horstmanshof, 2019; Jokinen & Murris, 2020; Springgay, 2019) this study configures new ground at the intersection of artmaking and educational justice. The role of proximity in trans/formative encounters highlights the tensions and negotiations of relations and co-formulates a particular togetherness that cuts interrelations both together and apart. Proximity conceptualised through touch in this study became a particular agential cut that Barad (in Kleinman, 2012) describes as a site where “differences are made and remade, stabilized and destabilized” (p.77). The inquiry into the function of proximity within trans/formative encounters follows the contours of a concept determined by particular inclusions and exclusions that shape the thinking about fair and just classroom processes in and around artmaking and locates where educational justice materialises.

Touching, or (dis)stacing, the becoming together/apart in/through/with proximity, is then one of the (im)possible processes that bring alive new topologies where different possibilities for different ways of being together emerge.
11.2 Creativity

11.2.1 Findings

The becoming with/in/through proximity that formulated spaces of togetherness that cut together/apart in and around artmaking in the three settings, opened up a space for thinking about the role of creativity in just classroom encounters. Creativity arose and intensified in relation to differences that emerged through the doing and undoing of proximity, that is through (dis)stancing. Thus, proximity became fundamentally entangled with creativity, and creativity became fundamentally connected to proximity and became an important aspect of trans/formative classroom encounters. Attending to trans/formative classroom encounters then brought attention to the variety of new sites of creativity as well as to the variety of new ways of being and doing creatively around artmaking activities that challenge normative thinking of the concept of creativity as a singular, universal concept. The following observations explore the role of creativity in trans/formative encounters and educational justice-to-come and attends to the different creativities that come to matter across different sites.

Paint—boys—palette—brushes

An inquiry into trans/formative encounters materialised through becoming with/in/through proximity, as a different understanding of togetherness in which entities are together and apart, brought attention to creativity and what it does during trans/formative encounters. The following observation of paint—boys—palette—brushes at the nursery setting shows that (dis)stancing de-centres an artmaking activity and as new hubs of productive, trans/formative encounters in and around artmaking emerge new creativities coming to the fore. Thus, the observation not only expands understanding of creativity by pointing to the various creativities that come to matter around artmaking, but also encourages new thinking about becoming with/in/through creativities that arises out of the messiness and tensions of different ways of being and doing together in and around artmaking rather than out of individuals or the artmaking practice.

A young blond boy with thick glasses is often a centre of attention in the classroom for what is most often perceived to be a negative behaviour. He refuses to join in on group activities almost on daily basis for various reasons that he always eagerly divulges. Sometimes he wishes to play instead of making art. Other times he doesn’t like the activity teachers prepared
that day. Having been assessed as a child with special needs he has a personal assistant who follows him around the class and assists him during group activities.

After a week of talking about weather and different weather conditions the teacher asked the children to draw a blue cloud on a white piece of paper. One of the teachers carefully laid out pieces of paper with an outline of a cloud onto two tables. Each table also received two large blobs of different shades of blue paint situated on the opposite ends of a palette. One table was assigned to children who were considered ‘competent’ and, the other, to children who were considered ‘less competent’. The young blond boy with thick glasses was invited to sit at the ‘other’ table along with his assistant where he eagerly joined other children in painting. As he sat down the other boys at the table were already dabbing their brushes and playing with the blue paint on the palette. Starting slow but smearing more and more energetically the two paint blobs around the shared palette the boys pushed the paint back and forth, closer, and further away, with their brushes reaching towards the different shades of blue and watching the paint travel as a result of this interaction. The paint moved creating groves layering itself up on the brushes with which it came into contact. The colours blended and provided a rich and lively medley. At the main table, children, majority of whom were girls, engaged with colours carefully avoiding any contaminations of the two shades of blue; the practitioner praised them for their technical skill.

The energy the boys and now also the young blond boy with thick glasses put into mixing and picking up the paint reflected in their work. Their clouds were full of texture and dynamic movement expressed through diverse brushstrokes and playful, less planned manner of artmaking. The young blond boy with thick glasses joined in the activity with excitement and energy that he often displayed when he was fully engaged and happy in play or work.

The boy: [Dabs his brush into the paint again and again and again. He is fully focused on the way the paint sticks to his brush observing carefully. Then he slowly and carefully places the brush laden with tones of blue in the centre of his paper repeatedly until the centre of his paper looks like a big blue puddle. He then smears the paint to the sides slowly exploring the movement or perhaps the fine bristle bending under the pressure of his hand. His brush then moves back to the centre and to the sides again while attending to the texture of the surface he is leaving behind.

The assistant [to the blond boy]: ‘That’s enough. Just finish off the edges. There are some white spaces right here.’ [With a concerned and annoyed look.] The researcher [to the blond boy]: ‘What a large, dark cloud. It looks like it will rain soon.’
The boy [to the researcher]: ‘Yes it will. Pitter-patter. Pitter-patter. Wshooo.’ [He begins to make short dabbing motions and sounds of rain as well as sounds of movement which are directed at the objects in front of him rather than the assistant or anyone else around him. He makes an eye contact only with the brush-paint-paper-hand]

The assistant [to the blond boy]: ‘Alright now. Let’s finish up, ok? I am afraid the paper will break soon.’ [The assistant attempts to stop the boy, but he squeezes his brush tightly.]

The boy: [Continues the animated conversation between him and the objects. The paper stays intact.]

The boys’ interaction with and within the activity, the way they worked with paint and how they painted was, deemed inappropriate, as is illustrated in the teachers’ uneasy body language and a frequent corrective language: ‘Spread the paint properly’; ‘Make sure to colour in all the white spaces.’ The practitioners also frequently contrasted the ‘messy’ work the boys have done with the immaculate and more orderly way some girls painted their clouds: ‘Look at that. See. She is very good.’ A ‘messy’ work in which paint was too thickly layered, mixed, and did not cover all the white surface within the pre-drawn outlines was perceived as a sign of inability or a lack of skill to draw a cloud. “I pre-draw the shape for them” the teacher said, “because many of them actually do not know how to draw a cloud.”

[M_obs_2018_09_18]

From the observation it is striking to learn that to draw the ‘correct’ shape of a cloud with the ‘correct’ colour was valued in the nursery classroom more highly than experimentation, imagination, innovation, and playful learning encounters around art, all found to be important aspects of creativity (Cremin, Burnard, & Craft, 2006). Nevertheless, what is more pertinent to the inquiry in this study is how proximity within trans/formative encounters brought forth new creativities that challenged classroom artmaking practices. While the practitioner placed two blobs of different paint on each end of a palette so that each child can comfortably reach one blob and asked children to use one type of blue for their painting, the children at the ‘other’ table pushed and pulled, smeared, and moved the blobs of paint for so long that at the end the two blue pigments inhabited the entire surface of the palette. Suddenly, everyone at the table could reach any of the two blue blobs. The becoming with/in/through proximity brought about several new tones of blue as the paint mixed as well as a different pattern when children transferred the paint onto their white paper. The back and forth of light-blue-paint—dark-blue-paint—white-paper—brush—hand—outline-of-a-cloud led the young, blond boy with thick glasses to pitter-patter,
whoosh, whoosh, explore and create a deep dark puddle with thick grooves that twisted and turned like a whirlpool. Moreover, the encounter among practitioner—boy—paint—brush—outline-of-a-cloud, where the boy’s ‘messiness’ and the practitioner’s continuous appeal for ‘orderliness’ came together, a larger shape, that stretched across the page and covered white space with rich paint in all directions, emerged.

In those moments of togetherness defined by differences and tensions, new creativities were found to be an array of lively creative moments that affected each other as they materialised and then fell apart just to be reconstructed again. Creativity, in those moments, became more than merely individual possession or even relational action, it became shared, communal, or as Barker writes, extra-individual way of becoming in which participants, the paint, brushes, hands, children were attending to and more importantly responding to each other’s differences. During the trans/formative encounters, creativity became “attentiveness to differences that matter” (Barad, 2007, p. 382) and led to new becomings that establish what Hickey-Moody (2009) calls “new affective systems of relation” (p. 178).

Christmas-card—girl—stickers—Christmas-banquet

The making of Christmas cards at the clubhouse setting further shows that the same artmaking activity, whether it is making Christmas cards, slime, or painting blue clouds, in which becoming with/in/through proximity comes to matter is not always entangled with creativity. Indeed, the encounters between children—practitioner—white-paper—Christmas-cards ended very quickly despite becoming with/in/through proximity in which differences emerged. The differences were nevertheless not responded to and brought the activity quickly to an end. However, during the same activity taken up under different circumstances later the same week, the differences that emerged this time were responded to and brought forth creativity that generated trans/formative encounters among the participants, the settings, and the ways of being and doing together that evening.

On Monday, a clubhouse practitioner is showing the researcher what she calls ‘her’ Christmas display in the clubhouse setting. The practitioner also takes out Christmas cards she made with the children as a thank-you for the local government which contributes financially to the activities of the clubhouse.
Practitioner [to researcher] “These [the cards] really did not turn out well. They [the children] were really misbehaved that day. Look at that. See. They were participating, they were, but they could not figure out what to make. So, I made a sketch for them, but they still did not want to do it. It looks like pre-schoolers drew this, but these were older kids. I asked them to draw something with a Christmas theme, but they would not.” [The practitioner takes the Christmas cards and lists through them to demonstrate their low quality using subjective criteria to judge them. Especially, pictures that were not colourful were regarded as poor quality. Indeed, the ‘ability’ and ‘desire’ to colour was valued and insisted on more than anything else.]

Practitioner [to researcher] “They don’t really want to draw much. They would rather record each other all the time.”

The next day, on Tuesday, the clubhouse was hosting a Christmas party for all the practitioners, parents, and children. The party was in the evening and all the warm lights in the setting were on. The tables were decorated with various foods, drinks, and Christmas decorations. White paper and Christmas stickers were scattered on top of tables. The adults and children were seated around two adjacent tables chatting in small, separate groups. There was a warm quiet murmur spreading through the air. Christmas music accompanied the voices and sounds in the setting.

Children are looking around, snacking, or chatting with friends. Others play with their phones. Most children seem a bit restless and others even nervous as they wiggle around in their chairs and look at their hands, walls, or towards the door.

Then, a few children pick up paper and pencils and begin to draw. As children slowly take up drawing the atmosphere becomes more relaxed, friendly, dynamic, upbeat, warm and everyone’s mood seems to change. A boy draws his own image with a black pencil and then colours the image in with a marker. He seems more relaxed now holding his pen firmly and leaning with his upper body on the table. The researcher admires the first picture he has made and praises the boy’s work. He smiles, makes an eye contact with the researcher, and proceeds in making several more images. He gifts them all to the researcher.

An older girl enters the setting and joins others at the table. She grabs an empty paper and folds it in half. She begins making Christmas cards. First card is for her elementary school teacher, the second card is for the researcher. Other children are now curious about her cards. The older girl picks up Christmas stickers and starts sticking them into her Christmas cards to decorate the pages. Upon seeing the stickers children get excited and want to hold them. As other children join the Christmas cards—girl—stickers—Christmas-banquet interaction, new interactions emerge. Children start touching the stickers and stick them to their skin. Then, one by one, they all begin to make their own cards.
Girl 1 [to others]: “I will make a card too.”
Girl 2 [to girl 1]: “Me too.”

An hour later all children are making cards, even those that did not want to make a card at first. [The children who come to the clubhouse often are called regulars. They are a more confident group that is able to fetch their own art tools and supplies. Nevertheless, today they are the least engaged group. Indeed, it is the older girl, considered by the regulars to be an outsider, who initiates and inspires Christmas card making during the Christmas party today.]

There is not much organization in the setting. Children can come and go as they please. A boy arrives late to the setting. He is looking around and does not talk much. He is observing what is happening. He is not greeted, nor approached in any way. Children are now making cards of all sizes and shapes. They are very creative making their motives and developing ideas. Children either copy each other, develop their designs on their own or make art together in collaboration with others. Some children have made tiny cards, and some have even made cards with heart cut-outs. There are only few pairs of scissors, only one eraser, and only few Christmas stickers for 13 children. The lack of supplies forces children to talk to each other, share, learn to wait, and do their work in relation to others.

After a while, the boy who arrived late notices a free spot and sits down at a table and picks up paper and pencil. He is looking at others and then finds some more pencils and markers. He begins to draw, still observing others, and looking around. He keeps drawing and crafting for a while. Then, without talking to anyone, he stands up, puts a jacket on and leaves the room. He leaves all the tools and his work behind on the table. [A familiar interaction with objects, such as artmaking, can be a welcoming activity. Children’s interaction with paper, stickers, and pencils was indeed very intimate and playful as children cuddled cute stickers and decorated their hands or put markers in their mouths. Even though there was a lack of human interaction between the boy who came late and others, there was a chair that seated him and a pencil that drew in response to him thus involving and embracing him as a part of the setting for some time.]

Later, two girls, that belong among regulars, and inhabit the clubhouse space with ease and confidence, are still chatting and looking at their phones. Yet even they become curious about the new interactions around the Christmas table and stand up from their spots at the end of the table to see stickers and cards others have made. They look at each other, and one of them proposes to make reindeer puppets that they have learned at school that week. To make a reindeer is not easy and the girls put a lot of effort into finding the right supplies and doing the work properly. Those that finished their Christmas cards are now observing them and one girl decides to join them to learn how to make a reindeer for herself.
The observation evidences the variety of creativities that can unfold in one setting when differences are not only attended and responded to but also when further differences are materialised as result of new encounters. The more that differences emerge the more creativities come to matter which leads to new subjectivities and new ways of making as well as ways of being made. Creativity here than becomes (re)creating, both making new and making again, as an important function of trans/formative encounters. Making Christmas cards was not a trans/formative encounter on Monday but became trans/formative on Tuesday as stickers—children—food—practitioners—white-table—Christmas-music came together through (dis)stancing and (re)creating. Drawing and doodling then became Christmas card making which in turn brought about reindeer making.

It also became evident that it is not necessarily those participants with most power or authority in the setting who are closely entangled in the becoming with/in/through creativity and therefore fundamental to trans/formative encounters. In the clubhouse, it was the Christmas-card—girl—stickers—Christmas-banquet that drew interest and engaged others in further artmaking. The boy who came late into the setting was able to participate and contribute to the co-construction of the trans/transformative encounters because of an empty chair, paper on the table and pencil laying free nearby with which he was able to engage. It brings attention to the role objects play in trans/transformative encounters. The way chairs invite people to sit and rest comfortably. The way pencils respond to movement and pressure by making a mark.

Paying attention to the more-than-human encounters, the different food, people, art objects, and sounds in the setting, underscored the messiness of the event. The event was not orderly. There was no clear beginning or end, no clear structure or aim. Yet all the emerging differences, children dropping crackers on their white paper, the smell of candy traveling through the air, or the stickers being stuck to hands, brought forth new creativities and led to further productive encounters that established particular sociality or ‘communing,’ a familiar atmosphere of being/doing/becoming with others (Huff Sisson et al., 2020). The Christmas card making became more than an activity that occupied the time of children. It became an activity that brought about other activities, a happy, creative bustle of (dis)stancing and (re)creating, being and doing together, during which each participant was making while being made as a part of shaping and reshaping common worlds together.
The more-than-human, trans/formative encounters that materialise in and around artmaking then point to the importance of the process over product of artmaking activities where the various, messy, disruptive, and (re)constructive creativities closely linked to (dis)stancing, or the becoming with/in/through proximity, give rise to an array of possibilities that appeared impossible. These then create a new territory for response-able and just ways of being and becoming together. Thus, rather than a universal concept, creativity here became a fundamental element of trans/formative encounters closely entangled with past and future creativities and the tensions between closeness and distance. Such creativity is a function of to the emerging response-able encounters in and around artmaking that materialise more just educational futures.

_Chalk—boys—hands—paper—movement_

Looking closely at the messiness and disruptiveness of the various more-than-human creativities around artmaking activities highlighted not only the need to reframe the concept of creativity, but also expand inquiry beyond what creativity is to what creativity does. The following observation of boys smearing chalk on their hands and arms during an art activity in the family centre elaborates on the role of creativity in trans/formative encounters and attends to what it does beyond production.

The practitioner at the family centre has prepared a chalking activity for today. Children’s tables are moved to the centre of the room. The children and their parents surround the table. A shy boy, who refused to join a welcome circle, keeps searching for his mother to make sure she is always close by. The other boy who came in with his mother today is happy and confidently participates in the welcome circle and initial exercises. The practitioner walks over to a supplies closet, pulls out two boxes of chalks, and hands them to the happy boy. He takes one and places the other on the table. The shy boy, already seated there, turns to the box of chalks. He keeps staring at it, perhaps contemplating to reach after it, but at the end shily turns away. The researcher notices the interaction and pushes the second box of chalks towards the shy boy. He smiles and slides the box towards himself.

The boys are asked to draw flowers on one large, shared piece of white paper as the theme of the month is Spring. They begin to draw. The shy boy is hesitating to make a mark on the paper he shares with the other boy. At first, he refuses to make a mark holding his chalk far away from the paper. His mother, sitting nearby, grabs his hand gently and they begin to draw
together. The moment, however, his mother lets go of his hand the boy begins to cry for her help.

Practitioner [to the boy] "Look at [your friend]."

The boy’s mother [to her son] "Look at [your friend]."

The shy boy is observing the other boy for a while. Then, suddenly, he places his chalk next to the other boy’s chalk on the paper and begins making marks copying his friend. Then both the boys start smearing the dry chalk all over the paper. They are giggling as they show their dirty hands to each other, to their mothers, and to the practitioner. The shy boy observes the colours on his hands and starts drawing on his arms which makes him laugh even more. He then shows his arm off with a look of achievement.

The boys are both now staining their arms and hands and use the chalk pigment on their hands to stain the paper. The adults do not intervene. They watch as the boys begin to chalk with the same excitement, using wide movements all over the surface of their white paper. The chalk—hands—paper—movement resembles a dance for which the large paper provides the perfect surface. Meanwhile, mothers are holding down the paper preventing it from sliding but the boys’ dynamic moves are making their job difficult as the paper slips from beneath their fingers. The practitioner observes the activity and praises the boys. She then tries to encourage the boys to progress towards an image of flowers she asked for. The boys are still experimenting with various movements. The shy boy copies the other boy as he his hand slides in slow jerky movements across the paper. Physically engaging with the colour on the paper and his friend makes the shy boy more involved and happier. After a while, the boys start drawing big confident circles on their paper to imitate flowers. The practitioner encourages them to fill in white spaces:

T1 “Smear it with your fingers now.”

Smearing with a finger, however, allows only for a slow progress and small areas to be covered with colour. Both boys are clearly discontent with how little surface they managed to cover with pigment and begin to spread to chalk with the entire palm of their hand. New pattern appears as they smear their palms across the chalk lines they have made previously.

When the chalking activity comes to end, the practitioner invites the boys to work with an interactive board. Both boys are excited and eager to join now, and they quickly move their chairs towards the board.
In the chalking activity several creativities emerged as hands holding chalk danced across a white piece of paper, as the boys smeared chalk on their arms which made them laugh, as they smudged chalk-marks with their palms across a paper, and so on. Each creative encounter produced new, (un)expected encounters and new ways of being and doing in/with/around the flower-chalking activity. Moreover, playing with chalk by touching their own arm with chalk became one of these creative activities. Touching one’s own arm with chalk can be perceived as merely a gesture, an ordinary enactment of touch and feeling, rather than an innovative contribution. However, creativity in trans/formative encounters can become more than a process that is limited to a specific ‘creative’ activity (e.g. artmaking, writing, dancing) and reveals creativity as a part of mundane, daily, encounters beyond the making of art and production of what is traditional perceived as ‘valuable commodities,’ whether it is physical objects (e.g. artwork) or intellectual outputs (e.g. innovative ideas, new concepts).

Creativity here is an enactment of relations rather than an enactment of production. In the words of Barad (2010), creative processes can then be described as “unending, iterative reconfigurings” of relations and “reworkings of mutual constitution” (p.245). Indeed, the happy-boy—chalk—paper encounter led to the shy-boy—happy-boy—chalks—white-paper—wide-movements encounter in which the shy boy was no longer behaving in a shy manner as he intertwined his hands with the other boy and giggled. Further encounters, the chalk staining the boys’ hands, led to more diverse encounters as the shy boy chalked on his own arm and laughed with the mouth wide open. Creativity then became the re-working of subjectivities that are mutually co-constituted as the shy boy became a happy boy, energetic boy, curious boy, and social boy.

Entangled, mundane creativities are therefore reworkings of relations in which new subjectivities and new ways of being and doing together are continuously (re)created. They are in a constant state of flux as they disperse in various directions across emerging fields of differences just to come back and thread through one another to give rise to further differences that lead to new ways of being/doing/becoming with others.

11.2.2 Discussion: Growing

Analysing trans/formative encounters around artmaking activities across three early years settings in one community surfaces the fundamental connection between proximity and creativity as co-constitutive of the iterative reconfigurings of just, response-able encounters.
Thinking-with Deleuze and Guattari (1994) and Hickey Moody (2005), creativity here is conceptualised as becoming that brings about a deterritorialisation and re-territorialisation of the intersection of artmaking and educational justice. Creativity brings forth new territories that allow access to new realities and new ways of becoming together in and around artmaking (Hickey-Moody, 2020).

The becoming with/in/through creativity within the different hubs where the doing and undoing of proximity comes to matter, are not extraordinary nor are they merely product driven. The creativities brought to light in this study are mundane, ordinary, tangible creativities that are of this world and encourage, using Thrift’s (2008) words, “taking some of the small signs of everyday life for wonders” (p.2). Attending to creativity here therefore brings attention to the mundane and the collective aspect of creativity. Holzman (2010) argues that mundane creativity, a Vygotskian concept, is an ordinary activity that can be attributed not to individuals but to social units. Holzman (2010) writes that creativity is a “collective form of working together” that underlies qualitative transformations of people (p.5). Mundane creativity, to Holzman (2010), is a function of collective behaviour in which children and adults “go beyond themselves” and “shape and reshape their relationships to themselves, each other and to the material and psychological tools and objects of their world” (p.7).

Building on Holzman, this study develops a concept of mundane creativities in which creativity becomes more than an individual attribute or doing, it becomes a relational process, a reworking, in which the whole system, all the participants, grow and change, not in terms of cause and effect, but as a process of becoming-with, a mutual co-constitution. Thus, the concept of mundane creativities connects closely to the original meaning of the word create that derives from the word creare meaning ‘to make grow,’ or ‘to grow,’ from the root ker- (Etymonline.com). Mundane creativities are therefore not product driven and instead materialise as relations of growth which deterritorialises universal notions of creativity and positions it outside of neoliberal discourse and agenda. Hickey Moody (2010) writes that diverse conceptions of creativity are important as “[t]hey show up the instability of our everyday uses of these concepts” (p.213). The concept of mundane creativities reframes creativity as a process of “communing” (Sisson, Whittington, Shin, Thiel, & Comber, 2020, p. 2). Rethinking creativity as more than a neoliberal trope disrupts the global push for what Craft (2012) calls the “marketized child” (p.3), in which families and children are perceived merely as producers and consumers whose purpose is to promote and sustain globalised capitalist economy. Mundane creativities, as communal reworking, then afford
not only new conditions for sociality and for thinking differently about educational justice, but also open up new possibilities for children, adults, and their environments to enact multiplicity that disrupts and challenges hegemonic discourses.

The concept of mundane creativities reorients thinking not only from production to relation, but it also disrupts deficit discourse in which some are creative and possess novel, unique ideas, and others are not. Similarly to Holzman’s (2010) argument that Vygotskian mundane creativity is a function of a social unit in which children are “fellow creators” who are “capable of doing things that are beyond them” (p.12), also the data in this study support the findings that not only adults cultivate creativity in and around artmaking. Specifically, this study, similarly to Chappell (2018), proposes that creativities are more-than-human processes in which both human and non-human participants creatively co-construct new ways of being and doing together while changing through the process of becoming with. In the chalk—boys—hands—paper—movement encounter, the chalk, the boys’ hands, the boys, the paper, all change as they move from one creative process, smearing chalk in large strokes across paper, to chalking on their bodies. The chalk slowly disappears as the boys’ hands become more colourful and the boys become joyful while watching and co-creating such transformations. Indeed, while ordinary and everyday, mundane creativities, as Holzman (2010) writes, are also “magical!” (p.6) because they are transformative.

Entangling with each other, with place, and other human and more-than-human participants in and around artmaking in the process of communing, mundane creativities are necessarily multiple and have no clear beginning nor end arising out of the unexpected, messy, and thorny relations of everyday life. Mundane creativities therefore do not come into being through imagination, the forming of concrete image of things not present, but instead they are emergent as function of trans/formative encounters that make the impossible possible. Indeed, drawing on Vygotsky, Holzman (2010) writes that “[h]uman beings learn and develop without knowing how or that we know” (p.6), which speaks to the creative being and doing together as a transformative process that brings new ways of being and doing into existence rather than a process that meets particular expectations and brings into existence what is already known. Rather than imagination, mundane creativities can be better characterised, thinking-with Osberg (2018), as ‘anticipation’ that makes space for the possibilities that are not yet imagined. Chappell (2018) builds on Osberg in her posthumanist exploration of creativity as an emergent, ethically driven journey, and suggests that it provides a new chance for being and doing educational relations differently using the words of Braidotti (2013) to argue that:
“[T]he posthuman turn is an amazing opportunity to decide together what and who we are capable of becoming, and a unique opportunity for humanity to re-invent itself affirmatively through creativity and empowering ethical relations” (p.195).

Thinking with Craft (2010) and the important shift her work initiated in re-conceptualizing creativity as possibility thinking underpinned by not only curiosity about difference but also by imagination of what can be done with difference, this study further suggests that mundane creativities are instead driven by the becoming-with differences in which more differences and new problems are created rather than found and solved or overcome. In this study, what the data revealed as more important was what creativities do rather than what they are. Mundane creativities within trans/formative encounters disrupt hegemonic practices, and thus function as an important aspect of just educational futures.

This study therefore proposes that just, ethical relationships do not flow out of creative situations as it is normally proposed. Instead, creativities flow out of just, ethical relationships and give rise to new, multiple, ways of being and doing around artmaking. Rather than approaching justice through artmaking, or the arts more broadly, this study suggests, it is perhaps time to attend to the just, ethical, response-able ways of being and doing in which creativity is an extra-individual affect, an everyday relation of growth.

11.3 Multiplicity

11.3.1 Findings

Thinking about mundane creativities in trans/formative encounters highlights the complexity, messiness, and ways of becoming together that draw attention to the constant, reiterative reconfigurations of new affective structures of relations. Creativities are therefore not only about making differences, but they are also about opening oneself to being made different, a process in which one becomes other. Such mutual making of differences can be understood as a process of becoming multiple in which entities are constantly being remade in response to encounters. This ontological multiplicity therefore speaks to the multiple singularities in each becoming and “the process of becoming continuously anew in each new encounter” (Taguchi, 2011, p. 47). Unlike neoliberal plurality in which multiplicity is treated as a cumulative human capital, an ontological multiplicity, as Braidotti (2006) states, is a
“qualitative shifter” rather than merely a “quantitative multiplier” (p. 22). Such multiplicity emerges in trans/formative encounters and is therefore intimately entangled with the various hubs where becomings with/in/through proximity and creativity emerge. As their encounter is non-linear, and there is no beginning nor end to the coming together of proximity, creativity, and multiplicity, neither one is the cause or the effect of the other as they co-exist in a re-iterative process of (re)configurations. Becoming multiple, as evident in the instances observed around artmaking in this study, then speaks to the constant state of becoming, or differentiation, or, as Braidotti (1993) writes, to how artmaking participants, children, adults, and objects “occupy different subjectpositions at different times” (p.10).

Kites—children—adults

Multiplicity that can be understood as a constant process of becoming through collective ways of being and doing and is materialised in the following observation of parents and practitioners making kites for children in the family centre. While negotiating how to make kites, who will have a kite, and who knows how to make a kite, participants constantly change as a part of these trans/formative encounters. As such they produce new territories where new ways of being and doing together can emerge through the becoming with/in/through proximity, creativity, and multiplicity:

It is a windy but sunny, fall day and families arriving at the family centre are asked to make kites. Children are given white paper in a shape of a kite to decorate, while mothers are asked to make an actual flying kite out of two wooden skewers, string, glue, and colourful tissue paper. The practitioner provides only brief instruction as she herself is not quite sure how to construct the kite. In fact, she has put the activity together only a few moments before the arrival of the first family, and in that time did not manage to construct a kite herself. Though a bit reluctant the parents begin to experiment with the string and two skewers. Making a kite is not an easy task. They struggle.

Mother 2 [to mother 1] "I have never made a kite. You?"  
Mother 1 "At school. But that’s long time [ago]...”  
Mother 2 "God, when did I go to school?”  
RP "I didn’t make a kite even at school."  
Practitioner "Me neither."  
Mother 2 "I also don’t remember that we ever made a kite at school, but..."  
Girl 1 "We did."
Researcher "Really?"
Mother 2 "So you already know how to make it..."
Girl 2 "We made them at the nursery already [inaudible]."

While mothers, much like the practitioner earlier, seem unsure and struggle to make a kite, children are very confident and secure in their ability to make a kite. Unlike their mothers, they look happy and energetic. Children become experts in the setting. They also work enthusiastically and finish their work very quickly while their mothers are still working. When children finish their kites, the kite making suddenly becomes solely an adult activity. Children are waiting, standing around their parents, assisting while mothers are creating the kites. Mothers are very focused on the activity and often even ignore their children. They seem to enjoy the activity.

A mother holding a baby is invited to sit at an artmaking table. While she feeds her newborn, the mother is chatting with another mother who is struggling to make her kite. When the mother with newborn notices that the other mother is struggling she stops talking about house chores and begins advising the other mother how and where to tie a string while encouraging her to keep going. In effect she has taken a role of an expert or a teacher who is helping the other mother to finish her kite.

Mother 2 "I can’t do it at all. It’s just constantly coming out wrong somehow."
Mother 3 "Not at all, now it’s ok."
Practitioner "It’s ok now." [practitioner confirms]
Mother 2 "It doesn’t seem like it to me. It seems crooked."
Mother 3 "No, like this now, attach the string."
Practitioner "You are robbing your children of the kites [if you don’t make one]."
Mother 3 "So, you better make an effort." [jokingly] "Or they will cry."
Mother 2 "A strong wind will make a whole in this right away anyways [inaudible]"
Mother 3 "Then we will take shopping bags and turn them into kites. You can fly those too."

A little while later, the mother with the new-born is disrupted as one of her five children had a pee accident, and she has to attend to them. The researcher offers to hold her newborn to relieve the mother and allow her to change her other child’s clothes. The baby seems comfortable and so the mother happily and eagerly returns to artmaking table to use her suddenly freed hands for making kites like the other mothers do. She joins the adult table and begins to make the first kite. The mother visibly enjoys the suddenly gained freedom from holding her newborn and eagerly makes not one but several kites for all her children. Her other young children, too young to participate in the kite-making activity, wonder around,
play with toys, and explore the classroom. Even the youngest daughter who is around three years old and does not seem to speak much behaves very independently, attends to her own needs, goes to a bathroom without an adult supervision, and shows her curiosity by carefully observing others at work. Despite having the mother finally making kites, the practitioner whispers in the researcher’s ear:

Practitioner [to researcher] “We are not here to babysit. The activity is for both the parents and their children so that the parents can learn to do something with their kids.”.

Only children are flying their kites. Adults are standing around observing or helping children untangle the ropes.

Mother 1 [to daughters] 'You fly your kite, and I am going home.” [She seems shy and uncomfortable, staying apart from others.]

The practitioner takes out an extra kite and starts flying it along with the children. Slowly, also other mothers borrow their children’s kites and attempt to fly them too. Other parents join in. The children invite the researcher to fly a kite too. The researcher runs with the kite up and down a hill several times. Mother 1 and her daughters stay for a while enjoying the company of others chatting to the researcher about artmaking, the family centre, and daily life.

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The kite making activity highlights several trans/formative encounters in which becoming multiple emerges with/in/through (dis)stancing and (re)creating. In the first instance, parents were struggling and questioning their ability to make kites while the practitioner offered little help as she herself was unsure of how to make the kite exactly. The children on the other hand were quite confident in their kite making skills and kept encouraging their parents throughout the session. The children suddenly became the experts in the setting, as they enthusiastically drew their kites, chose the colours for their kites, and flew the kites outside, as if it was an activity that they did every day. Thus, multiplicity, in which children became experts and adults became laypersons, led to new encounters in which children assisted their parents in artmaking and stood behind them while not only observing but also helping and encouraging the adults to make kites.

Similarly, when a mother holding a newborn noticed a fellow mother struggle, she stopped chitchatting about her curtains and loads of washing she has to do, and changed from a friend to a mentor encouraging, helping, and guiding a fellow mother in her kite-making. As the mother with the newborn became involved in helping the other mother, she began touching the objects on the table and talking about making a kite for her own children.
Later then, when the researcher took on the role of a carer and held her newborn, the mother went back to the artmaking table and made kites for her own children. Finally, by flying kites with children and other parents, a shy, withdrawn mother, who first wanted to leave to go back home, stayed around for a while in response to the fun everyone was having with kites. These encounters further lead to her opening up to the researcher about her life and her relationship to the family centre.

The more-than-human participants were therefore constantly becoming different as they were becoming active, passive, knowledgeable, open, closed, inside, outside, involved, reluctant, happy, responsive, or shy. Their multiplicity was shifting and unstable, constantly changing in response to others and the new emerging ways of being and doing together.

_Crayons—children—practitioners—etching_

To inquire about multiplicity is to inquire about what multiplicity does rather than how it defines the various artmaking participants, both human and more-than-human. Differences embedded in the fluctuating multiplicity are then important not because they present participants as having multiple identities, as those are not inherent properties, but most importantly because becoming different leads to different new encounters that have the potential to challenge and disrupt normative classroom practices. In this sense difference can no longer be commodified and essentialised and instead it serves as a catalyst for social change. Such multiplicity is fundamental to trans/formative encounters because they have the capacity to disrupt established norms. Moreover, they also have the capacity for interconnectedness (Braidotti, 2006) in which the making of new relationships leads to the remaking of the old ones in the collective construction of common worlds. The becoming of multiplicity through interconnectedness and the remaking of relationships can be sensed in the crayon etching activity at the nursery setting.

Today’s activity is a continuation of an activity children have done yesterday. They layered a rainbow of colourful crayons onto a small piece of white paper and then covered the colour medley with black ink. Today, the young practitioner invited a first group of children to make an etching of a pear onto the papers they prepared the day before. The first group of children considered ‘competent’ by the practitioners sits around the main artmaking table and happily begins to etch with a sharp wooden skewer. They are enjoying the activity, chatting, making marks as they rub the black ink away. The main practitioner does not spend much time around
the activity leaving the kids and the new, young, teachers to deal with the activity on their own.
Suddenly, the young practitioner notices that the activity is not working out as she imagined. The ink doesn’t really come off and colourful crayons underneath are barely visible.
Girl 1 "It’s not working for me."
G2 "It’s working for me. See."
Practitioner [goes to girl 1 to help her etch] “[inaudible]” [struggles to make a visible difference in the image]
[Some children seem happy with the little differences they are making to their paper showing off the marks they have. Others are showing that the skewer is not working.]
Practitioner 1: “I think that you didn’t put enough crayon.” [She seems distressed and disappointed, and it is clear that the activity failing took her by surprise.]
Practitioner 2 [wals over to see what the matter is and to assess the situation] “Perhaps it will be better, if you make it again.”
Practitioner 1 [to all] "Alright, let’s do it one more time, but this time we will make a thicker layer with the crayons."
[The children do not protest to having to redo the activity even though it was difficult for them to transfer crayon on the paper in the first place. They are happy because they can take the ‘failed’ image home. They begin colouring a new piece of paper enthusiastically using crayons. Children are supporting the teacher and continue experimenting with her.]
The first group of children are given a new piece of white paper. They are colouring their blank paper with layers of crayon colours with a commitment, even though it is very difficult for them. Their hands and arms are hurting as transferring crayon on a paper requires them to engage their hand and arm muscles. Children are encouraging each other, and some children also start helping each other. Two girls are working on the same paper now.
Researcher [to two friends] "Girls, are you both working on this? That is a nice idea."
Girl 1 "I am just helping a little."
Researcher "Sure. You can help each other, that’s right. When your hands get tired, the other one can take over."
The practitioner and the teaching assistant, who are helping some of the children, are also struggling.
Researcher [notices the teaching assistant struggle and begins joking with her] "Alright, next picture, please."
Teaching Assistant [smiles to the researcher] "My shoulders are in pain already."
Girl 2 [turns to teaching assistant] "Try to stretch, Ms. Like this."
Teaching Assistant [joking] "I am afraid my shoulder will pop out."
Teaching Assistant [turns to another child] "Should I change with you?"
Girl 1 [Nods in agreement]
Teaching Assistant "Alright, I will take a seat here then."

The practitioners are now either sitting next to the children, leaning over them, or drawing very close them. They are all interacting within a small area of a white piece of paper. Hands and crayons are dancing around each other in fast paced yet careful motions as the practitioners and children rub crayons on a sheet of paper.

The second group of children the practitioners consider less able, all of whom are boys, are invited to the table to take their turn. They are not given a chance to try to do the etching. They are given a new piece of paper right away. The boys sit down and begin to work. They are not complaining at all. They are using force to transfer the colour on their paper. They are showing each other their muscles and clearly enjoy that the activity requires strength. The boys seem eager and proud to show off their strength. They were showing off their powerful, long strokes that are leaving thick marks that soon cover the entire surface of their paper. One of the boys keeps talking about the fast motion he was using to colour his sheet of paper even after the activity is over. There is a scent of excitement and uncertainty whether the project will work out this time or not as the children place their drawings on a windowsill after they are done. Have the children and teachers transfer enough colour onto the paper? Children are very involved and eager to help practitioners and each other to make sure that this time the activity works out.

[M_obs_2018-10-01; M_360s_2018-10-01; M_vid_2018-10-01_a-b]

The encounters around crayon etching activity were unusual and different from all other encounters in the setting. During the etching activity, practitioners faced a failure through which they changed. They acted confused, vulnerable, and uncertain. They seemed indecisive and helpless while children on the other hand continued etching in different ways to see the different marks appear on their paper. Some children turned their skewer around and other proposed to employ other objects for etching. Holding on to their papers, the children were proactive and imaginative as they pushed the activity forward. They were not giving up. They were trans/forming the etching activity by becoming with/in/through proximity, creativity, and multiplicity. Nevertheless, the practitioners decide to redo the activity. Instead of throwing their paper away, children asked to keep it, again negotiating the distance between them and their inked paper.

As they were given a blank piece of paper, children did not protest and get on with colouring despite the fact that drawing with crayon was a strenuous activity for them. The children—crayons—paper—hands—practitioners encounter became a trans/formative
encounter in which practitioners were drawn closer to the artmaking table. The children—crayons—paper—hands—pain—practitioners were physically intertwining as they were working together. Feeling their aching bodies, the children and practitioners were encouraging and helping each other. A young girl even advised one of the practitioners to try the exercise children were often encouraged to do in the setting when their hands ached during writing or artmaking activities. New territories and subjectivities were being co-produced. The boys who were normally considered ‘less able’ emerged out of the encounters as strong, capable, and powerful. Their drawings had a thicker layer of crayon, and they seemed proud of what they had achieved as they continued talking about their strength and the activity long after it was over.

During the etching activity, both human and more-than-human participants were (dis)stancing, (re)creating, and (be)coming, meaning both being and changing, through different trans/formative encounters. The multiplicity that emerged as new ways of being and doing with others entangled with mundane creativities and new forms of togetherness and manifested as a reworking of relationships and co-construction of common worlds. The children could take their first etchings home which made them happy as they were normally not allowed to take their work home. The teachers became artmaking participants and felt the physical effects of pressing crayon on to a paper. The crayons were disappearing and changing shape as they were being pressed, swiped, and transferred onto a blank piece of paper and then painted over.

During the etching event, the normative practice was not only disrupted but also reinvented, not through an individual genius or a person in charge, but through responsive remaking of relationships manifested as the becoming with/in/through proximity, creativity, and multiplicity. The productive forces generated by the continuous, shared response to the iterative emergence of chaos and messiness brought about a warm, generative, happy, and familiar atmosphere in which new ways of being/doing/becoming with others emerged as a site or territory at the intersection of artmaking and educational justice where new possibilities for living justly materialise.

*Paper—boy—practitioner*

Multiplicity, as discussed here, conceptualises difference as a relational process rather than a particular state. Such multiplicity does not other and does not insist for difference to be included as a part of fair and just classroom. Instead, multiplicity speaks to the ways
“differences that matter” (Barad, 2003, p. 803) are produced as a part of relational encounters, and thus points to the possibility of a “new kind of bonding” (Braidotti, 1993, p. 10) in which difference has the capacity not only for disruption but also for interconnectedness. How multiplicity brings about difference that can be understood as both constructive and deconstructive is enacted in the encounter between a boy, practitioner, black pencil, and colourful markers in the clubhouse setting.

The clubhouse is quiet today. The only boy who arrived minutes ago is seated right next to the practitioner. The practitioner is thumbing through a thick folder full of previous art ideas and projects she has done with children in the past. The boy next to her is observing and looking at pictures with together with her when he notices a scrap piece of paper tucked in among drawings in the practitioner’s folder. He picks it up and begins scribbling superheroes.

Boy [to researcher] "This one is [inaudible]." [The boy has a particular speech impediment, and the researcher struggles to understand him well.]

Practitioner [to the boy] "Would you like a paper? You can first draw something on a piece of plain paper and then we can even take out a construction paper."

Boy [Nods.]

Practitioner [Hands the boy a clean white blank piece of plain paper.]

Boy [Draws large figure of Bart Simpson with an ease. He draws every line with certainty as if he drew that particular image many times before.]

Practitioner [to researcher] "He really draws well."

Boy [Begins colouring the image. After he is done, he folds it as if he is intending to bring it home with him.]

Practitioner [Gets up and pulls out a sheet of quality card paper from a back drawer. She hands it to the boy.]

Boy [Asks for scissors which he is also given. He draws three large boxes onto the card and wants to cut them out.]

Practitioner [to the boy] "Well, at least colour them in first." [She proposes in a concerned voice and closes her folder.]

According to the practitioner, construction paper is only given away if a child is ready to draw ‘seriously’ and put an effort into drawing a ‘nice’ image. When the boy draws three thick blocks and begins to cut them out and experiments by cutting the shapes further, the practitioners is not happy but does not stop the boy. Paper is a highly valued resource at the clubhouse which is carefully monitored and distributed as not to be wasted.
Boy [Chooses one piece of the piece he cut out and draws an image of a vampire heart.]
Practitioner [to the boy] "And how about colouring it in?" [Still visibly concerned the paper is being wasted unless it is being coloured in.] "Or you want to keep it black and white?" [Asking cautiously, perhaps in response to the presence of the researcher.]
Boy "Sure, I will colour it in." [Answers with confidence and agreeableness and colours his picture with colour pencils.]
Researcher "So is it better in colour, or did you prefer the black and white look?"
Boy "Yeah, it’s better in colour."
Researcher "Do you enjoy colouring?"
Boy "I do. Look here. It’s a girl heart." [Smiles while showing his image off.]
Practitioner [opens her folder again] "Here. Here is a bookmark. You can take it home with you. And look there is another one." [Seems happier now and hands the boy several old bookmarks she found among her papers.]
Boy [Accepts the bookmarks and begins colouring them.]

At the end, B1 returns colour pencils he has been using back to the supplies closet where he found them. In the pencil box nearby, he discovers a black marker. He grabs it and uses it to outline his Dracula girl heart drawing. Afterwards he walks back to the supplies closet behind the counter where he discovers more markers which he brings to the table. He continues layering more colour with markers onto his drawings.

[D_obs_2018-09-26]
The initial encounter between the practitioner and the boy connected them as they were both interested in looking at drawings in the practitioner’s folder. Their interest was the same and brought them together. Then the boy diverged and grabbed a scrap piece of paper to draw on his own while the practitioner continued thumbing through her folder. The practitioner was responsive to the boy’s difference as he wished to draw rather than observe. She offered him a blank piece of paper which he accepted. The encounter between the boy—paper—pencil became different as he was now able to draw a large figure which pleased the practitioner who took out valuable construction paper and handed it to the boy. There was a relational intensity, an entangling, among paper—boy—practitioner in which the boy—drawing—practitioner negotiated their proximity. The encounter led to the boy asking for scissors which he used to cut the construction paper into smaller, square-shaped pieces. The encounter among the boy—scissors—paper—pencils was different, unexpected, and new and made the practitioner uncomfortable.
The boy became multiple as he developed different ways of doing and being with materials in front of him. The practitioner was worried and urged the boy to “at least colour” the image to meet her expectations. The boy did not mind obliging her and coloured his image. He was pleased with his work: a Dracula girl heart. He giggled and showed it off to the researcher. The practitioner was pleased too and rewarded the boy with a blank bookmark which led to another new art project. The relations were constantly developing as participants changed and became multiple, and as new ways of being and doing emerged. The relationships were creative and productive and led to differences that were both disruptive and connective and brought participants, the boy, the construction paper, the practitioner, the scissors, and the markers together and apart. Indeed, each new input, the practitioner’s plea for colour, newly found markers, or cutting, led to new relations and creativities to emerge and intensify.

It is therefore not radical difference that points to constructive, ethical, and response-able ways of being, and instead, it is the proximity of actors and their relational intensities that are creative, multiple and constantly re/configuring, and trans/form ways of being and doing with others. Such an understanding of multiplicity as it is intimately entangled with proximity and creativity opens up new understandings around just and ethical ways of being and doing in early years settings and begins to situate trans/formative encounters in and around artmaking activities.

11.3.2 Discussion: Bonding
Attending to and thinking-with trans/formative encounters and tracing the process of becoming of response-ability draws attention to how response-able educational encounters around artmaking in the three early years settings in a specific community manifest as the reworking of togetherness and co-construction of common worlds. Similarly to proximity and creativity, multiplicity is then not a capacity inherent to an individual. Multiplicity as discussed here speaks to thinking beyond neoliberal concept of human capital in which multiplicity, the accumulation of skills and abilities, is valorised for enabling individuals to work and produce more (Petersen & O’Flynn, 2007). Instead, multiplicity as materialised in the observed instances in this study, is a process, a relational production of subjectivity, in which the ‘self’ is not only constantly changing but also fundamentally entangled with and in a process of becoming with multiple others.
Multiplicity is therefore an emergent property, not of an individual, but of a community. Thinking with Braidotti (1993), such multiplicity defines a third space, a site where radical differences come together, and thus produces a new kind of bonding. Braidotti (1993) describes bonding as a “collectivity resting on the recognition of differences” (pp.10-11). Attending to multiplicity as a space of communal correspondence, brings attention to the coming together of a nursery setting, a family centre, a clubhouse, the various tables, art supplies, glue, children, and adults, and their becoming together. The trans/formative encounters, that emerge within this “throwtogetherness,” as Massey (2005, p. 135) describes the messy and thorny more-than-human relations in place, generate new conditions of being and doing together. It is where its participants learn to live together with difference. Such a reframing of multiplicity disrupts the neoliberal relations of exploitation in which difference, or diversity, is just another feel-good commodity (Scarritt, 2019), and instead affirms relations of response-ability.

The coming together of various people, objects, place, and time in relationships of response and response-ability is not easy. Such encounters are rich and collective but not seamless, as Puig de la Bellacasa (2012) writes that dissent is an important part of them. Barad (2015) points to tensions inherent to all matter in which any entanglement, or coming together, always involves both attraction and repulsion. Indeed, Barad (2010) maintains that:

“Responsibility is by necessity an asymmetrical relation/doing, an enactment, a matter of différance, of intra-action, in which no one/ no thing is given in advance or ever remains the same. Only in this ongoing responsibility to the entangled other, without dismissal (without ‘enough already!’), is there the possibility of justice-to-come” (pp.264-265)

Thus, the multiplicity defined here refers to differences that do not stand in conflict or opposition, and instead are interdependent, affirmative, and productive, in a state of constant entangling and differentiating (Barad in Kleinman, 2012; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2012). It is therefore not radical alterity, but rather the collectivity of differences, that forms the basis of ethical understanding in this study, as Gammelgaard (2014) points out, that “we are always entangled and differences are temporary and contingent – the products of differential intra-actions and not inherent properties” (p.55). Ethical, response-able, trans/formative encounters are therefore not about social inclusion, or any other “right response to radically exteriorized other,” as this study argues with Barad (2007), but about
response-ability, “the accountability for the lively relationalities of becoming of which we are a part” (p. 393).

Summarising this section, then, it has been argued that in order to understand how and where just, response-able encounters materialise, it is important to look beyond diversity and instead pay attention to how differences emerge and what they do, the (im)possibilities they generate. Indeed, as Taylor and Giugni (2012) write “In order for communities to survive, they must attend to their common interests” (p.108). Thus, building on Taylor and Giugni, this study suggests that in order to generate and build just, response-able common worlds, communities must attend to the ways just, response-able relations emerge as situated, more than-human encounters. This study then attends to how response-able, just, transformative encounters in and around artmaking in early years settings manifest through becoming with/in/through proximity, creativity, and multiplicity, and how their entanglement brings alive a place of transition that serves as a catalyst for change.

What is made in common in and around artmaking in early years settings in this study is the touching, growing, and bonding that makes the impossible possible in the process of building common worlds. It is argued here that to build response-able and just classrooms it is fundamental to consider which encounters are and can be made possible rather than how others, i.e. children, parents, teachers, objects, or artmaking, should or need to be changed.
12 PROPOSING: In/conclusion

“A Whiteheadian proposition [...] is a risk, an opening to what is not yet. A proposition is also an opening to become with those with whom we are not yet.”
- Haraway (2007, p.93)

Rather than concluding and closing the matter of the arts in education and educational justice, the last chapter in this thesis is a proposition. That is, it hopes to do more than simply provide a brief summary and reflection on each chapter of the thesis. Its objective is to do more than set out an overview of this study’s contributions and its implication for policy, practice, and daily living. The final chapter again entangles and responds to the reflections, diffractions, concepts, and implications brought forward in this study in order to offer new topics for further discussion. It diffracts, and thus responds to Barad (2014) and Haraway (2007b) who challenge researchers to disrupt and allow differences to show differing. The conclusion is conceptualised through Springgay’s (2019) concept of ‘speculative proposition’. A conclusion chapter framed as a proposition, invites immersion and involvement in the “friction, anxiety, strain, and quivering unease of doing research differently” (Springgay & Truman, 2018, p. 204). The aim is to incite further action through the challenging and potentially discomforting encounters with the inquiry and its implications in this study. Thus, the chapter aims to show the benefits of thinking differently and reinhabiting any ruptures that materialise in order to start re-imagining and re-enacting educational justice differently together.

12.1 General overview of the contributions

12.1.1 Rethinking social inclusion

This thesis has presented a new, expanded inquiry into processes of social inclusion and exclusion around artmaking in early years settings, and suggests that current limited understandings of social inclusion impede the efforts to tackle and address educational (in)justices. Narrowly defined conceptions of educational justice are not only exposed to political and ideological bias, but they also prevent inquiry into the complexity of inequalities inherent to European, institutional, historical, cultural, and interpersonal practices. Moreover they inhibit the development of new and just educational practices. As argued earlier (see 2.1.2 Social inclusion in education), inclusive education that lies at the heart of the social inclusion project has struggled in dealing with educational inequalities. Instead, it
has been found to reinforce and deepen inequalities by promoting neoliberal agenda driven by capitalist mindset and worrying discourse around access, attainment, performance, and employability.

This study carefully maps how different processes beyond social inclusion and exclusion are enacted and made in and around artmaking in three settings working with young children and families from historically disadvantaged backgrounds in a small town in the Czech Republic. The in-depth ethnographic inquiry brings attention to the significance of more-than-human, trans/formative encounters around artmaking activities that reorient thinking about social inclusion and exclusion towards different possibilities for educational justice. The study does not merely question or challenge current practices, it creates an opportunity for conversations around the question of ‘what next?’ by offering alternatives, vocabularies, and different routes towards rethinking educational justice in the early 21st century. Thinking again with Engel, Holford, and Pimlott-Wilson (2010), the study seeks to view educational justice as more than a set of strategies and practices employed by teachers to involve all children in classroom learning. It aims to show how educational justice can become a way of being and doing around learning, and artmaking specifically, that “permeates” through people and place, and grows through affective, close relationships (Engel et al., 2010, p. 153).

12.1.2 Developing a novel theoretical and methodological framework

Drawing on the posthuman turn that has radically shifted what is possible in research (Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2016b; Haraway, 2016; Kuby, 2017; Kuntz & St.Pierre, 2020; Ringrose, Warfield, & Zarabadi, 2019; Ulmer, 2017), this study crafts a novel theoretical and methodological framework to attend differently to processes of social inclusion and exclusion, and to think in different, ethical ways about the intersection of artmaking and educational justice. The study engages posthumanist and new materialist theories (Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2016b; Haraway, 2016; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017a; Ringrose et al., 2019), and draws on eco-behavioural science theories (Barker, 1968, 1978) to reorient inquiry away from people towards what Barker (1978) calls “extraindividual assemblies” (p.33). Such assemblies are the full ecological environment of more-than-human encounters that underlie social inclusion and exclusion around artmaking events. Moreover, thinking-with Barad’s (2010) work that draws on quantum theories, this study attends to more-than-human encounters (macro-scale) through particle interactions (micro scale), in order to, first, remove analysis away from human-centred inquiry and, second, reconsider the fundamental
elements of classroom encounters, such as barriers and agency. Novel reconceptualization of trans/formative encounters through inventive thinking—with the quantum tunnelling paradox shows that trans/formative classroom encounters generate processes that make the impossible possible. The study then suggests and outlines how non-habitual, non-standard, more-than-human, affective encounters open up new possibilities for new ways of being and doing together, and what is more, that they are essential for building towards educational justice-to-come. Finally, the study argues that new possibilities for living justly do not emerge as a result of an external energy, practice, or policy, it is the coming together of different people, objects, place, and time in relations of response.

This study also develops a novel approach to ethnography, and a set of new, response-able methods (360-degree video recordings, (inter)views, and participant observation conceptualised as a process of becoming-with), to assist in the objective of attending to the processes of inclusion and exclusion not only differently but also ethically. This study proposes that in order to bring ethnography into focus in the early 21st century and advance its methods, it is essential to bring back what is at its heart, that is committed, affirmative, and ethical relationships. Creative approaches to ethnographic practice together with a more robust discussion of the essential and the less essential features of ethnography can both reaffirm the value of ethnography in providing alternative ways of thinking and doing inquiry in the Anthropocene and reinvigorate ethnographic inquiry as an approach fit for the demands of the 21st century. To develop ethnography as an ethical, new materialist and posthumanist practice, this study forefronts relationality, response-ability, and risk as essential features. The ethnography argued for here is a relational process of becoming-with, a particular embodied and even intimate encounter of differences, that does not seek to objectify and instead attends to, learns from and is open to being affected by others. It is a practice that is deeply concerned with asymmetry of power between the researcher and those the researcher encounters in the field, and therefore is committed to employing non-essentialist values and responsibilities in which asymmetry of power is always present but never static. The study therefore positions responsibility and accountability for research encounters and practices at the centre of its ways of becoming-with others in a research assemblage. Listening, responding, and opening up to change are risky and precarious processes but they allow for inquiry to become expansive, complex, and abductive which disrupts normalised ways of thinking and instead generates new ways of knowing, seeing, feeling, experiencing, and becoming with processes of social inclusion and exclusion around artmaking activities in early years settings.
12.1.3 Reconsidering the role of artmaking

The thesis also paves the way for attending to the arts, and artmaking specifically, as far more than a miraculous tool or a process that positively effects social cohesion and promotes social inclusion. This study moves beyond simplified notions of causality and, drawing on Barad (in Dolphijn & Van der Tuin, 2012), attends instead to the relationship among artmaking, education, and educational justice as complex, multiple, and affective by mapping and thinking-with the various processes and entities in and around artmaking activities. Thinking about artmaking differently allows this study to reorient inquiry towards new directions for educational justice in and around the arts as well as to gain a more profound relational and ethical awareness that is necessary when adopting a new materialist and posthumanist approach to taking notice of differences at the intersection of artmaking and educational justice.

Building on Barker (1978), this study conceptualises artmaking as more than merely an individual or social practice, but rather as a behaviour setting, an extra-individual, ecological event during which new ways of being and doing are made together and in common. By drawing attention to artmaking as a collective, more-than-human practice, this study aims to show how more-than-human communities participate in shaping ways of being, doing, and becoming together, and as such play a fundamental role in in the advancement of educational justice. It is thinking with Taylor and Giugni (2012) who write that communities cannot thrive or survive if they do not pay attention to what they make in common, which, as proposed here, is their emergent properties. This study therefore argues that to build towards response-able and just educational futures it is necessary to consider which encounters are made possible rather than how the participants, the children, parents, teachers, objects, place or the making and doing in and around the artmaking in early years settings, need to be corrected and improved.

12.2 Summary of the research

12.2.1 Summary of aims and objectives

In summary, the aims of this study were to:

a) explore and expand understanding of the processes of social inclusion and exclusion around artmaking activities in early years settings
b) develop new ways of attending to the relationship between artmaking and educational justice

c) attend to the rich complexity and collectiveness of artmaking encounters and their role in educational justice in order to inquire what else is there beyond inclusion and exclusion and begin addressing educational justice in and around the arts differently

To achieve these objectives, this study conducted a full literature review of research in the topics of social inclusion, inclusive education, and the arts in education, and developed an innovative methodology and methods to inquire about the topic ethically and anew. An alternative analytical approach framed around the concept of sense-making was laid out. Finally, new ways of thinking about just interactions and the relation between artmaking and educational justice were offered together with new propositions for thinking about educational justice differently and implications of such an endeavour for policy and practice.

12.2.2 Summary of literature review

The literature review outlined how social inclusion, the arts, and education are not only fundamentally entangled, but most importantly how they are conceptualised and understood in simplistic ways that limit the possibilities for productively employing both the arts and inclusive practices towards educational justice. Both social inclusion and the arts in education are popular and prominent approaches to educational inequality across the global north while being firmly rooted in very specific social agendas and neoliberal discourses. Thus, as this study argues, they are embedded in specific institutional, normative frameworks and the capitalist logic of individualism and production that perpetuate hegemonic practices and injustices. As inequalities and injustices, specifically educational injustices, persist, new imaginations and discussions of alternative approaches, principles, and visions for educational justice must be developed and materialised. The intersection of social inclusion, the arts, and education is therefore a rich site for an exploration of wider issues of educational justice and for opening up new possibilities for educational justice to come.

12.2.3 Summary of methodology

To address the gap and begin new conversations around the arts and educational justice beyond social inclusion, the study set out three research questions to aid in this endeavour:
1. What processes are enacted in and around artmaking in the early years settings beyond social inclusion and exclusion and what they do?

2. How can inquiry into what appears impossible reorient thinking about educational justice in and around artmaking in early years settings?

3. What else can thinking diffractively about the web of more-than-human relations across the different early years settings in one community reveal about the intersection of artmaking and educational justice?

This study approached its research questions through a robust methodological framework and engaged novel ethnographic methods generated through situated encounters with children, people, objects, and settings in the community in this study to learn more and gain new understandings. Adopting anti-anthropocentric, ecological, ethical, and affirmative ways of thinking and inquiring, it made particular ontological, epistemological, and ethical commitments, yet was able to engage, navigate, and think-with different theories, and thus produce an expansive and complex ways of inquiring.

Such an approach was reflected in its methods. Indeed, while fundamentally connected to traditional notions of ethnography, engaging with a field of varied concepts critically and creatively allowed this study to develop and enact a new materialist ethnography that is relational, response-able and risky (for the discussion see 4.2 Ethnography <-> New materialist ethnography). Moreover, a range of new ethnographic, response-able methods that have been advanced through the immersion and tensions in the field, informed this methodological approach. Participant observation in this study turned into a practice of becoming-with, which in the field helped build safe, ethical, and productive relationships based on profound reciprocity. It transformed research encounters into a ‘multi-voiced,’ responsive, and transformative research assemblage. A 360-degree video disrupted both normative recording and viewing research practices as well as understandings of video data by: bringing attention to encounters of multiple modalities, being disruptive and sensitive to the more-than-human elements of encounters, and by being in movement. Finally, ethnographic conversational interviews became (inter)views and conceptualised as intra-active events in which multiple bodies and forces come together to co-create knowledge and meaning through the collective coming together and the entangling of various stories and enunciations rather than through individual stories. These methods opened the study up to new affirmative ways of doing research and thinking with the material-discursive phenomenon of social inclusion and exclusion in and around
artmaking. The methodology challenged this study to be flexible, open to change and to become-with others in the research assemblage.

12.2.4 Summary of analytical framework

The analytical framework in this study provides a series of steps taken to analyse and make sense of the various process beyond social inclusion and exclusion in and around artmaking activities and the encounters that underlie them. It sets out three different stages of analysis: boundary sensing, (wonder)ing-with data, and diffraction. The first stage of analysis attended to the first research question and provided a sense of the various enactments beyond social inclusion and exclusion around artmaking, how they become determinate, and what they do within artmaking events. In the next step, the analysis challenged normative understandings of classroom encounters by focusing on what seems impossible and defies easy explanations at the intersection of artmaking and educational justice. This stage of the analysis helped to move the inquiry around the second research question beyond what is obvious, and to open the research towards new fruitful ideas and possibilities by thinking with the quantum tunnelling paradox. Lastly, the diffractive stage of analysis assisted in attending to the final research question by producing different connections that drive the inquiry away from normative readings, and instead challenge the study to produce readings that disperse across time and spaces and reorient thinking.

12.2.5 Summary of findings and discussion

Finally, the findings and discussion chapters addressed the three research questions guiding this study. They generated novel understandings of what collective enactment of response-able relations in and around artmaking in early years settings may mean for educational justice. Thinking-with the first research question and the various processes in and around artmaking activities beyond social inclusion and exclusion in three early years settings, the study proposed that the processes at the intersection of artmaking and educational justice are more than one-directional, normative, and human centred. They are heterogenous, multidirectional, more-than-human, and collective processes. They are multidimensional processes during which more than inclusion or exclusion happens.

Producing the initial typology of the various processes brought attention to the infrequent entangling, or trans/formative, processes through which new approaches to educational justice emerged. During these processes children-adults-objects-place converged and became otherwise in unexpected ways that not only transformed their ways of being together but also introduced new ways of being together in and around artmaking.
Thinking with the second research question and quantum tunnelling paradox, this study reconsidered educational justice as a process firmly rooted in response-able relationships in which exposure to difference, to the ‘other’, produces a particular collective enactment of agency that leads to a particular transgression of/with/in barriers. Such a process brings about ways of being and doing together that were considered impossible and yet are fundamental for building towards common worlds and educational justice-to-come.

Lastly, the inquiry around the third research question proposes where and how possibilities for educational justice around artmaking might materialise, that is, through the coming together of: proximity, creativity, and multiplicity. These are further conceptualised and manifest as interwoven relational enactments of (dis)stancing, mundane creativities, and particular togetherness and highlight that what makes the impossible possible in the enactment of educational justice in and around artmaking in early years settings, are the processes of touching, growing, and bonding. The study concludes that these intra-active processes bring alive a place of transition that serves as a catalyst for change, and therefore offer an important starting point for rethinking how to continue co-producing and co-enacting educational justice in and around artmaking in early years settings and beyond through the collectivity of differences.

12.3 Contribution and implications

12.3.1 Education for all

This study contributes to a discourse on social inclusion and exclusion by highlighting that social inclusion as an approach to inequality, and specifically educational inequality, is too narrowly defined around neoliberal values, and very poorly understood. This hinders the development of meaningful and effective educational policies and practices for educational justice. Children have an inalienable right to fully participate in mainstream education in which access must be matched by quality (United Nations, 1989). Thus, while securing access is important this study posits that it must go hand in hand with robust discussions on what quality or full participation mean in relation to educational justice. With educational inequalities on the rise again, this study argues that it is time to stop emphasizing outcomes and employment, a narrow set of neoliberal targets evident in the current structure for early years provisions in the UK, over quality relationships. Instead, it is suggested here that response-able, positive, quality relationships that generate collective, new, and ethical
classroom practices are essential for addressing educational injustices and for building better educational futures for all.

This study finds that social inclusion and exclusion around artmaking are multidimensional processes during which more than integration, inclusion, or even exclusion happens. Moreover, the study shows that other than inclusive processes, which promote equality of opportunity and access, matter. Relational processes during which various participants come together and entangle in a relationship of reciprocation and responsiveness are more powerful because they are transformative, as the various encounters in this study indicate. Trans/formative, rather than inclusive, encounters lead not only to change in practice but also in participants. These encounters are heterogenous rather than habitual and homogenous. They are multi-directional, meaning that multiple participants actively contribute to making them happen. They are also more-than-human, revealing the importance of inquiring and approaching educational justice ecologically by attending carefully to the relationship between people and their environments.

Thinking and probing the trans/formative encounters with the quantum tunnelling paradox, this study does more than broaden the definition of social inclusion and exclusion. It provides new directions in tackling educational inequalities by challenging current understandings of barriers and agency. It proposes and illustrates that barriers, which in these instances were materialised through particular situated biases, are neither static nor impermeable as is normally understood. Moreover, they are an essential part of trans/formative encounters. Having a robust knowledge of barriers is therefore crucial for developing new and ethical classroom practices as well as building towards educational justice-to-come. This study also suggests that to move beyond these barriers, an internal and collective rather than external and individual input of energy, or agency, is needed. What this means is that in order to trans/form classrooms and classroom processes towards more just and fair educational futures, educational policy and practice need to stop placing all responsibility on individuals, such as teachers and parents, and imposing external, standardised methods. Instead, policy and practice should look to and support what children, adults and their artmaking environments together do and make possible in early years settings already. They then need to engage and respond to the different possibilities for living justly that children and adults in early years settings co-produce. These possibilities that lead to new imaginations are essential for the future of education and will not be generated otherwise. Thus, this study argues for the urgency to develop early years educational provisions that reflect not only children’s right to access education but also their right to
quality, full participation that does not build on simple and essentializing understandings of quality, just classroom encounters.

12.3.2 The arts in education

The arts have played a central role in inclusive educational practices, but rather than challenging the agenda of the neoliberal approach to education, it has more often than not been sustaining it. The arts in education and associated practices have therefore at times been complicit in the victimization, othering, homogenization, and sometimes even exclusion of marginalised groups. Traditional approaches to the arts in education therefore no longer prove to be useful as very little is still known about the complex nature and the intersection of the arts, and the being and making in and around the arts, in relation to educational justice. There is hence a need to attend to the arts in education differently in order to learn about the arts in education and their intersections with educational justice, in which the arts are more than problem-solvers or tools meant to include, improve, or change the marginalised groups to help them overcome their circumstances. There is a need to attend to the arts differently beyond the notion of effects. Indeed, this study is driven by the provocation that the “arts don’t do anything” (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013, p. 222). The research presented in this thesis therefore responds to the call for more in-depth studies that focus on contextualised interactions around the arts to make sense of what actually happens around the arts in order to counter the often universalizing, essentializing, and human-centred discourses of the previous developmental and post-developmental research in this field. Instead, this study attends carefully to ways of being and making together with others, people, and objects, in and around artmaking in order to reframe the arts in education and educational justice discourse and disrupt normalised ways of approaching, engaging with, and thinking about the arts in education.

This study opens new possibilities and understanding of the intersection between the arts and educational justice by reframing artmaking as an extra-individual activity, a practice of enacting the world collaboratively, and by locating and thinking-with conditions through which the possibilities for trans/formative, response-able, and just encounters around artmaking emerge and what they do. The study then identifies three processes that emerge from trans/formative encounters in and around artmaking in the settings in this study: (dis)stancing, mundane creativities, and reworking of togetherness. Moreover, the study shows how the coming together of these relational processes brings alive a place of transition that serves as a catalyst for change towards more just educational futures. It
indicates that artmaking is a particular extra-individual behaviour in which different entangled processes and encounters, such as (dis)stancing, mundane creativities and reworking of togetherness, co-create spaces where just practices constantly (re)materialise.

The processes of negotiation of proximity, or (dis)stancing, are in this study conceptualised as proximity in relation rather than location, which opens educational justice up to understanding just processes as more than relations of closeness but also as relations of distance. Thinking-with the processes of negotiating proximity, this study challenges notions of centre and periphery and proposes that both distance and closeness is a productive site where trans/formative encounters emerge and thinking beyond inclusion and exclusion begins. Moreover, such processes are not adult driven, nor adult centred, they are shared endeavours. Thus, this study develops the conceptualization of proximity in educational justice and proposes new directions around discourse on the production of difference and asymmetry between centre and periphery. New framing of proximity speaks to the multi-centeredness of just classroom processes in and around artmaking. This means that neither practitioners nor dominant classroom practices (e.g. painting) are necessarily the cause or at the centre of these processes. Moving beyond the traditional discourse of centre and periphery towards multi-centred classroom processes, this study argues, is then fundamental for rethinking educational justice as a relational, rather than an individual, effort in which negotiation of proximity has the potential to create productive spaces where trans/formative encounters materialise new possibilities for educational justice-to-come.

This study further observes that creativity emerges as fundamentally connected to proximity and materialises as a communal process, a process of being/doing/becoming with others grounded in “attentiveness to differences that matter” (Barad, 2007, p. 382). Thus, thinking-with the various instances of trans/formative encounters points to creativity that is more than an individual possession or a particular skill to be gained, and instead, it is an assemblage of emerging creativities brought forth through the tensions between closeness and distance. This study then crucially expands current understandings of creativity by highlighting the various creativities that are materialised in and around artmaking. It also encourages new thinking about creativities as more-than-human processes in which both human and non-human participants co-construct new ways of being and doing together that lead to further creativities. Mundane creativities arise out of the messiness and tensions of different ways of being and doing together around artmaking rather than out of individuals or specific practices, a finding pertinent not only to educational policy and programmes but also to early years and arts education practitioners in particular.
This study then reframes and uplifts creativities as a part of mundane, daily encounters beyond artmaking and production of what is traditionally perceived as ‘valuable commodities’ (e.g. artwork, innovation). It is argued here that mundane creativities fundamental for building towards educational justice-to-come are enactments of relations rather than enactments of production. Such creativities disrupt hegemonic practices, and thus function as an important aspect of just educational practices during which more-than-human classrooms grow and change. This study argues and emphasises that just, ethical processes around artmaking are not necessarily the result of the arts or creativity, as it is normally proposed. Creativities are essential for building and working towards just educational futures, but they flow in and out and from response-able classroom relationships, and thus are a part of the conditions for educational justice to materialise.

Finally, also multiplicity entangles and materialises in relation to proximity and creativity, as the data demonstrate. Such multiplicity is ontological. Rather than referring to multiple identities of an individual, it speaks to a particular communal correspondence, a process in which artmaking participants are continuously becoming different through artmaking encounters. Thus, becoming multiple around artmaking is a relational process rather than a signifier of subjectivity, in which radical differences come together in a relationship of response and produce a new kind of bonding that, drawing on Braidotti (1993), can be described as a “collectivity resting on the recognition of differences” (pp.10-11). In becoming multiple, artmaking participants’ subjectivities are not only constantly changing but more importantly they are fundamentally entangled with and in the process of becoming with multiple others. Differences that arise from the processes of becoming multiple are not inherent properties and instead they are generative of further, new encounters that have the potential to challenge and disrupt normative classroom practices.

Such multiplicity does not other and does not exploit difference, or diversity, as a convenient commodity for democratic classrooms. Instead, multiplicity introduced here speaks to the ways radical differences are produced as a part of relational encounters that make possible a “new kind of bonding” (Braidotti, 1993, p. 10). This study therefore proposes that difference has the capacity not only for disruption but also for interconnectedness. Moreover, rather than radical alterity, it argues for the fundamental role of collectivity of differences in building towards educational justice-to-come. Becoming multiple, as it is suggested here, is a responsive remaking of relationships that not only disrupts but also reinvents normative classroom practices, such as artmaking, in a process of building towards
just educational futures. Becoming multiple is therefore a fundamental process to be studied and attended to in educational justice research.

To conclude, educational justice in and around artmaking is more than a set of predetermined practices, goals, and outcomes, such as social inclusion. It is a collective process of touching, growing, and bonding during which intra-actions among children, adults, objects, and place become life-sustaining moments that work towards just educational futures as they come to be and fall apart just to be reconstructed again. Rather than approaching educational justice through artmaking, or the arts more broadly, this study suggests, it is time to pay attention to how just, ethical, response-able ways of being and doing around the arts, and artmaking specifically, materialise through different, complex, and intertwining processes. These processes, which in this study were conceptualised as the (dis)stancing, mundane creativities, and reworking of togetherness, generate new, multiple ways of being and doing around artmaking activities, and thus become a productive site where trans/formative encounters materialise and thinking beyond social inclusion and exclusion begins. Artmaking and creative processes are therefore fundamental aspects of educational justice, but not in the sense of cause and effect. Instead, they are processes of enacting the world collectively during which (im)possible, response-able ways of being, doing, and living can emerge. It is proposed here that artmaking, and the arts more broadly, need to be released from the overwhelming responsibility of fixing and combating educational injustice. Instead, policymakers, researchers, practitioners, and families will need to learn to open up to and take-up the response-ability for the kind of encounters they make possible in early years settings, and educational settings in general, through processes of becoming with both human and non-human others on the worldmaking journey towards educational justice-to-come.

12.4 Future directions and propositions

This study of processes of social inclusion and exclusion around artmaking activities in early years settings starts a new conversation about the role of social inclusion and the arts in tackling educational injustices and inequalities. The study is by no means extensive or comprehensive as it inquiries about processes of social inclusion and exclusion around artmaking activities in just three settings in one community. Moreover, the research was conducted in a very specific community where a large proportion of inhabitants are families from low socio-economic backgrounds, some of whom are Roma. The focus on this particular
community was intentional as most arts and social inclusion interventions are often conducted in such communities and very often with ‘Roma’ children. Nevertheless, such a narrow focus does not allow for a broader understanding of the processes of social inclusion and exclusion and the role of the arts in other communities and settings (e.g. affluent, additional needs, urban, rural, border, religious). More studies that reach out and develop a close, ethical, and response-able research practice with diverse communities to study the intersection of the arts, education and educational justice are therefore needed. Social inclusion project is a pan-European phenomenon. More educational justice research should therefore be conducted with the diverse communities that are often ignored in the European context and whose specific needs and ways of being and doing have often been considered marginal in both policy and research. The following questions provide possible framings to such research:

- What are the encounters and practices of social inclusion and exclusion around artmaking and other learning activities in educational settings for Roma families in Hungary, or for child migrants in Sicily?
- How is social inclusion both enacted and practiced in different communities across Europe?
- How does the intersection of neoliberal discourse, the arts, and justice in education materialise and how does it affect policy and practice in different communities across Europe?

With this line of inquiry, this study aligns with Blížkovský (2006), who argues that the richer and more diverse the contribution of individual countries and regions to common values and understandings, the richer and stronger the European community will be.

This study engages, works with, listens, and responds to, more than 70 children and adults from both Roma and non-Roma backgrounds in one community through the process of becoming-with. Its methodology, methods, and findings are the result of co-production and both responsive and responsible ways of inquiring and thinking-together. Nevertheless, the study has a very narrow and very specific focus and aims that may not be reflective of the most current needs and concerns of the children and adults in the study. The thesis does not capture or provide platform for the marginalised community to share a wider range of their experiences in early years settings and urgent issues concerning their learning experiences. It cannot be stressed enough here that more explorative studies grounded in
response-able, ecological research practices are needed to continue the conversations among educational justice, arts, and education researchers and various learning communities. Future studies should develop close attentive, and response-able relationships specifically with children, adults and their environments in marginalised communities and engage in affirmative, productive, and co-constructive conversations and interactions that attend carefully to matters that concern them. One such direction could trace and map the label and self-designation ‘Roma,’ as it moves across a community, changes roles and meanings, and produces new subjectivities and topographies. There is also currently a woefully small number of studies and work concerning itself with Roma children’s opinions and experiences of schooling and learning despite the fact that they are more likely to have negative as opposed to positive experiences of education. More research that attends to the lived experiences and perceptions of children from diverse backgrounds and with diverse needs should be developed. Questions possibly pertinent to such a work are:

- How do children in different communities imagine happy, fair, and just education?
- How do children in different communities enact happy, fair, and just education together with peers and adults?
- What do children think and say about the arts and arts education they are offered and asked to engage with?
- Do classroom practices, such as artmaking and various practices for social inclusion, reflect what children themselves expect, wish, or already do themselves and in relation to others?

There is too little discussion and concern whether children have positive or negative experiences at school and why. Educational and social justice research should fill that gap.

This study also explores the various macro and micro encounters that underlie processes of social inclusion and exclusion around artmaking activities and points to trans/formative encounters and how they materialise to provide new ground for rethinking what educational justice is and could become in the future beyond inclusion. Nevertheless, more work is needed to get an even more detailed understanding of the micro-political relations within situated encounters in early years settings in which educational (in)justices are co-produced by various more-than-human actors. Having a robust body of research that attends to the contextualised micro-politics of more-than-human encounters in early years settings is
essential, as this is where the beginnings of social change and sustainable, just future materialise. Building on Murris (in Murris, Semenec, & Diaz-Diaz, 2020), this study challenges future educational justice research to expand its focus on what and who counts in early years settings. Indeed, in and around artmaking, this study observed, even the smallest particles had a very strong presence. Children loved to apply paint on their bodies and watch the pigment discolour their skin. Parents, on the other hand, feared the strengths of the pigment and dreaded seeing their children getting paint on their clothes. The difficulty of separating particles of paint from clothes or children’s skin was one of the reasons parents did not want to bring children to the family centre on days when painting was scheduled as the main activity. Yet paying attention to pigment is nevertheless only scratching the surface of the macro/micro encounters that happen in early years settings and around the arts. Questions below propose a line of inquiry interested in blurring the macro/micro divide:

- How can educational justice be attended to differently if sounds or smells, as particles, become important in early childhood research?
- How could artmaking events be understood differently if even the smallest encounters, such as the child-saliva-brush, are made to matter?

This study therefore proposes that more ecological research is needed to attend to the complex encounters across the macro/micro scales in early year settings.

Finally, this study offers several what-if propositions (Burnett et al., 2020) to generate thinking beyond what already is to what could be:

- What if artmaking is conceptualised, following Haraway (1992), as a topos rather than a behaviour setting? How could attending to artmaking as a ‘commonplace’ aid in re-inhabiting artmaking events in classrooms differently?
- How can a response-able research practice be enacted differently if conceptualised through Haraway’s (2016) storytelling as a practice that, besides (re)telling, involves also “comforting, inspiring, remembering, warning, nurturing compassion, mourning, and becoming-with each other”? (p. 148)
- What would future classrooms look and feel like, thinking with Gammelgaard (2014), if adults across educational policy, research and practice opened up to
the possibility that ethical ways of being together are central to classroom existence not something applied later?
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Appendix 1 Project Information Sheets

Figure 15 Informational flyer (original Czech document)
**Figure 16 Information sheet: parents (original Czech document)**

[Czech text from Figure 16]

**Figure 17 Information sheet: practitioners (original Czech document)**

[Czech text from Figure 17]
Show-and-Tell Activity

(An outline of the activity to be loosely followed)

Objects to show:
Notepad, video cameras, tripods, audio-recording device, thesis

Introduction
Hello, my name is Petra and I am a student. I go to school much like you go to preschool every day. I study at the Open University in the UK, a country that is only a few hours away by plane and where people speak mostly English. I came to your class because I heard that it is a very special class, full of very special children. And I was hoping that you, your parents, and your teachers, will give me the permission to stay with you for a while and learn from you about the way you make art. See, I would like to understand how the tools and materials your use to be creative help you in communicating your interests, needs and wishes, and in order to learn that, I will need your help.

Methods
What I need to do is to spend time in your class and watch very carefully when you make your art works. Look, I will use this notepad to write down what I see and what I hear. I am so interested to hear what you say about your art and how you talk to your friends. I am also curious what your teachers tell you and what you tell them! Is it ok if I watch you make art and write down what I see?

Discussion
Here are video cameras. I would like to use to record everything. And these are called tripods. They are stands that support the cameras and allow me to place them anywhere in the classroom. The camera will be on only during the art activity. It will be switched off for the rest of the day. You, your parents and I will be the only ones to see what I record. I won’t talk to anyone else about you. Is it ok with you if I use the camera to record in your classroom?

Discussion
I have an audio-recorder too. Look. It records what people say and once it is recorded I can listen to it as many times as I want. Here. The audio recorder makes sure I do not forget what you told me about your art. And only I know how to make it work. Do you mind if I use the audio-recorder at all? Is there anything you would like to know?

Discussion
I would also like to use a photo camera if allow me to. Here it is. I would like to take photos of you drawing, working together, playing, and experimenting during an art activity. I would like to use these pictures when I present what I have learned at school to my fellow students to show them what an amazing group of children you are. See some people can understand better if they see what I am trying to describe. Pictures can make words, thoughts, and ideas come alive.
Would you like to know what happens at the end? After spending a whole month here with you, I will write a book like this. I will write about what I learned here and though I cannot tell anyone who you are and where this school is, I will write about your experience in such a detail that other children and other teachers in other preschools will be able to learn from what I have learned from you. Are you happy for me to share what I learn here with other children and parents?

**Participation**

Of course you do not have to help me! That is all up to you. You should never feel forced. If you choose not to participate right now I will not look at any videos of you, I will not write anything about you, and I will not be asking you any questions. There will also be no consequences if you do not wish to participate. But know this, you can always change your mind. Now if you do say yes, and you will help, I will make a video with you, I will record what you want to share with me, and I will write about you, but if you ever feel tired, uncomfortable, or simply annoyed by me, just come to tell me or tell your teacher you no longer wish to be part of the study. You can change your mind as many times as you want. You can ask me to delete video of you, or anything you said to me. That is absolutely fine. I would like this experience to be as fun as exciting as it is for me. Are you at all excited to do this project with me?

**Safeguarding**

Now before, this Show and Tell is over, I would like to encourage you to talk about this project with your parents today. Tell them what we talked about today. Tell them all about the objects I showed you today. I am certain that they will be very interested to hear about your day. Your parents, much like your teachers here, want to know how you feel and they will make sure that you feel like you do not want to work with me anymore that I will know and I will respect your wishes.

Is there anything you would like to ask me?

**Consent Form**

Now, I will give each one of you a piece of paper with a few questions about this project accompanied by a lot of smiley and frowny faces. I will read each question and I would like you to answer. In order to do that you will choose and circle either smiley face, neutral face, or sad face. Green smiley faces means YES I am very happy to do that or YES I understand. Yellow face means I am not sure. Red frowning face means NO I am absolutely not happy to do that, or NO I do not understand. Can we play this game together?
## Appendix 2 Consent forms

### Consent form: child

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the child</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Signature of supervising adult</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**ARE YOU HAPPY IF I TAKE PHOTOS AND RECORD WHAT YOU SAY AND DO WHILE YOU ARE DOING YOUR ART?**

**YOU DON’T HAVE TO LET ME RECORD YOU. JUST SAY, NO, NOT TODAY. BUT IF YOU DO, THE VIDEO AND PHOTOS I TAKE WILL ONLY BE FOR ME TO LOOK AT. I WILL ONLY CHOOSE ONE OR TWO PHOTOS OR SHORT CLIPS TO SHARE WITH PEOPLE INTERESTED TO LEARN ABOUT WHAT CHILDREN LIKE YOU DO AROUND ARTMAKING. IF YOU WANT ME TO DELETE ANYTHING, JUST LET ME KNOW ANYTIME, I WILL DO THAT. IS THAT CLEAR?**

**DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS? DO YOU FEEL THAT I HAVE TOLD YOU ENOUGH ABOUT THIS PROJECT?**

**ARE YOU HAPPY TO JOIN IN THIS PROJECT? IF YOU ARE, PLEASE COLOR THE SMILING FACE. IF YOU ARE NOT HAPPY TO JOIN IN OR YOU ARE NOT SURE, COLOR THE UNHAPPY FACE.**

*Figure 19 Consent form: children (English translation of a Czech document)*
Consent form: parents

If you are happy for you and your child to participate in the research project please complete this consent form by circling either yes or no for each question below and sign at the end.

1. Do you feel like you have been given enough information about this project? YES NO

2. Have you had the opportunity to ask questions? YES NO

3. Was it clearly explained to you that your participation and the participation of your child is voluntary and that you and your child can refuse to be part of the study anytime without giving a reason for doing so? YES NO

4. Do you agree that you and your child can be interviewed, and the interview can be written down, audio or video recorded? YES NO

5. Do you agree for you and your child being observed in the school setting and video recorded during art activities there? YES NO

6. Was it clearly explained to you that you can ask for the recordings of anything you and your child say or do to be deleted up to one month after the very last observation session? YES NO

7. Was it clearly explained that real names and identity will not be revealed for any of your words and actions, or those of your child, and that all that is recorded during the study may be used in the final report and any other academic presentation of the project? YES NO

8. Do you agree for you and your child being photographed during artmaking sessions and the photographs to be used during academic presentations of the project only? YES NO

Name of the parent/guardian

Date

Signature

If you have any questions or concerns, contact:
Petra Vackova, PhD Student, +420736612807, petra.vackova@open.ac.uk,
John Oates, Student Supervisor, +44190852395, john.oates@open.ac.uk
Lindsay O'Dell, Director of Postgraduate Studies, +44190852017 lindsay.oddell@open.ac.uk

Figure 20 Consent form: parent and child (English translation of a Czech document)
Consent form: practitioners

If you are happy to participate in this research project please complete this consent form marking the appropriate box, and signing at the end.

1. I have read and understand the information sheet about the project and I have been able to ask questions about it. [ ] YES [ ] NO
2. I understand that my real name and my identity will not be revealed for any of my words and actions that are recorded and may be used in the final report or any other presentations. [ ] YES [ ] NO
3. I understand that I can withdraw from participating in the project from any or all related activities at any time by simply saying so without giving a reason before, during, and after the project. [ ] YES [ ] NO
4. I understand that I can ask for recordings of anything I say or do to be deleted up to one month after the last observation session. [ ] YES [ ] NO
5. I consent to my words and actions being audio and video-recorded. [ ] YES [ ] NO
6. I consent to being photographed and the photographs being used during academic presentations of this project only. [ ] YES [ ] NO
7. I understand that all data related to me is confidential and stored safely on a secure drive at the Open University until data analysis is complete. [ ] YES [ ] NO
8. I agree to take part in this research project. [ ] YES [ ] NO

Name of the participant ___________________________ Date __________ Signature ___________________________

If you have any questions or concerns, contact: Petra Vackova, PhD Student, +420 266 128 57, petra.vackova@open.ac.uk, John Oates, Student Supervisor, +44 190 852 33 85, john.oates@open.ac.uk, Lindsay O’Dei, Director of Postgraduate Studies, +44 190 852 33 85 lindsay.odei@open.ac.uk

Figure 21 Consent form: practitioners (English translation of a Czech document)
### Appendix 3 Interview schedule

**Interview schedule (30min)**

1. **THANK YOU**
2. **VAGUE PROJECT SUMMARY + PARTICIPANTS**

3. **THE ROLE OF THE ORGANIZATION IN THE COMMUNITY**
   a. What would you say is the role of your organization in the community in respect to young children and their families?
   b. Tell me about your organisation and its presence in the community.
      i. Is your organization trying to develop a strong independent presence or contribute to building a robust network of services and activities within the community or both?
   c. Are there any specific social problems in the community that your organization tackles more than others?

4. **WORKING WITH OTHERS**
   a. Do you think it is important for your organization and its mission to work with other individuals or institutions in your community?
   b. Are collaborations possible? What enables or limits your ability to work with others?
   c. Who are you working with or who would you be interested to work with and why?
   d. Are there any challenges collaborations pose in the context of your community or your organizational structure?
   e. Are there any benefits to collaborating with others?

5. **EARLY YEARS PROVISIONS**
   a. In terms of early years provision, or if we focus on young children in the community, how, from your experience, children and families navigate/move between the different provisions?
   b. What do you think the different EY provisions in this community do for the children and families?
   c. Is there anything the EY provisions could do differently?
   d. What do you think about the recent push for inclusion? Is it relevant to your community and your work? ....

6. **CLOSING**
   - My curiosity about the interconnectedness of the three studied settings
   - Next steps in my work
   - Next steps in our relationship → Can we keep working together?
   - What I learned from interactions around artmaking in their setting
     - Social inclusion and exclusion are embedded in the mundane daily material-discursive processes
     - Social inclusion/exclusion is ongoing or constantly re-negotiated
     - Social inclusion/exclusion arises from plurality and difference
     - Plurality and difference are inherent and indispensable part of classroom culture
     - Plurality and difference help us renegotiate and develop our classroom culture
     - Social inclusion goes therefore beyond methods and practices to the core of human relationships where openness and vulnerability to others allows for a more just classroom

7. **FEEDBACK on project (practitioners, kids, parents)?

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*Figure 22* Entry interview schedule: directors and practitioners *(English translation of a Czech document)*
# Appendix 4 Data log

## NURSERY

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- **FAMILY CENTRE**

**Obs:** Observation

**Video:** Video recording

**Image:** Image recording

**Audio:** Audio recording
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*Figure 23 Data log (anonymised): across time and settings*