III. Artistic Research – New Insights Through Arts Practice?

Barbara Lüneburg, Kai Ginkel

> "The history of a concept is … that of its various fields of constitution and validity, that of its successive rules of use, that of the many theoretical contexts in which it developed and matured." (Foucault, Archaeology of Knowledge 1972: 4)

In the third part of this monograph, my co-worker Kai Ginkel – who comes from the field of ethnographic sociology and praxeology – and I as artistic researcher compare discourses in artistic research and ethnographic sociology with regard to theory and practice in each domain. In *TransCoding* ethnographic sociology and artistic research were employed side by side. Working together within the framework of *TransCoding*, Ginkel and I both found it inspiring and enriching to deal with the different methodological tools, approaches to interpretation, ways of representation and dos and don'ts of our academic home disciplines, and to debate their use for our research.

From our perspective, both artistic research and ethnographic sociology belong to domains in which – as Foucault puts it – "the questions of the human being, consciousness, origin, and the subject emerge, intersect, mingle, and separate off". (Foucault, Archaeology of Knowledge 1972: 16) We will compare the methodologies in both domains, and their data collection strategies, methods of analysis and evaluation, structures of fieldwork and connected power relations. We work under the philosophical paradigm of Foucauldian discourse analysis, searching for the origins of knowledge claims and trying to archaeologically uncover the construction of 'truth' and 'knowledge' with regard to the artwork *I Am a Priest*. We will examine the overall production of knowledge, while taking into account similarities and differences. Above all, we are interested in whether artistic research renders new insights through arts practice not only for academia but also for public audiences – insights that would remain inaccessible through other research methods. We will look at each discipline from the perspective of its particular specialist: for ethnographic sociology Kai Ginkel, and for artistic research myself.

Framing the Study

In chapter 10 ('Artistic Research and Ethnographic Sociology – One Project, Two Methods'), we first attempt definitions of artistic research and ethnographic sociology and offer rough outlines of practices, methodologies and research goals.

In chapter 11 ('Case Study *I Am a Priest*') we talk about my own artwork *I Am a Priest* for violin, electronics and video, which forms one segment of the multimedia show *Slices of Life*. *I Am a Priest* deals with the religion of Santería from the personal perspective of a practitioner. Ginkel and I will in turns investigate the artwork and the process of its creation from an ethnographic and an artistic research artistic perspective. We first recount where the origin of the artwork lies. We establish a series of events that led to the creation of *I Am a Priest* and concurrently served as a means for data collection with regard to Santería. We then follow the archaeology of the artwork and relate the different strata of research and creation to discursive practices in both artistic and ethnographic research, contrasting methodological practices and their respective outcomes. Questions with regard to knowledge claim and meaning making are at the basis of our analysis.

In chapter 12 ('A Comparison of Discourses') we juxtapose both domains' methodological approaches and principles in detail. We compare research set-ups, data collection, power strategies and values that stand behind the dos and don'ts of each discipline. We also closely look at the influence researchers have on their researched field, the researching subject and the domain. We consider the language researchers use to formulate results of both artistic and ethnographic-sociological research and compare the expressiveness, exploratory power and informative value different ways of presentation offer. In doing this we seek mutual enhancement and possible innovation in each discipline.

10. Artistic Research and Ethnographic Sociology – One Project, Two Methods

In qualitative research, our philosophical stance, methodologies, the manner of data collection, questions asked and the audiences we aim for influence our claim to truth and how we are perceived by academic institutions and society. In his essay *The Order of Discourse*, Foucault states that

> "in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and re-distributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality." (Foucault, *The Order of Discourse* 1981: 52)

Taking Foucault's thoughts as a starting basis, we examine methodology, aims and possible taboos of both disciplines, since we are convinced that in the exclusion of certain methods and approaches lie distinct clues to the values and the knowledge claim of an academic field.

Definition and Methodologies of Artistic Research
(Lüneburg)

The history of artistic research is a fairly recent one and also one of ongoing, as yet unfinished institutionalisation. Educational researcher Savin-Baden and Howell Major date art-based approaches emerging "from an educational event in 1993 at Standford University that was funded by the American Educational Research Association." (Savin-Baden und Howell Major 2013: 288) So relatively fresh is the genesis of artistic research – in comparison to academic disciplines such as sociology – that it is still subject to discussions among scholars as to how the field can be defined both from a theoretical and a methodological perspective. Savin-Baden and Howell Major describe the use of artistic research approaches as a means "to explore, understand and represent human action and experience." (ibidem: 289) They observe that "researchers who work in the arts-based field are often seen as taking up an opportunity to challenge the dominant discourses ... in relation to the nature and purpose of research itself." (ibidem: 290)

There are different forms of artistic research with different methodologies. Some researchers divide them into practice-based and practice-led research indicating that the investigation either is based on arts practice or should lead to new knowledge for the arts. Savin-Baden and Howell Major suggest a differentiation between:

"1. Arts-based inquiry: where the artistic process is used as research by artists, researchers and participants in order to understand the art itself or understand a phenomenon through the artistic process.
2. Arts-informed inquiry that is of two types:
   a. where art is used to represent the findings of a study
   b. where art is used to represent a response to the findings of an issue or situation studied.
3. Arts-informing inquiry: where art is used in order to evoke a response from an audience (in the broadest sense) made to a situation or issue: the response may or may not be capture." (Savin-Baden and Howell Major 2013: 299)

Artistic research operates from an inside perspective that is based on the immediate involvement of the artist in the process of art making and the practice within the field. Often the research object must first be created and the process of creation may be part of the investigation. Furthermore, the research is used to systematically study and possibly change the domain itself and the investigated field, including the artist him- or herself. Music therapists Austin and Forinash define artistic research as

"a research method in which the arts play a primary role in any or all of the steps of the research method. Art forms such as poetry, music, visual art, drama, dance are essential to the research process itself and central in formulating the research question, generating data, analyzing data, and presenting the research results." (Austin and Forinash 2005: 458)

This stands in stark contrast to traditional knowledge gain in academia which has been formed through concepts expressed in language, words and sentences. Accordingly, some academic faculties observe artistic research with reserve, scepticism or rejection unless – as philosopher and artistic research scholar Dieter Mersch states – it is validated through verbal discourse:

"der Erkenntnis- und Wissensbegriff [wird] *diskursiv vorentschieden*, so dass nur das Geltung besitzt, eine Aussage trifft oder ein 'Argument' formuliert, was die Eigenschaft von Sätzen besitzt. Wenn es folglich 'ästhetisches Wissen' gibt, muss es gleichsam immer schon durch die Sprache als privilegierte Form des Ausdrucks hindurchgegangen und in Sprache übersetzbar sein, oder aber es erscheint obskur, ein Missbrauch des Wortes, eine Anmaßung." (Mersch 2015)

"the notion of cognition and knowledge is *discursively decided in advance*, meaning that only that which possesses the characteristics of sentences is valid, is declarative or formulates an 'argument.' Accordingly, if there is 'aesthetic knowledge,' it needs to virtually pass through language as the privileged form of expression and it needs to be translatable into language; if not, it seems obscure, an abuse of the word, a presumption." [ibid. translation by the author]

Conversely, there are representatives of artistic research for whom it is almost a taboo to make use of a verbal research report in artistic research. They argue that cognition, the search for 'truth' and new insights happen through the practice of art, that knowledge lies in and should be expressed through the artwork itself.

In a private talk and email exchange educational researcher Silke Kruse-Weber and I developed the following definition:

"Künstlerische Forschung operiert mit Formen des Wissens, die mit Methoden rein wissenschaftlicher Forschung alleine nicht fassbar sind. Dazu gehört das Wissen, das auf der künstlerischen Praxis basiert und durch und für die unmittelbare künstlerische Praxis gewonnen wird, sowie das Wissen, das sich in den Resultaten künstlerischer Praxis manifestiert und für dessen Vermittlung die Erfahrung des Kunstwerks notwendig ist. Künstlerische Forschung sucht nach alternativen Möglichkeiten, diese Formen des Wissens zu kommunizieren. ... Der gewichtige Unterschied der künstlerischen Forschung zur wissenschaftlichen Forschung ist, dass bei der künstlerischen Forschung die Ziele und Methoden zum Erkenntnisgewinn von Fragestellungen geprägt sind, die aus dem (strukturierten und reflektierten) unmittelbaren Involviertsein des Künstlers bzw. der Künstlerin in den künstlerischen Prozess und das künstlerische Werk entstehen." (Kruse-Weber and Lüneburg 2016)

"Artistic research operates with forms of knowledge that one cannot investigate using scientific research methods alone. To this category belongs knowledge based on and gained through artistic practice, as well as the knowledge that manifests itself through the results of artistic practice for which experience with the artwork is essential. Artistic research strives for alternative possibilities to communicate these forms of knowledge. ... The essential difference between artistic and scientific research is that in artistic research, the goals and methods for acquiring knowledge are infused with the posing of questions that stem from the structured and reflective direct involvement of the artist in the process of creating the work and the artwork itself." [translation by Clio Montrey] (ibid.)

Another discussion among a group of artistic researchers of the University of Music and Performing Arts Graz (Austria) emphasises a method of knowledge gain through aesthetic experience that goes along with verbal reflection and includes the non-academic public.

"In den letzten Jahrzehnten hat sich eine Form der Forschung etabliert, deren zentrale Methode die künstlerische Praxis ist. Diese künstlerische Forschung eröffnet uns einen neuen Blick auf unsere Welt und ihre Phänomene. Durch ihren Fokus auf die Gestaltung ästhetischer Erfahrung und über das Hinterfragen künstlerischer Prozesse und ihres Kontextes, erlaubt künstlerische Forschung aus der unmittelbar erfahrenen Praxis heraus Strukturen offen zu legen, deren man sich mit anderen Methoden nur schwer gewahr werden kann.

In der künstlerischen Forschung wird Erkenntnis durch sinnliche Erfahrung und verbale Reflexion mitgeteilt. Das Erleben der Kunst bzw. die ästhetische Erfahrung an sich ist dabei von zentraler Bedeutung für die Forschenden und deren Publikum, das so auch Teil des Forschungsprozesses werden kann." (Ciciliani, Eckel, et al. 2016)

"In recent decades a form of research has been established that is based on artistic practice as its central methodology. Artistic research affords us a new perspective on our world and its phenomena. Through its focus on the formation of aesthetic experience and through the examination of the artistic process and its context, artistic research allows us to lay open structures taken from directly experienced practice, which would be difficult to become aware of using other methods.

In artistic research, knowledge is communicated through sensory experience and verbal reflection. The experience of art, or more generally, the aesthetic experience, is of central importance to the researchers, as well as to the audience, which may also become a part of the research process." [translation by Clio Montrey] (ibid.)

Summing up the operational categories and characteristics of artistic research we can say that artistic research uses artistic practice as its central focal point. The research question arises from the arts practice and usually leads back to it. Typically, artist researchers first have to create the object or the situation they are investigating in a fieldwork setting: "[i]n the medium itself – in the creative process, the artwork and its effects – perspectives are revealed and constituted, horizons are shifted, and new distinctions are articulated." (Borgdorff 2012: 24) Knowledge is gained from an inside position. Consequently, artistic research requires its scholars to assume a high level of disclosure and maintain a critical and self-reflective position towards their practices, and the context they are placing their research in. The artist-researcher usually is a professional in the field he or she investigates and does not leave the field when the research is done, which may raise questions with regard to ethics and objectivity.

Artistic researchers claim that their research produces insights and knowledge that are more difficult, impossible even, to gain through any other method. In their opinion, the artistic-aesthetic experience holds knowledge that is communicated through the senses, the imagination and the mind. It evokes a response that reaches beyond verbally transmitted knowledge (as traditionally used in academic research). Consequently, in artistic research the representation of research results through the arts is of equal importance to the verbal presentation. Those representations can take the form of artistic artefacts, performances, or the creation of artistic situations or processes. Interpretation of these results may be more open than in traditional (qualitative) research. It democratises research, in the sense that audiences – other than those found in academia – might gain access to research knowledge through the experience of those artworks.

"The specific nature of artistic research can be pinpointed in a way that it both *cognitively and artistically* articulates this revealment and constitution of the world, an articulation which is normative, affective, and expressive all at once – and which also, as it were, sets our moral, psychological, and social life into motion." (Borgdorff 2012: 24)

At the same time one could claim that the position of the artist is one of authority, since the (exploratory) power, informative value and expressiveness of a high quality artwork might very well guide the perception of an onlooker in a certain predetermined way.

In artistic research the philosophical stance of the researcher, methodology, data collection, data analysis and evaluation must be adjusted for each research project. Commonly adopted paradigms include phenomenology, pragmatism, post-modernism, post-structuralism, social constructionism and constructivism. A wide range of interdisciplinary approaches is followed, such as collaborations with researchers from sociology, psychology, ethnography, acoustics, musicology or other fields. Data generation and collection happens for instance via case studies, interviews, queries, and of course through the creative process itself, the resulting artwork and audience response.

Savin-Baden and Howell Major state that artistic research may use arts "for personal exploration of concern or issue," "to enhance understanding, reach multiple audiences and make findings accessible" or to evoke a response and "make meaning through complicated and messy performances and products that have power and are evocative." (Savin-Baden und Howell Major 2013: 299) I would add that researchers might explicitly aim for impact on the researched subject, their researched field and the domain itself.

Definition and Methodologies of Ethnographic Sociology (Ginkel)

The term 'ethnography' addresses a specific style of knowledge production in academic disciplines such as sociology, anthropology and political science. Ethnography "marks a distinction from quantitative approaches to social science and carries with it a commitment to a period and degree of immersion in the social setting being studied that is sufficient to reach a qualitative understanding of what happens there. Beyond this, ethnography can be put to the service of virtually any theoretical school: there are, for example, functionalist, structuralist, interactionist, Weberian and Marxist ethnographies." (Shapiro 1994: 418)

Among the key virtues of ethnographic studies "is their focus upon the rich and varied 'real world' sociality recovered through a fieldworker's participation in the social life of some setting" (Hughes, Randall and Shapiro 1992: 124). Scholars applying ethnographic methodology strive to "produce detailed

descriptions of the lived social experiences and social activities of social actors within specific contexts." (ibid.: 125) According to political and social science scholar Giampietro Gobo, 'doing ethnography' basically involves being present when things happen and seeing them with one's own eyes. Another striking feature "is the precision of the observations, the large number of details and the vividness of the account" (Gobo 2008: 4) According to John van Maanen, who wrote the highly influential *Tales from the Field* in the early 1980s, doing ethnographic fieldwork requires "only a fieldworker, time, a bunch of people to talk with, and some writing materials," making it a research method that can be understood to be 'archaic' in terms of the basic technology involved. (Van Maanen 2011: 125) However, to Gobo, it is important "to understand that ethnography is a methodology (a style of thinking and doing), not a mere technique." (Gobo 2008: 15)

Ethnographic sociology first came to prominence through the seminal works by the Chicago School of symbolic interactionism in the first half of the 20th century, when scholars such as Nels Anderson (1923, *On Hobos and Homelessness*) and Frederic M. Thrasher (1963 [1927], *The Gang*) would explore contemporary developments in US city life through participant observation, rather than by merely theorising about them from a distance. As Travers sums up "[t]he type of ethnographic research favoured by [interactionist scholars] Blumer and Prus requires a long period developing an 'intimate familiarity' with some group or social setting." (Travers 2001: 25) Consequently, in many cases practising ethnography means involving oneself in the everyday practices of a given field through actual participation. One's own involvement is being explored through means of observation, self-reflexivity and the subsequent ethnographic writing process, all of which serve the process of rendering the familiar strange (and vice versa) and objectifying the 'other.'

According to various sociologists, in ethnography the research process needs to allow for spontaneity while concurrently retaining a clear structure and traceability. Clifford Geertz, for instance, states that during fieldwork ethnographers face "a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit, and which he must contrive somehow first to grasp and then to render." (Geertz 1973: 10) Giampietro Gobo suggests that the "researcher can select and follow a particular participant, letting his or her action define the boundaries of the context of observation" (Gobo and Molle 2008/17: 166), and Carol Cohn, researcher in the fields of gender, security and human rights, claims that ethnographic research can harbour both "preplanned" and "opportunistic" elements. (Cohn 2006, 94)

What does this look like in the various subdisciplines of sociological ethnography? Scholars from symbolic interactionism assume that for instance the

meaning of objects or situations is not predetermined but instead established in actual interactions and might be modified in the unpredictable course of people's interactions. Interactionists do not assume that there is some sort of "hidden reality" behind what people do; instead, reality is brought forth by interactional practice. (Dellwing and Prus 2012: 21) Consequently, participation observation is the preferred tool in interactionist research.

Scholars coming from praxeology add a distinctively different perspective to the methodological palette. They focus on the body and materiality as well as on practical (often tacit) types of knowledge. (cf. Bueger 2014: 383) Meaning here is understood to be produced by a much wider variety of "doings and sayings" (cf. Schatzki 2002: 80) or, as Reckwitz adds, by "doing with things": "[N]ot only human beings participate in practices, but also non-human artefacts form components of practices. The things handled in a social practice must be treated as necessary components for a practice to be 'practiced'." (cf. Reckwitz 2002: 212) Here we see parallels to artistic research: researchers search for production of meaning not only through the process of creating art and the interactions that happen between, for example, artists and their audiences but also explicitly through non-human artefacts, the artworks.

In general, ethnographic scholars regard personal participation in the field as a way of having "access to meaning"; (Gobo 2008: p. 51) however, it is traditionally considered a taboo for a scholar to become too attached to their field (a phenomenon referred to as 'going native'). 'Going native' indicates that a scholar's personal involvement in the researched group hinders his or her reflective analytical work and is regarded a potential threat to the analytical process. (Hegner 2013: paragraph 14) Recently, however, modes of participation in which researchers get more deeply involved in the field are increasingly being discussed in ethnographic sociology. Matts Alvesson, for instance, speaks of the concept of 'at-home ethnography':

> "a study ... in which the researcher-author describes a cultural setting to which s/he has a natural "access" and in which s/he is a natural participant, more or less on equal terms with other participants. The researcher works and/or lives in the setting and uses the experiences and the knowledge of and access to empirical material for research purposes." (Alvesson 2009: 159)

Gender studies scholar Jone Salomonsen's approach is based on the "method of compassion":

> "'Compassion' ... does not refer to a wholesale positive embrace, nor to passionate criticisms and arguing, but to something in between: honesty. It shall designate an attitude in which belief is taken seriously, both cognitively and emotionally ... This means to leave behind the anthropological "method of pretention," which is mainly used to gain access, be it to rituals, to secret knowledge or to initiations." (Jone Salomonsen cited by Hegner 2004: 326)

Both approaches deal with personal involvement and closeness to the researched subject – which is also relevant to artistic research – and they are regarded as fruitful and productive for the social sciences. However, Adler and Adler argue that with closer relationship and familiarity come specific responsibilities:

"Here we see people familiar with a setting having to create the space and character for their research role to emerge. They must look at the setting through a fresh perspective, to develop relationships with people they did not associate with previously, to change the nature of their preexisting relationships, and to become involved with the setting more broadly. This can be difficult, awkward, and heighten the sense of unnaturalness that invariably surrounds the research enterprise." (Adler and Adler 1987: 69 f.)

Therefore, even in cases where deep membership is considered acceptable, scholars always have to 'make the familiar strange' in order to be able to analyse and explore it systematically. (Coffey 2004: 21) A sociologist who himself practised so-called 'opportunistic complete membership' (Adler and Adler 1987, 78), Loïc Wacquant, warns that

"membership in a category or collective does not by itself make one a good anthropologist of it. At best it might make one an informant about it; at worst, it invites a descent into moral subjectivism, a parroting of the folk sociology of members, that is the negation of rigorous ethnography … The warrant to study prizefighters, as any other social world, and by whatever method, comes not from the social ties that the inquirer entertains with members of that microcosm but from the *theoretical problematic* that animates the inquiry." (Wacquant 2005: 457 f.)

Overall, there are different approaches to the question of how to deal with the points of view and 'folk sociologies' of those participants commonly labelled as 'natives' by researchers in ethnography. We will later compare it to artistic research where 'being native' is an intrinsic part of the research.

Ethnographic research allows different forms of documentation for representing research results: social anthropologist Tim Ingold declares that ethnography quite literally means

"*writing about the people*. … Ethnographic description, we might well say, is more an art than a science, but no less accurate or truthful for that. Like the Dutch painters of the seventeenth century, the European and American ethnographers of the twentieth could be said to have practiced an "art of describing" (Alpers 1983), albeit predominantly in words rather than in line and color. Theirs is still a standard against which we measure contemporary work." (Ingold 2014: 385)

Gobo identifies a number of ethnographic approaches and writing styles applied until the 1980s, among them Erving Goffman's, who is considered one of the most influential scholars and field-workers in sociology. His writing style is known for its broad statements taken from detailed observation. However, he does not clarify which specific situation he bases his writing on. (cf. Gobo 2008: p. 43 f) Goffman does not introduce his participants as actual people or individual subjects with characteristics of their own; he does not write from a first-person perspective, nor does he make the specificities of the ethnographic process transparent. Instead, he focuses in a generalised fashion entirely on actions. Such a writing style may still be applied today, although some see it as outdated and even problematic. Ingold states:

"Much of this debate has fallen under the rubric of the so-called "crisis of representation." Quite reasonably, controversial questions have been asked about who has the right to describe, on what grounds any description may be taken to be more truthful or authoritative than any other, to what extent the presence of the author can or should be acknowledged within the text, and how the whole process of writing it might be made more collaborative." (Ingold 2014: 385)

Changes in presentation do not apply to writing styles only. Sociologist Sibylla Tinapp's photographic doctoral thesis on everyday life in Cuba, for instance, suggests that ethnographic research expands its methodology beyond that of being a purely pen-and-paper affair. (Tinapp 2005) Harvard University proposes a course in sensory ethnography offering its students "instructions in ethnographic media practices, producing a variety of original digital video, still photographic, hypermedia, and sound works." (Castaing-Taylor et al., Sensory Ethnography Lab: Harvard University 2010) and in her monograph *Doing Sensory Ethnography* Sarah Pink outlines this methodology as

"a way of thinking about and doing ethnography that takes as its starting point the multisensoriality of experience, perception, knowing and practice ... a process of doing ethnography that accounts for how this multisensoriality is integral both to the lives of people who participate in our research and to how we ethnographers practise our craft." (Pink 2009/2015: 1)

In this juxtaposition of some of each discipline's key features we find similarities between ethnographic sociology and artistic research, but we are also aware of the differences. We will continue by analysing the discursive practice behind the artwork *I Am a Priest* for violin, video and electronics while alternating between the perspective of artistic and ethnographic research. We reveal the archaeology of the piece by exploring various strata of its creation and meaning making, compare the processes of data collection, which kind of data are gathered

and how it is done, and look into the analysis and evaluation of the data. Furthermore, we are interested in how results of the research are represented and communicated.

11. CASE STUDY *I AM A PRIEST*

> "The frontiers of a book are never clear-cut: beyond the title, the first lines, and the last full stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network." (Foucault, Archaeology of Knowledge 1972: 23)

In this chapter, we aim to understand my artwork *I Am a Priest* via four different perspectives: firstly, through my experiences as a performer of the composition *Toque a Eshu y Ochosi* for singing violinist by Louis Aguirre, an artwork that is based on the religion Santería. Louis Aguirre, a Cuban composer, violinist and priest of the religion Santería, is a community member whose story is told in *I Am a Priest*. Studying and performing his violin solo *Toque* served as one source of investigation for my study of Santería and consequently for the creation of *I Am a Priest*. Secondly, we examine *I Am a Priest* through the "cultural resources and reference points" (Frogett, et al. 2014) I share with Louis Aguirre: my own personal background as a former practising Catholic, my participation in Shaman ceremonies, and our shared experience as violin students with Russian teachers. Thirdly, we investigate how identity is musically established and lastly, last but not least we look at *I Am a Priest* via the topic of spirituality, hereby establishing the context with regard to the community of *TransCoding*.

When I analyse the strata of *I Am a Priest*, I search for what Foucault calls "a system of references": texts, narratives and musical or personal associations the artwork might evoke and refer to, thus becoming a "node within a network." (Foucault, Archaeology of Knowledge 1972: 23) I am interested in what lies beyond, when we come from a material to an immaterial level, when art does something to us and we perform through it. Therefore, I set out to investigate the claim to knowledge that emerges from an artwork, even though I believe that this 'truth' is subject to change depending on the onlooker. When I present the artwork publicly, onlookers search for their own truth and for reflections of their personal experiences in it, possibly causing discontinuities between my intentions and their perception. Accordingly, I follow Margaret Wetherall as cited by Graham who states that

> "discourse analysis said to be informed by Foucauldian or other poststructural theory endeavours to avoid the substitution of one 'truth' for another, recognising that "there can be no universal truths or absolute ethical positions [and hence] ... belief in social scientific investigation as a detached, historical, utopian, truth-seeking process becomes difficult to sustain." (Wetherall, 2001, 384 cited by Graham 2013: 114)

Correspondingly, Kai Ginkel approaches the artwork from another perspective, through the lens of ethnographic sociology. He introduces definitions and

several main methodologies a researcher might use to get access to different manners of knowledge gain. In the ethnographic process, scholars may indulge in the method of participant observation, thus being able to experience social practice 'from within' instead of observing and analysing from a distance through the analysis of quantitative types of data. Throughout this participative process, research question have been developed that have often addressed topics of broad sociological interest, and making use of the fieldwork as a case study for a particular scholarly issue. Coming from a praxeological approach one might be interested in how religious practice is being embodied and what other types of materiality take on special meaning in the investigated field. Last but not least, in an analytical comparison of the 'foreign' culture and one's own, the research may shed light on and help to develop an increased sensibility for our own cultural surroundings.

History of *I Am a Priest* and Data Collection: An Artistic Research Perspective (Lüneburg)

Uncovering the strata of *I Am a Priest* means going back two years into my personal performance history, to a period before the actual creation of the composition. Its beginnings lie with my premiere of Cuban composer Louis Aguirre's violin solo *Toque a Eshu y Ochosi* for singing violinist on 24th of January 2016 at the festival Ultraschall in Berlin. It was my first encounter with the religion of Santería, which also served as data collection on this Afro-Carribean religion. The solo *Toque* is an invocation of the gods of Santería. The performer functions as the priestess who conjures up the gods and plays and sings herself into an ecstasy.

Link to a video excerpt of *Toque a Echu y Ochosi* by Louis Aguirre:
http://transcoding.info/english/book.html – PART III CHAPTER 11 (1)

Practising and performing *Toque* placed high demands on me as a performer. Not only was the violin part extremely difficult, but I had to concurrently sing a vocal part in Spanish, and at some point I had to accompany my own singing and violin playing with heavy rhythmical foot pounding. According to the composer, I literally embodied a priestess in a Santería ceremony.

The violin solo and the resulting concert situation are radical in the sense that the performer is exposed far beyond the norms of classical performance practice. *Toque* is a demanding and physical piece with an unusual expressiveness that reaches from guttural, grunted sounds to half screamed, almost sexual sounding passages to classically sung vocal parts with heavy vibrato.
Responding to my worries and questions when practising the vocal part, Aguirre wrote an explanatory email:

"the vibrato,..just feel free, without thinking much, when it comes super,,,when not, just keep going..
...try as a trill first with the voice along...just to **unleash the inner mechanism..and the feeling of something shaking/moving inside**....
also, I think, the shake of your body while playing fast vibr. on the violin may help...use your body...**get inside shaky trance**...:-)
the voice will be beautiful no matter which type of voice the player has...

when we do rituals in order that it happens, reach Olofi (God in yoruba) certain things has to be said or chanted..or screamed..
you dont judge the voice of the priest.....it has to be there...so the magic happens...think it on that way...because is the way i thought it...
we, in western culture, always focus on: do I like it? is it beautiful? but on these ceremonies no body will ask anybody, do you like it? the voice of the Obbá was 'beautiful'..(Obbá, name of a high priest in santería)...**it has to be there, some prayers has to be sang**, etc..
i say all that, to give you a bit of the idea behind...:-) and to easy your possible worries..." (Aguirre, Re: Solo 2013 [emphasis by the author])

As a vocally untrained instrumentalist I needed to overcome personal inhibitions to present the piece on stage. Aguirre declares *Toque* with its crossing of boundaries as an evocation of the deities through singing and playing; the bodily exertion experienced as a trance-like state, the fast and extreme vibrato as a religious possession – all signs that are typical for a Santería ceremony. He insists that the performance is not about aesthetic standards of beauty in classical Western performance. He claims that the magic of the ritual will happen through the performance and through the performer. The player doesn't just act out the role of a priest or priestess of Santería, he or she embodies it. [cf. emphasised text parts of quotation]

The process of practising and performing *Toque* can be understood as an arts-based inquiry. It was the first step of data collection, an artistic research process that offered me an entry into the phenomenon and practice of Santería. I gained data by way of immediate involvement and the means of embodiment. Through the preparation – several months of intensive practising – and the actual performance process, I gained an inside perspective on what worship in the religion of Santería literally might feel like; a perspective that encompassed mind, body, imagination and senses. Knowledge of Santería was likewise transmitted to the audience via verbal description, that is the programme notes, and via the audio and visual perception of the shared concert experience. During the performance, I was able to convey the physical experience in particular via mirror neurons.

"According to neuroscientist Viliayanur Ramachandran, when one person moves, mirror neurons in the brain of another person will react, 'as if the neuron is adopting the other

person's point of view, almost as if it were performing a virtual reality simulation of the other person's action.' Mirror neurons allow us to empathise with other human beings and dissolve the barriers between people (Ramachandran 2010) and through their body language performers can control the flow of information and emotion in social interaction, and influence how the audience responds to their personality and feels their music. Nevertheless, the audience might reinterpret the leader's identification according to their values and their particular context." (Lüneburg 2013, 87 f.)

Moreover, Arnie Cox argues in his paper *Embodying Music: Principles of the Mimetic Hypothesis* that performances offer an invitation to take part and engage in the experience of what happens on stage via mimetic participation.

"When we take an aesthetic interest in something, whether people-watching or attending a sporting event or a film or a concert, our responses can be understood as if we are implicitly asking, *What's it like to do that*, along with the corollary question, *What's it like to be that*? Part of how we answer these questions is via MMI [Mimetic Motor Imagery], along with occasional overt mimetic motor action, as when we move to music in one way or another. In effect, it is as if we are responding to an invitation to somehow imitate and to thus take part. Accordingly, we can speak of the performing arts as offering a *mimetic invitation*, and we can speak of our various responses as *mimetic engagement* or *mimetic participation*, whether in the form of overt movement or in the privacy of covert imagery (MMI)." (Cox 2011)

Thus, a performance becomes a means to transport knowledge. In the case of *Toque*, I shared knowledge on the practice of Santería as I experienced it through my preparation for the concert and my actual performance on stage. In a second step, the performance of *Toque* was as a preparation for my own artwork in the framework of *TransCoding*: it served as a means of data collection for *Slices of Life – I Am a Priest*.

In this section I spoke about data collection through embodiment and how knowledge gained on Santería can be experienced by and transferred to the audience through arts practice. Next, Ginkel will analyse the data material of *Toque a Eshu y Ochosi* from a praxeological perspective. As Ginkel was not present for the performance of *Toque a Eshu y Ochosi* at Ultraschall Festival Berlin in 2016, his process of data collection did not include an actual observation of the situational performance of Louis Aguirre's Santería piece itself. Instead, his ethnographic perspective derives from his professional involvement in the proceedings of *TransCoding* as a whole. The data he could work with were notes from work meetings with me, the performer, written material such as snippets from interviews and email exchanges between composer Aguirre and myself and the programme notes on *Toque* he found on the website of Ultraschall Festival.

History of *I Am a Priest* and Data Collection: A Sociological Praxeological Perspective (Ginkel)

On the occasion of the premiere of *Toque* by Barbara Lüneburg, Eckhard Weber wrote the following programme notes:

"Die heftige Klangsprache Aguirres, die in der afrokubanischen Priesterkultur gründet, führt das Publikum und die Performerin in extreme Welten. Barbara Lüneburg wird in *Toque a Eshu y Ochosi* zum 'totalen Instrument'. Stimme und Violine verschmelzen, Musik und innere Haltung werden voneinander untrennbar, wodurch sich die Szene gewissermaßen in eine rituelle, trance-artige Handlung verwandelt." (Weber 2016)

"The intense musical voice of Aguirre is based on an Afro-Cuban priest cult, and leads audience and performer into extreme worlds. In *Toque a Eshu y Ochosi* Barbara Lüneburg becomes the 'total instrument.' Voice and violin merge, music and inner stance become inseparable from each other, so that the scene effectively becomes a ritual, trance-like act." (Weber 2016; translation by Barbara Lüneburg)

Weber uses terms such as the German words 'heftig' (intense) and 'extrem' (extreme), words that suggest strong emotions. He implies that the experience of *Toque* will possibly lead both performer and audience into a world beyond the mundane, into a ritualistic, trance-like act. This echoes Aguirre's and Lüneburg's email correspondence, in which they talk about 'trance' and 'magic' when referring to the performance practice of *Toque*. The notion of emotional states that are understood as intense and extreme is echoed and specified in Louis Aguirre's own words. In his email, he gives Lüneburg helpful hints on how to use her body to understand how to play the piece.

From a praxeological perspective, the description in the first email paragraph quoted above helps to answer the question of how 'trance' and 'magic' are established through bodily and discursive activities. Instructing someone to 'unleash' some 'inner mechanism' and to 'get inside shaky trance' refers to this person's tacit (embodied) knowledge. We can only assume that Lüneburg as the performer understands what the composer would like to imply by it and that she knows how to translate this instruction into an act of competent bodily activity. As sociologist Stephen Turner suggests:

"Some activity, inference, or communicative act depends on both the user and the recipient possessing some inferential element or mechanism which allows them to understand, anticipate, co-operate, or co-ordinate with another. The typical sign of an element of tacit knowledge is that some people can perform the activity, including the activity of inferential reasoning, and others cannot." (Turner 2014: 155)

Here, the performer's inherent body knowledge and practical skills translate a seemingly vague instruction into an artistic performance. To me – from my outside perspective – Aguirre's instruction would serve foremost as an indication of how performing the piece is particularly demanding or unusual in terms of physical activity. However, Aguirre specifies the role of the body for Lüneburg who grasps his meaning through context understanding and via tacit knowledge.

Trance and magic are established by an explicitly and specifically described bodily practice, as well as through the ritual of the concert and the shared acoustic and visual experience of violin, voice, performer and collective attendance. Vibrato, screaming and repetitive playing are conducive in *establishing* – rather than *expressing* – states of trance. 'Affect' is constructed by the bodily activity of the performer, the corporal identity of the instrument and the performer's body, the spatial and performative situation everybody is placed in and the ritualistic concert setting with all its connotations. In praxeological terms, 'affect' – as opposed to the everyday understanding of emotion – is established and shared among participants: "Affect is reminiscent of 'to affect' and 'to be affected' and thus of **dynamic and interactive dimensions** [emphasis by Ginkel] that the term 'emotion' lacks, as it rather implies the static notion of having an emotion 'deep inside'." (Reckwitz 2012: p. 250) Accordingly, we could state that the artistic practice in the concert situation and the experience of magic and trance is shared with the public via the dimension of 'affect.'

Furthermore, notions of 'magic' and 'trance' are made plausible through a distinction between aesthetics in the arts and in the religious ritual. Although *Toque* has been written for the concert hall, Aguirre understands his work as religious practice. The spiritual quality is established through a particular style of performance that, according to the composer, may defy conventional aesthetic rules.

> "we, in western culture, always focus on: do I like it? is it beautiful? but on these ceremonies no body will ask anybody, do you like it? the voice of the Obbá was 'beautiful'..(Obbá, name of a high priest in santería)...it has to be there, some prayers has to be sang, etc.." (Aguirre, Re: Solo 2013)

The distinction is not made through abstract categorisation of what counts as 'beautiful' or 'not beautiful,' but through bodily performance. As Lüneburg wrote above, she needed to embody the role of a priestess of Santería through the performance and Aguirre claimed that by doing so the magic of the ritual would happen.

Establishing a state of 'trance' remains dependent on the performer's tacit skills that in this case draw on experiences that are common to both, Aguirre and Lüneburg. As Lüneburg outlines in the next section on cultural reference

points, she and Aguirre share a history as violin students educated by Russian teachers. On several occasions she has participated in Shaman ceremonies and is thus familiar with rituals where the body is enacted in a ritualistic way. Both of these facts appear relevant to the indexicality of Aguirre's instructions and the way that she, the performer, understands the context to them. It also raises the question of whether the specificity of collaborating in performance practice may be dependent on shared personal histories or shared experiences.

To further understand the strata of I am a Priest, Lüneburg will next look into the "cultural resources and reference points" (Frogett, et al. 2014) she shares with Aguirre.

I Am a Priest — Cultural Reference Points: An Artistic Research Perspective (Lüneburg)

After my premiere of *Toque*, I interviewed Louis Aguirre on his art and his inspirations. In a narrative interview setting he explained to me the role Santería plays in his art and life. Part of the interview constitutes the text that forms the basis of *I Am a Priest*.

"My music is devoted to worship my god.
I am a priest in the Santería. This religion came with the slave, is black people.

Ochosi is the hunting god and Echu is the god of the path. And then he is like a child. I mean he is the one that can close the path so nothing bad comes to you and he can open it, so good things happen to you.
First toque is for el Juan de la Juan tu.

The slaves were allowed to celebrate parties at the same day, in the wrong way of course, that the Catholics celebrate their own parties.
Cuba is a point of merging, a symbiosis between the Spanish and the African and a bit of the Chinese culture.

When people get possessed in some ceremonies you see them beating with knifes. They don't get caught, they walk in fire. It's unbelievable, it is a drive, a force of nature. You lose yourself, you are not yourself anymore. It is incredible, it is something that you are not you anymore. Entranced by the god. Because everyone is the son of some god, we believe that.

Echu Elegguá is like a child and is Jesus of Prague. St. Barbara is Changó and you have St. Lazarus that is Babalú Ayé. Echu Elegguá and Ochosi.
We have some gods that could be male and female and we don't know. We have this ambiguity.

We give cigars and rum and whiskey to our gods, I mean alcohol, all that kind of things. It's, it's a weird thing, I mean, it's really."
(Aguirre and Lüneburg, Lyrics of the artwork „I Am a Priest" 2016)

👁 Link to the video documentation of *Slices of Life – I Am a Priest*:
http://transcoding.info/english/book.html – PART III CHAPTER 11 (1)

Aguirre's art is not only deeply rooted in the religion itself but also in his being a priest in Santería. In the interview he talks about Santería's relationship with Catholicism, describes some of the gods and goddesses, talks about how both his home country Cuba and Santería melt cultures and origins from different people. He describes trance-like conditions and powerful rituals. The *Oxford Encyclopedia of African Thought: Abol-Impe*, volume 1, confirms Aguirre's personal account, describing Santería as follows:

"A religion that developed out of the historical exigencies of the Atlantic slave trade in Cuba, Santería (Way of the Saints), also known as La Regla de Lukumi (Lukumi's Rule), is an Afro-Caribbean religion created during the sixteenth century by enslaved Africans from present-day Nigeria and Benin, who mingled various Yoruba religious beliefs and practices with the Roman Catholic belief system of the Spanish plantation owners. Enslaved Africans from West Africa, imported to the Caribbean to work on sugar plantations, brought with them their own religious beliefs and practices, such as sacred drum music and dance, animal sacrifice, and the tradition of possession trance for communicating with ancestors and deities." (Irele and Jeyifo 2010: 305)

My personal history allowed me to relate to this. Santería shares rituals and personages with the Catholic Church; for example, offerings that are the focus of ceremonies, and saints who in the Santería version are re-interpreted as and reframed as their own deities. In *I Am a Priest* my own connection with the Catholic religion is mainly communicated through my choice of imagery of two different Virgin Marys that serve as symbols for the venerations of Santería gods. Powerful repeated violin motifs that first present and later answer the line of the Santería priest in a ritualistic form of call and response (the so-called 'lining out' that is common to both Santería and Christian rites) serve me as an artistic means to express Santería worship.

🔊 Example for the use of 'lining out' in *I Am a Priest*:
http://transcoding.info/english/book.html – PART III CHAPTER 11 (2)

I have witnessed and participated in Shaman ceremonies by an indigenous Canadian medicine woman and of a Mongolian shaman, whose ceremonies involved chanting, drumming and body rituals. Through these experiences

I have an inkling of the power such rites can have over body and mind and the condition of trance that might be reached. My Catholic upbringing lets me relate to this as well, since I have experienced how rites in the Catholic Church speak in various ways to the senses. Through the use of incense (exciting the sense of smell), through call and response singing (speaking to the sense of hearing) or through the lighting and subsequent blessing of the Easter fire and the carrying of the blessed fire into the dark church space (stimulating eye and mind) Catholic priests evoke powerful rituals. In *I Am a Priest* trance and bodily possession are conveyed through the slow reverberant beatings of a bass drum, the human voice, screams and repetitive, passionate melodic motives.

Aguirre claimed that through my practising and performance of *Toque* I had a true experience of religious trance and connection with his gods, which he deduced from certain signs in my body in one of our rehearsals. He would argue that I had in a positive sense truly 'gone native' through an experience that I – at least partly – shared with my audience.

I understand my arts practice as performative, meaning that both the artwork and the creative process stir me (and my audience) and modify how we understand and reflect the world. I state that artistic practice can intrinsically have its own status in the search for knowledge. Although Loïc Wacquant might call my approach to participant observation and meaning making a "descent into moral subjectivism, a parroting of the folk sociology of members," (Wacquant 2005: 458) I prefer to follow Ingold, when he calls practising participant observation an education.

> "But to practice participant observation is also to undergo an education. ... That is to say, it is a practice dedicated to what Kenelm Burridge (1975: 10) has called *metanoia*: 'an ongoing series of transformations each one of which alters the predicates of being.'" (Ingold 2014: 388)

The state of 'going native' – meaning that I personally experienced shamanistic rites when performing *Toque* – was an education that helped me to understand and later to artistically express various phenomena of Santería in *I Am a Priest*. 'Being native' through my Catholic upbringing, it was easier for me to understand the concept of Santería gods and goddesses that share predicates with Catholic saints. It also let me connect to the musical phenomenon mentioned above that forms part of a Santería service while having its roots in Christian psalm singing, the so-called 'lining out.'

Analysing the strata of *I Am a Priest* in search of meaning and epistemic potential, I searched for a system of references: texts, narratives and musical or personal associations the artwork might evoke and refer to. I claim that I can make an artistic statement on Santería that is valid in an artistic-scientific field,

on account of my shared reference points and cultural resources with a priest of Santería and by practising and performing the religious ritual of *Toque*, that means by embodying certain aspects of Santería. Those become the references, the narratives, musical and personal associations that in the form of *I Am a Priest* grew into the "node within a network" of discourse and meaning. (Foucault, Archaeology of Knowledge 1972: 23)

Next, Ginkel investigates cultural references from a sociological perspective, approaching it from the opposite direction. For him, cultural reference points do not exist as such, but are constructed by people. Accordingly, he poses questions such as: How and by whom are rituals (i.e. cultural reference points) produced? How are they shaped as something which is convincingly powerful? And how does *I Am a Priest* fit into these considerations?

I Am a Priest – Cultural Reference Points: A Sociological Perspective (Ginkel)

Louis Aguirre, the priest quoted in the artwork *I Am a Priest*, shares memories and narratives of his own experience in the practices of Santería. The snippets from the original interview that we read and hear are selected and rearranged by Lüneburg for her artwork. The recording has a casual and personal quality that displays Aguirre's deep knowledge of Santería. Through Lüneburg's artwork, Aguirre delivers a rather disjointed yet detailed account of spiritual practices. He talks about the history and context of Santería. He also describes specific situations experienced through physical activities in a Santería service. Aguirre labels those activities as remarkable, even unusual—or in the interviewee's own words, "weird." This particular word strikes me as interesting. From an outside perspective it could be understood as a judgement, while at the same time supporting our impression of his familiarity with Santería, which he presents in a playful manner.

Lüneburg offers a perspective that is slightly different, yet also rooted in personal experiences. She refers to reference points such as her Catholic upbringing, and to having experienced shamanistic ritual first-hand, although not in the context of Santería itself. Lüneburg reflects on her experience, remembering them as having a powerful effect on body and mind. She appears interested in the question of how shamanistic rites exert power over people, whereas sociology would ask how rituals are established as something which is convincingly powerful. Besides her being less directly involved in Santería rituals than Aguirre, there is another way in which Lüneburg's account differs from his. While the interviewee describes spiritual practice as a first-hand experience, Lüneburg chooses an account take from an encyclopaedia entry, adding scientific plausibility to what is presented both by herself and Aguirre with regard to

Santería. Describing the history of this particular type of spirituality also allows her to establish links between an acknowledged narration stretching back numerous decades if not centuries in time and her own biographical history and ritual experience as we get to know them through her writing.
From a praxeological perspective we would say that Santería does not simply 'exist,' ready to be approached and observed by itself. Instead it exists as a bundle of practices we can see, hear, follow, observe and describe. It echoes what Lüneburg writes about Catholicism: "the believers' perceptive and emotional coding" is stimulated through "their senses of hearing (sermon, music, singing), smell (incense, candles), sight (clothing, architecture, illumination, paintings), and even touch (kneeling and [consuming] the host)" (Lüneburg 2013: 95) This is how Santería is established here – practically and discursively – as a network of practices, experiences, narrations, rearrangements, and historical accounts and this is how *I Am a Priest* becomes part of the practices it describes.

Establishing 'Identity' through Artistic Means: An Artistic Research Perspective (Lüneburg)

There is a third stratum of *I Am a Priest* that has to do with the overall artistic topic of the project, identity. Since the goal of the artistic research in *TransCoding* was to find artistic expressions of 'identity' in its many facets, I tried to capture a special aspect of identity in each section of *Slices of Life*. In the section of the artwork here studied, *I Am a Priest*, I accordingly expand the ethnographic investigation of Santería to an arts-based investigation that focuses on the representation of a person's identity epitomised through the personality of Louis Aguirre. His identity is characterised by his religion, and – as importantly – by his musicianship, when he works as a composer and former violinist.

Aguirre and I share personal reference points that can be found back in the artistic expressional means I use. We both studied violin with Russian teachers, he in Cuba and I in the former Soviet Union. During the interview we talked about how being taught by them was more than an instrumental education. It was an encounter with artists who showed a deep passion for life and for art that holistically formed both our personalities as artists and later as teachers.

Our shared experience left its mark in the way I treat the violin in *I Am a Priest*. The part mainly draws from a classical sonority, virtuosic violin techniques and romantic gestures often played in octaves. It refers to Aguirre's deep knowledge and love for classical music. At the same time, its melodic structure relates to the singing of a Santería priest, which can be heard in the soundtrack, and reflects and represents religious practices. It is also used to convey passion and commitment, which seems to be a feature of both, of practitioners of Santería in general and of the individual practitioner Louis Aguirre.

However, Aguirre and I share a space beyond the classical world. This is reflected in my occasional use of timbral means, extended techniques and abstract sound features of a sonoric language that is common to Western European contemporary art music and touches the art world Aguirre is a composer in. It shows for example when I musically describe the ambiguity of male or female gods ("We have some gods that could be male and female and we don't know. We have this ambiguity."). (Aguirre and Lüneburg 2016) I apply brittle tones, as well as sul ponticello techniques that touch on the overtone series and then abandon it again, and noisy, cracking scratchy sounds (sound sample 1). Nothing is absolutely clear, nothing is entirely in focus, the sonoric qualities waver.

Audio samples showing the use of sonoric features typical for contemporary art music in *I Am a Priest* (sound samples 1 and 2):
http://transcoding.info/english/book.html – PART III CHAPTER 11 (2)

I proceed similarly when Aguirre mentions that "everyone is the son of some god" and then lists the name of some of his gods: the violin prepares and highlights the textual enumeration through several bowed Es that flicker through timbres, maintaining variety and securing the interest of the listener, adding brightness and resplendence and, in general, serve as a plateau of concentration (sound sample 2). Thus, I musically underscore features of the gods by using elements and means of film sound design, the only difference being that I retrieve the sonic material from the world of classical contemporary music.

Documentary features such as the original tone of the interview, the material taken from the practice of Santería, and the ecstatic screams and shouts of a group of young people further emphasise the 'truthfulness' and authenticity we seem to experience in the (concert) situation. I further underscore the topic of spirituality by using a huge resonating bass drum that adds a steady, ritualistic beat (sound sample 3). Thus the musical material does what Nicholas Cook describes as a possible feature of musical multimedia in his book *Analysing Musical Multimedia*. It "transfers its own attributes to the story-line and to the product," "it creates coherence" and "participates in the construction of meaning" (Cook 1998/2000: 20f). Music adds to the credibility of the said scene and it confers meaning on a subconscious level.

Example for the use of the ritualistic bass drum in *I Am a Priest* (sound sample 3):
http://transcoding.info/english/book.html – PART III CHAPTER 11 (2)

Last but not least, I musically address the community of *TransCoding* by including electronically produced rhythm samples that are associated with popular culture rather than classical music (sound sample 4) thus alluding to their assumed (musical) identity. Later in the piece I merge these samples with the percussion instruments of Santería (sound sample 5).

Examples for the use of rhythmic sound samples taken from the world of popular culture that mix with the rhythmic features of the Santería practice (sound sample 4 and 5): http://transcoding.info/english/book.html – PART III CHAPTER 11 (3)

To quote Cook, the different styles used in the soundtrack and violin part of *I Am a Priest* "offer ... opportunities for communicating complex social or attitudinal messages instantaneously; one or two notes in a distinctive musical style are sufficient to target a specific social and demographic group and to associate a whole nexus of social and cultural values with a product." (Cook 1998/2000: 17). By intentionally applying different musical means and styles within one single segment I artistically establish identities that not only speak to different audiences but also mirror the symbiosis and merging of cultures that is inherent in Santería practice and Cuban everyday life.

When I chatted with Aguirre about *I Am a Priest*, he confirmed that I had caught the essence of the religion.

Barbara Lüneburg: FB chat with Louis Aguirre, Apr 17th, 10:36pm
"Did you really listen to the new piece? [I am referring to Aguirre's 'like' on FB when I posted the video of *I Am a Priest*] To be honest, I didn't dare to send it to you. I didn't write your name to it, because I didn't want it to be too personal, but if you want, I would. Hope you are well, Louis. All the best, Barbara"

Aguirre: Apr 18th, 8:34pm
"Yes, I listened to it! ☺I liked, and I think that you are doing something very particular. ... for me, it is a kind of composed 'Testimony' through a soundscape that includes the culture and 'soul' of the chosen 'subject.' many greetings, and hope you are doing fine too. L"

Establishing 'Identity' through Artistic Means: A Sociological Research Perspective (Ginkel)

Lüneburg refers to her compositional artwork as an expression of identity established with artistic means. However, sociologists often regard identity as established through social practices such as interaction, instead of seeing it as something constructed individually. Sociologists perceive 'personalities' as something that cannot and does not exist outside the realm of the social. Identity is established through interactional partners, in which the name of a person, their outward appearance and biographical data all play a major role. According to Goffman, identity is highly dependent upon the interaction in which it is presented and thus performed. (cf. Miebach 1991: p. 107)

Aguirre's identity here, 'performed' through both interview snippets and their musical embedding, is primarily focused on the priest-composer's spiritual

life. The similarities in Lüneburg and Aguirre's lives as artists seem to form a backdrop that informs certain artistic decisions during the creative process. It is something that Lüneburg is consciously aware of and thus something that is an integral part of the eventual form of the piece. However, how do these biographical and artistic elements work in conjunction?

In the interview snippets Aguirre presents himself primarily as a Santería priest and therefore as an expert regarding ritual practice and the history of the field. Lüneburg picks up on these elements, amplifying and enhancing them artistically. She presents her own biography as in certain aspects similar to that of Aguirre. We find overlaps such as a similar education in music, a religious context that is in the widest sense at least partly based on Catholicism, spiritual shamanistic experiences and a passionate dedication to being an artist. Although in some aspects their biographies also show differences, Lüneburg emphasises their similarities. Additionally, she underpins Aguirre's historical explanations of Santería by quoting an encyclopaedia to confirm his statements.

On the artistic side, 'truthfulness' or plausibility is additionally established through 'technical' means. Lüneburg states that she uses sound design to underscore features of the gods. Seen from a praxeological point of view, this is how religious experience is often co-established or, at the very least, emphasised. Going back hundreds if not thousands of years we observe that people have established the divine through sound, from ritual drumming to the sonic surroundings encountered in large cathedrals. From Lüneburg's previous account one could argue that she used similar means to establish epistemic grounds in *I Am a Priest*.

It is assumed that the divine cannot be seen directly so it must otherwise be established, for example through the sense of hearing. The sense of smell is important too, as one might know from walking into a Catholic church and being exposed to the scent of incense. So, although the divine or the spiritual is something that we believe to go 'beyond' matters of the body, it is the body that hears and sees and smells it (or that which we 'know' to be hints and traces of it). If we hear the echo-drenched sound of certain organ chords and if we were brought up in a specific cultural environment, we know immediately that it is certainly sacred music we are hearing. In this context, we might 'sense' holiness and spirituality instead of 'mere' craftsmanship or compositional competence.

Lüneburg achieves plausibility through collaging several elements into one musical composition: the interview snippets (as rearranged by herself), her own violin playing, sound design, artistic ways of expressions deriving from classical contemporary music as well as the confirmation of historical and artistic narratives through encyclopaedia entries. This reminds us of what – according to Sarah Pink – the methodological approach of sensory ethnography offers when it strives "to bring researchers and their audiences close to other people's multisensory experiences, knowing, practice, memories

and imagination." (Pink 2009: 132). While social sciences appear interested in opening their methodological palette to the styles of representation offered by sensory ethnography, and may work with artistic or semi-artistic elements, Pink stresses that "[w]ritten scholarship facilitates ethnographers' engagements in theoretical debate." (ibid.: 135)

Establishing the Context: An Artistic Research Perspective (Lüneburg)

Following the strata of *I Am a Priest* and its connection to the project, it is worth noting that religion and spirituality were recurring topics on *what-ifblog.net*. Assuming that spirituality, as a part of one's identity, affords personal meaning, we explored rites and philosophical questions in a series of disparate blog posts that reached from the goddess Athena of the ancient Greek (*Athena – Why I Like the Ancient Goddess*), the power of transformation embodied in 'masks' (*Masks for a New Identity*), to Māori (*Te Reinga…the Leaping Place of Spirits*) and other rites, such as for example the guest blog *Lines of Connection and Identity* by Malika Sqalli, or *Rose Petals, Queer Trauma, and Rituals – AA Bronson's Sacre du Printemps* by myself. We explored in posts the connection between life and death (*Catrinas | Submissions and Thoughts*, and the artwork *The Gods Envy Us*) and of course between Santería and Catholicism (*The Orichas of Santería*). Being aware that our community came from a huge bandwidth of countries and cultural and societal systems, the methodology was explorative, including aspects of different cultures and religions. We investigated whether there are questions and inspirations shaped by spiritual and religious experiences that are valid for our community and that would include members from different cultural backgrounds.

What is the link between these disparate blog posts on spiritual experiences and *I Am a Priest*? While there is no causal succession to be found, we could talk about a continuity and overall significance to the project. None of the blog posts on this topic spoke about rules and directives in any of the world religions. Instead they dealt with questions of our own identity. They explored for instance how goddesses and gods from different cultures inspire the way we live our lives.

"Athena – why I like the ancient goddess

Athena.
Goddess of wisdom, courage, inspiration, civilisation, warfare and justice, strength and strategy, mathematics and the arts, crafts, and skill. … She'll be an inspiration for me during the next month when I will try to get used to the art of blogging."
(Lüneburg, Athena – Why I Like the Ancient Goddess 2014)

They asked how ancient cultural landscapes shape our identity; for example Anahit Mughnetsyan from Armenia in her guest blog, when she tried to grasp her connection to Armenia (quoted in full in chapter 8 'The Community's Voice'):

"The place where I live, Armenia, is 'holy' or 'Noah's,' 'stone crosses,' 'paradise'.....land – they say.

Holy? Land?...
What if the place we live in is really holy, unique, special...?

Why I love living in Armenia. Really don't know. No one knows why he's born, rises, lives, loves in the place which we call homeland...
Identity? Roots? Again questions.
Yes and it's a pleasure to find your roots, and gain answers by walking on the holy+home+land..."
(Mughnetsyan, "Armenia-Homeland" by Anahit Mughnetsyan 2014)

We, the social media team of *TransCoding*, and our guest bloggers talked about rites and beliefs as part of the identity of a people, as for instance in my blog post on the place Cape Reinga, which is according to Māori lore the leaping place of spirits:

Fig. 3.1: Cape Te Reinga. Photo used by kind permission of Marko Ciciliani

"Te Reinga...the Leaping Place of Spirits

Cape Reinga is the northernmost point of New Zealand, on the narrow peninsula Aupori.
Here, the Tasman sea and the Pacific Ocean meet.
Here, according to ancient Māori lore the spirits of the deceased leap into the sea.
What a haunting, beautiful, spiritual place.

'An ancient pohutukawa tree and a lonely lighthouse mark this special place. It is here that after death, all Māori spirits travel up the coast and over the wind-swept vista to the pohutukawa tree on the headland of Te Rerenga Wairua. They descend into the underworld (reinga) by sliding down a root into the sea below. The spirits then travel underwater to the Three Kings Islands where they climb out onto Ohaua, the highest point of the islands.' After a last farewell look at the land of the living, they descend again to the depths and continue their journey to the other world, the land of their ancestors, Hawaiiki-A-Nui.

Te Reinga 'the leaping place of spirits.'

We met Huinga, a Māori, who told us many stories about this landscape and about its people. He and I stood on top of Cape Reinga looking across the vast sea, when he sang this song for me.

Song by Huinga at http://transcoding.info/english/book.html – PART III CHAPTER 11 (3); text quote taken from http://www.doc.govt.nz/conservation/historic/by-region/northland/ kaitaia/cape-reinga/."

In her guest blog post *Lines of Connection and Identity* Malika Sqalli continues the topical strand on Māori culture when she speaks about tattoo traditions in New Zealand among the Māori, and in Morocco within the Berber culture. The Māori Tā Moko tattoo tradition is understood as a sign of cultural, as well as tribal and personal identity with transcendental association. If the person that gets the Tā Moko wishes for it, it even links this person with their ancestors.

Fig. 3.2: Mere Taylor Tuiloma decided to take the step of getting her Moko done, a year after her husband's death. Photo used by kind permission of Malika Sqalli.

Inspired by the post of a follower on Facebook, I asked how thinking about death and the finiteness of life shapes our everyday being. I transformed this into an artwork: *The Gods Envy Us* – part of the overall artwork of *TransCoding*:

👁 Link to the video *The Gods Envy Us*:
http://transcoding.info/english/book.html – PART II CHAPTER 6 (1)

The visuals I used were images we had been given by our community in response to the *Call for Entries | Catrinas* and *Creativity is Contagious*.

Fig. 3.3: Drawing of a 'Catrina' by Daniella Michelle in response to our call for Catrinas on the occasion of the Mexican Día de los muertos (Day of the Dead). The image is part of the visuals for *The Gods Envy Us*.

Those disparate blog posts and thoughts on spirituality, rites, life and death and identity formed one stratum through which *I Am a Priest* could come into being. They emerged as a field of questions on spiritual experiences and how those could be felt as part of our identity.

In *I Am a Priest* these strings came together and in it we find many elements our community members thought about in their own words, music or images: Aguirre introduces us to a number of his gods and goddesses, their tasks and their connections to Catholic saints, and he explains what they symbolise for the people who worship them. Through his words we hear about rites and

ceremonies, the influence of different cultures on Santería (and his home country Cuba) and his personal priesthood. The motive of death appears in images that depict the ritual sacrifice of animals. In the soundtrack the audience can hear how religious feelings and ecstasy are established through the passionate and repetitive playing of the violin, the screams of the masses, and the ritualistic beating of a drum. Moreover, we experience Aguirre's personal way of worshipping – namely through classical music, part of his upbringing and his profession – in the sounds and the part of the violin, the instrument he studied. The material of the artwork (interview snippets, violin part and the soundtrack with its mixed elements from documentary recordings, electronic sounds and violin additions, and the images chosen for the video) offers the listener a reference to the immateriality and spiritual experience of the religion Santería.

In my opinion, the artwork has epistemological potential. It forms the node in the network of posts that refer to spiritual knowledge from different cultures, distant countries and even long-gone times. Through it I made notions of identity and spirituality available and possibly meaningful for an audience that in itself consists of many different cultural and personal identities.

Establishing the Context: A Sociological Perspective
(Kai Ginkel)

From a sociological perspective it would be pointless to debate or even doubt any participant's personal associations regarding immateriality and spiritual experience. However, immateriality is not the focus of praxeological research. On the contrary, in praxeology and in other sociological disciplines scholars focus on what is material. Material is open to more or less direct observation, whereas any knowledge about the immaterial is treated as speculative. Ethnographic investigations can, however, focus on how the immaterial is talked about, written about and otherwise enacted in the form of clearly observable practice(s).

Ethnographic research of religious practice faces considerable challenges. As Murchison and Coats point out: "Attempts to understand contemporary religious practice, and its associated communities and identities, must take into consideration the way that these phenomena exist in both virtual and physical spaces, as well as the way that, in some instances, religion bridges or erases this dichotomy." (Murchison and Coats 2015: 988) This seems applicable to the way accounts of religious experience or spiritual identity are collected for *TransCoding*. Lüneburg addresses the question of what the link might be between disparate blog posts on spiritual experiences on the one hand and *I Am a Priest* on the other. Through these personal posts, spirituality and spiritual diversity

are 'enacted' in a virtual space, namely the blog, by discursive action, i.e. the action of writing and reflecting on spiritual ideas. In the blog, those discursive artefacts of spiritual experience were linked via the concept of identity. In the Foucauldian sense of a "node within a network," the individual experiences and identities still form references and construct continuities that flow into the artwork *I Am a Priest*, but also connect community members across an abstract, yet personally interpreted concept.

Whereas Lüneburg contemplates how goddesses and gods from different cultures inspire our being, we could also change the perspective to the question of how gods and goddesses might be understood as reflections of societal living. In this sense, Anahit Mughnetsyan's spiritual blog post might be interpreted as a reflection of a strong notion of 'home' that is shaped by society and her cultural heritage, and an understanding of being 'rooted' in a particular place. How all of these aspects are enacted in everyday practice and also linked to questions of spirituality both in virtual and physical spaces might hypothetically serve as the subject of an ethnographic investigation.

In this way, the research results would take on the form of a text which, as Alvesson expresses it, is seen as the central part of the research project. "It tells a story, it uses a particular style, and includes much more than simply the reporting of data and a description of objective reality." (Alvesson, 2002 cited by Alvesson 2009: 159). While *I am a Priest* is not in a strict sense an ethnographic study, it achieves something similar: the artwork touches upon the multi-sitedness of rites, on enacted spirituality in everyday living and on the merging of both.

12. A COMPARISON OF DISCOURSES

In the previous chapters we offered a general definition of artistic research and sociological ethnography and investigated their particular knowledge claims. Based on the case study *I Am a Priest* we studied data collection strategies, methods of analysis and structures of fieldwork, and tried to trace the construction of meaning making and knowledge gain in both fields. Additionally, we were interested in the articulation and communication of research findings. In doing this we were not seeking any singular valid perspective. Instead, we were studying the production of knowledge with regard to this specific artwork, and investigating how each method has a bearing on the kind of 'truth' that is being sought and how it is accordingly depicted.

In what follows, we strip down artistic research and ethnographic sociology by enlisting the raw factors of data collection, methodological set-up, 'going native,' 'being native' or 'making the familiar strange,' we look at power relations and ethical considerations, and representation and dissemination. In short, we look at the bones of both disciplines in an attempt to reveal the similarities and differences and to evaluate whether they might possibly inform each other in terms of methodological and discursive enhancement.

Data Collection

Both artistic research and sociology often work exploratively in an effort to understand human knowledge and experience. In artistic research data may be collected by doing art (such as performing, exhibiting, artistic software coding, sculpturing, etc., followed by critical reflection), by personal embodiment (for instance through my performing *Toque*), scientific experimentation, by connecting seemingly distant analogies or by exploring discontinuities to create new contexts within and through the artwork. Additionally, data collection happens via participant observation (to a great part from an inner, native perspective), by analysing case studies of one's own practice and that of other artists, and by any kind of qualitative or quantitative research that fits the inquiry.

In ethnography, participant observation (paired with an often prolonged engagement in the field), field notes and in-depth interviews or group interviews are well tested data collection tools, as is the use of non-interactive data sources such as documents and other unobtrusive measures. Recently, digital media for capturing images, recording sounds or interacting with social worlds have taken on an increasingly important role in data collection. They have also gained importance in the active involvement of researchers and participants (thereby granting participants a stronger sense of agency), and in the contextualisation, interpretation and representation of data. Social researchers Caroline Lenette

and Jennifer Boddy state that "Proponents of the increasingly popular visual-based methods argue that complex experiences cannot be fully conveyed through textual interpretations alone (Pink 2006, 2007; Radnofsky 1996)." (Lenette and Boddy 2013: 72)

However, even if we can find a common approach with regards to tools and methods of data collection, there are still differences between artistic research and modern ethnography. In ethnography (classical, visual or sensory ethnography) data are collected to directly learn something about a selected group of people (or multiple sites and cultures), i.e. the field. In artistic research investigation could also mean to investigate through and on an abstract, aesthetical topic (through which we can explore more indirectly the notion of being human). Ethnographic researchers gather data on something that already exists, while in artistic research we often first have to create the data (the artwork and the process of creating art) that we base our inquiry on. Ethnographic researchers investigate others, whereas for art researchers their own art and arts practice are central to their work.

If tested methodologies of ethnography are applied as a tool for meticulous documentation and "analysis that does not necessarily emphasize the personal meaning or strongly subjective aspects of the research/event/experience," this might lend artistic research additional means "to address 'subjectivity' and prior knowledge as a complex mix of resource and blinder." (Alvesson 2009: 160 and 166) For those who investigate from inside their field or even from inside their own creative process and need to carefully counterbalance personal or subjective aspects of their analysis and narrative, such tools can be very important. Ethnography, by contrast, could gain from the self-reflective experience and investigative practice artistic researchers have with the handling of those data – thoughts, ideas, interpersonal relations and communications – that are usually inaccessible to others because they are held 'under closure', i.e., in sociological terms, behind boundaries or within constructed identities that protect them from prying eyes.

Methodological Set-Up

In artistic research, scholars often engage in interdisciplinary work, combining methodologies from various fields that have to be tailored for each research project. In addition to the "experimentation *in* practice, reflection *on* practice and interpretation *of* practice," (Borgdorff 2012: 23) methods, techniques and approaches can be drawn from the humanities, the social sciences or the natural sciences. There is no one clear-cut singular method to follow. Often the conceptualisation of the research process is a continuous flow, especially since the research object, the artwork, is usually created within, through and as a result of

the research process, and the researcher might at the same time be the research subject. The process of creating art, the process of performing or exhibiting art, and the product itself is necessarily a main part of the investigation. Research results are immediately fed back into the field and into the process of doing art and of thinking about art, and into the actual resulting artwork.

The research consists of the actual artistic activity and of the systematic and self-reflective investigation of it; the essential component is the artistic expression of the findings, often but not necessarily paired with a verbal report. Fundamental academic conventions such as 'methodology,' 'verifiability,' and 'reporting' are met, however, since artistic research is concerned with the production of art which in itself claims to be unique and individual, and 'replicability' is not primarily a criterion. Nevertheless, research findings are transferable insofar as artistic research is concerned with the development of the arts and future artists can base their (individual) work on the prior findings of artistic researchers.

In artistic research, methodology and research design for each new project have to be uniquely conceptualised and may differ fundamentally from one project to the other; classical ethnography, by contrast, prefers to use methodologies that are established, confirmed and time-tested. Subdisciplines of ethnography, such as ethnographic action research or visual or sensory ethnography, have nevertheless broadened the range of methods and approaches, leading to a different perspective on participant involvement, collaboration and feedback into the field.

> "Further, visual methods induce more critical, reflexive methodologies (Pink, 2006), as interpretations of emerging data from participants' perspectives provide a comprehensive and enriching exploration of the social worlds of both researcher and participants. They also promote more collaborative methodologies than used in the past, as such methods involve the active involvement of both researchers and participants rather than, for example, passive involvement of participants in research based on observation (Pink, 2006)." (Lenette and Boddy 2013: 72)

Looking at future mutual methodological enhancement, it might be rewarding to apply the praxeological view on social phenomena (established as a network of practices, experiences, narrations, rearrangements and historical accounts) to the investigation of interactions between artists and their audiences and to the question how artworks construct and establish knowledge and meaning. Ethnographic research on the other hand could profit from the flexibility and multiplicity of methods and perspective offered by artistic research, paired with the art's rich means of sensory expression and its visual, audio and bodily interpretation of research outcomes.

Going Native, Being Native

Whereas in many sociological debates 'going native' – today less offensively termed 'over-rapport' – is mostly considered a methodological flaw, artistic researchers are necessarily always 'natives' in the field they study; the creation of art and the reflection on context, the process of creation and the work itself, all come from an inner perspective. In his book *The Reflective Practitioner* on the professions of engineering, architecture, management, psychotherapy and town planning, social scientist Donald A. Schön argues that "[d]oing and thinking are complementary. Doing extends thinking in the tests, moves, and probes of experimental action, and reflection feeds on doing and its results. Each feeds the other, and each sets boundaries for the other" (Schön 1983: 280). Through artistic research we gain a detailed inside perspective on exactly this process: on artistic procedures, work development and how this leads to consequences in the artwork. 'Outside' researchers would not have access to this information, but only to the information granted by the artist(s).

Ethnography, on the other hand, sees an advantage in keeping objectivity and distance, to balance empathy and reflexivity and to avoid what Karen O'Reilly in her book *Key Concepts of Ethnography* calls the 'lure of acceptance.' However, she also observes that

> "[n]ow that ethnography is likely to be undertaken in societies and communities where the ethnographer is already to some extent an insider **(insider ethnographies)**, the problem of 'going native' is discussed less frequently. Furthermore, it is increasingly recognised that complete physical and emotional distance is neither possible nor even desirable." (O'Reilly 2009: 88 [emphasis in original])

When artistic research engages in enquiry from the inside, there can be disadvantages in the potential professional dependencies or obligations and the ethical sensitivities involved if a researcher is investigating while being part of the field he or she researches. The artistic researcher is vulnerable with regard to his or her professional position in the field which could theoretically even lead to self-censorship. There is a sense of personal exposure and the danger of exposing collaborating artists or colleagues in the field. The ethical guidelines of the Arts and Humanities Council include the 'confidentiality of information provided by research subjects, and anonymity of respondents.' (University of Glasgow, College of Arts - Research Ethics Policy 2017) However, it is not always possible to anonymise research subjects when describing arts practices or art works, and this may lead to the omission of controversial information. Also matters of professional self-branding might get in the way of honest reflection on both successes and failures, on opportunities and obstacles, and make open and critical self-reflectivity more challenging.

In our opinion, it would be worthwhile for artistic researchers to look into and learn from the handling of closeness and professional distance in ethnography, and the problems that come with ethical considerations and self-reflectivity, two areas that are much more openly addressed in ethnography. Ethnographic researchers in turn could gain interesting insights from overcoming the closure of the field. Nevertheless, we see the need to carefully balance out the position of the professional and perhaps more 'objective' observer with the position of the inside expert who might be more intimately but also more 'subjectively' informed. In our opinion it is particularly important to find a balance here, especially with regard to shared authority over questions investigated and possibly controversial answers found. This problem links directly to the following section on power relations and ethical considerations.

Power Relations and Ethical Considerations

In *The Order of Discourse*, Foucault talks about "procedures of exclusion" linked with desire and with power. What does this mean with regard to the articulation and communication of research findings? Who has a claim to knowledge in the disciplines we look at? The actual members of the field researched or the researcher investigating the field? Who profits, and how? Who is allowed to say what? What does the interaction and relation between researcher and researched subject look like?

> "In a society like ours, the procedures of exclusion are well known ... We know quite well that we do not have the right to say everything, that we cannot speak of just anything in any circumstances whatever, and that not everyone has the right to speak of anything whatever. In the taboo on the object of speech, and the ritual of the circumstances of speech, and the privileged or exclusive right of the speaking subject, we have the play of three types of prohibition which intersect, reinforce or compensate for each other, forming a constant grid which changes constantly ... It does not matter that discourse appears to be of little account, because the prohibitions that surround it very soon reveal its link with desire and with power." (Foucault, The Order of Discourse 1981: 52)

As we have seen, in ethnography, researchers aim for an analytical distance from their research subjects, even if they immerse themselves in a field via long-term engagement. Their understanding is based on a holistic approach, observing, perceiving and gathering facts to describe, reflect on and interpret place, people and activities. This does not come without drawbacks. A critical moment for example in ethnographical research can be the moment of leaving the field:

"'The ethnographer who courted others, who had seemingly limitless time to listen, is now revealed as a person who can no longer be bothered and is in a hurry to be off' (Rock: 36). To make matters worse, the ethnographer is off to expose what has been learned to the whole world. No wonder people can feel *used*." (Gray 2017: 463)

Ethnographers usually do not immediately feed their findings back into in the field or test their research results while still investigating. The research is done through studying and observing from an observational and analytical position, not through the process of active doing and reflecting as in artistic research. Also, ethnographic sociology does not necessarily aim for a transformation of the field or the subjects it studies. Furthermore, critical ethnographers address possible bias and the reinforcement of dominant power relations. They argue that the relationship between researcher and researched should not be hierarchical or exploitative, but based on consent and collaboration.

Artistic research is concurrently done for the researcher her- or himself, for the development of the arts and artistic practices, and for the (general and academic) audience. At best, artistic researchers simultaneously advance the domain and produce artworks that are shared with the public. Hence, the power lies with the artist-researcher and is shared with the onlooker. However, there are potential conflicts of interest that arise from the interplay of an interlocked professional research and arts practice.

The discipline of artistic research does not exist in a societal and professional vacuum; artistic researchers explore their art, and their investigation may be influenced by professional (financial, artistic and aesthetic) pressure from their peer group. Further, artistic researchers have to consider ethical pitfalls, since it can be difficult, sometimes almost impossible, to make research data from the arts domain and from colleagues anonymous.

Another power question that evolves around the relatively young field of artistic research is the question of legitimacy, distribution of money and reputation. A sociologist might ask whether artistic researchers count more than 'ordinary' artists, since they receive societal appreciation in the form of research money or academic titles. The arts world might ask whether artistic researchers perhaps represent an 'academisation' of art that has nothing to do with the 'real world' and challenges of arts practice. A traditional academic scholar might doubt the validity of art as a research outcome. In turn, an artistic researcher might face the special challenge of how to handle the tension between artistic practices within a relatively autonomous, dynamic art world and the standards and slower-paced reflective culture of academic research, which they share research money with. In our view, these questions deserve more future research from both the inner perspective of artistic and the more distant view of sociological ethnography.

Representation and Dissemination

In artistic research the 'native,' the artist him or herself, claims to unearth and shape the knowledge embodied in the artwork, in the practice of art and in the reflection on it. The artworks themselves and their presentation constitute an indispensable component of the research outcome. Foucault describes the "living openness of history," that in its historical analysis can include the "use of discontinuity, the definition of levels and limits, the description of specific series, the uncovering of the whole interplay of differences" (Foucault, Archaeology of Knowledge 1972: 13); likewise, in artistic research, we investigate the 'living openness of art.' Artistic researchers look at series, ruptures, transformations and thresholds, they are concerned with ideas (and sciences), and embrace and explore discontinuities. Meaning making and knowledge gain is ascertained through the artwork itself or through reflection on the process of doing art. Researchers not only witness to their own field and of their own art through their artistic work, they also touch on questions of humanity.

Artistic research has several audiences: the academic world, peers in the art world, and the general public who experience the artworks. The search for 'truth' and 'knowledge' through art has to allow for the fact that onlookers might understand artworks differently from the creator and draw their own individual conclusions. There is no claim to absolute truth, art is living and fragile insofar as it may be interpreted to have multiple meanings. By nature, its knowledge is contingent and invites ambiguity in the interpretation by the onlooker.

In Borgdorff's *The Conflict of the Faculties*, he postulates that artistic researchers should "elucidate both the process and the outcome [of their artistic research] in accordance with customary standards" and "reflect on the research process, and documentation of it in discursive form." (Borgdorff 2012: 25) However, for some artistic researchers turning their research findings into a verbal report for the purpose of meeting traditional academic standards is contrary to the idea and essence of artistic research. Far from being a mere illustration that goes along with the 'actual' research, as might be the case in sensory ethnography, to them the artwork is the main if not the only and indispensable outcome of their investigation. Borgdorff reports:

> "It was warned ... with recourse to Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, and Levinas, that true artistic research should resist, as an independent form of knowledge production, any kind of academisation. Through its focus on the singular, the aesthetic-affective, the transgressive, the unforeseen, artistic research should exemplify an alternative culture of knowledge." (Borgdorff 2012: 5)

Other scholars appreciate precisely this, the additional verbalisation of their artistic research; they see it as a tool to systemise and deepen their artistic

investigation and practice, and as a matter of self-reflectivity and scientific rigour. A third party coming from traditional academia argues that the artistic production of knowledge has "potentially more in common with speculative philosophy and the knowledge criticism it practises than with scientific knowledge production." (Borgdorff 2012: 5)

The written research report is the traditional outcome in ethnographic research and has a special meaning for it. In the opinion of ethnographer John van Maanen, the written report represents the culture of a field that needs to be interpreted by the fieldworker. He clearly distinguishes between natives' points of view and the interpretation of culture that the ethnographic researcher develops. It's not that the culture makes itself known through words, actions and artefacts of its members; rather, the independent interpretation by the researcher constitutes the representation of the culture and thereby the (valid) research outcome in ethnography.

"A culture is expressed (or constituted) only by the actions and words of its members and must be interpreted by, not given to, a fieldworker. To portray culture requires the fieldworker to hear, to see, and, most important for our purposes, to write of what was presumably witnessed and understood during a stay in the field. Culture is not itself visible, but is made visible only through its representation … The fieldworker must display culture in a narrative, a written report of the fieldwork experience in self-consciously selected words. Ethnography is the result of fieldwork, but it is the written report that must represent the culture, not the fieldwork itself. Ethnography as a written product, then, has a degree of independence (how culture is portrayed) from the fieldwork on which it is based (how culture is known)." (Van Maanen 1988/2011: 3 f.)

In this understanding, the meaning of culture is not accessible through 'being an insider' but through an academic perspective established in specific methods of data collection, analysis, reflection and, finally and necessarily, academic writing. The Sensory Ethnography Lab (SEL), an experimental laboratory at Harvard University, acts in contrast to this assessment. They explore – as they call it – innovative combinations of aesthetics and ethnography and use analogue and digital media to explore the aesthetics and ontology of the natural and unnatural world. In their own words they provide

"an academic and institutional context for the development of creative work and research that is itself constitutively visual or acoustic – conducted through audiovisual media rather than purely verbal sign systems – and which may thus complement the human sciences' and humanities' almost exclusive reliance on the written word and quantification. It opposes the traditions of art that are not deeply infused with the real, those of documentary that are derived from broadcast journalism, and those of visual anthropology that mimic the discursive inclinations of their mother discipline." (Castaing-Taylor et al. 2010)

They seem, however, to be the exception. Although with the development of sensory ethnography the palette of methodological tools has been expanded, even expert Sarah Pink supports the claim of academic writing as being the most important tool for the communication of research findings:

"The written word is the most embedded and developed form of ethnographic representation, and a sophisticated technique for scholarly communication. It remains the dominant method of relating the findings, methodologies and theoretical implications of ethnographic studies generally, as well as those that attend to the senses." (Pink 2009/2015: 132)

Whereas artistic researchers still debate among themselves which form of representation may be valid for displaying the outcome of their research, and some struggle with the connotations of the written report, ethnographic sociologists only slowly and cautiously open their communication and research representation to sensory and artistic expression. The gap is still wide but holds the potential of added value for both sides.

Quality Assessment and Development of Our Disciplines

Two questions remain: how do we establish quality standards and how do we further the (methodological) development of our respective disciplines?

Artistic researchers need to continuously discuss and develop skills and methods that enable them to adopt an inquiring approach to their own art, to observe the process of doing art with analytical awareness and a broad choice of methodological tools, and to assess the effect they have on their domain and – through their art – on their audience. Embedding their research in an interdisciplinary approach or an interdisciplinary team can provide a point of reference and accountability, and support their pursuit of adequate quality criteria and standards of judgement. The typical first-person perspective of artistic research could for instance be supported by second-person and third-person research; alternatively, the use of multi-disciplinary methodologies could help to counterbalance subjectivity and reduce the defensiveness that might result from research 'at home,' within one's own professional field. However, what organisational behaviour scholar Judi Marshall and action researcher Geoff Mead say about first-person action research can equally be true for artistic research in the most positive sense:

"Without wishing to render oneself or others unnecessarily vulnerable, it may be that this 'edginess' is a possible marker of quality in first-person action research, an indication of a willingness to work at one's 'learning edge.'" (Marshall and Mead 2005: 237)

For both ethnography and artistic research, we would like to pose the question of how 'being native' as a legitimate access to knowledge and information can further be systemised and rendered useful. We argue that inquiry in each of these domains can gain value and depth not only by interaction and self-reflection by someone who is both 'native' and observing researcher, but also by the inclusion and participation of the field while having a critical, systematic and analytical research approach. The investigation of 'context,' the construction of 'realities' and the evaluation of meaning in each of these fields could be enriched by the juxtaposition of theories, ideas and the practice of observation from a certain distance used in ethnographic research, and the explorative practices and inquiry from the inside used in artistic research.

For this to be possible we need to carefully assess and differentiate autonomies and dependences in our domain and the field we investigate, and change our core questions from 'What has *really* happened?' or 'What is *really* said?' to 'Which methodological tools render the most interesting result in our search for meaning?', 'What do we learn from the different perspectives available?', and 'To what extent does this method drive our analysis and understanding of questions of humanity forward?'

Following Foucault, we propose to strive for a 'total description' that draws all phenomena around a single centre – a principle, a meaning, a spirit, a world-view, an overall shape." (Foucault, Archaeology of Knowledge 1972: 10)

Conclusion

With *TransCoding* we came from the field of contemporary art music and multimedia art, a field that is often considered 'highbrow,' intellectual, and unapproachable, a field that produces art for a minority and experts. And yet we succeeded in establishing an online community of mainly non-expert, creatively interested people that picked up on our topic of contemporary art and was actively involved in the making of new artworks. In the course of the project we developed a successful model of interaction and involvement (as discussed in Part II of this monograph).

The work with the community led to a whole body of artworks that were generated from different premises: firstly, those that were built on our calls for entry, for which the community partly used material *TransCoding* provided, adding their own resources; secondly, works that were based on inspiration from the community but otherwise produced non-collaboratively either by single community members or by myself; thirdly, the artworks *Read me* and *Slices of Life* that combined the creative potential of the community with my own artistic ideas; and finally, the accumulation of creative works and thoughts on all of *TransCoding*'s social media channels, which I consider a separate participatory artwork in itself.

We as a team, and especially I as lead artist and communicator, experienced not only successful long-term interaction, but also ruptures and discontinuities within the process that can be traced well into the artworks and into the development of the content and design of the social media channels. Therefore, I would like to conclude this text by discussing the viability of this model of participatory art for future arts practice.

TransCoding – A Model for Future Arts Practice?

What practical and theoretical problems emerge from a review of this project? The decision to work and produce under the premises of participatory art and via social media was fed by my desire as a performer to reach people beyond the anonymous relationship between the sole creative artist and the 'consuming

audience' and to exchange with them. With the project I strove to share and democratise the creative process, and to define the relationship between artist and audience/community as one of permeability, mutual influence and empowerment. Whether this led to a fruitful interactive exchange between contributors and artists, adding meaning to both groups, was energetically discussed.

Participation of the Community

The original group of artists was not comfortable with the community as a partaking agent in the creative process. In their perception the communication and interaction with the community did not add value to their artistic practice. On the contrary, they felt hindered in their creative process, they found it difficult to integrate the contributions from non-professionals, and they feared for the quality of their work and their reputation in the arts scene. In consequence, the original group of artists left the project after the first year. I had to accept that what seemed to be stimulating for the community was not necessarily perceived as fruitful for the personal artistic practice of my creative collaborators, and that each individual artist had to balance the pressure they felt from the professional field they worked in and to draw consequences from that. However, the community itself conveyed interest, pride and joy in being involved in *TransCoding*, and I felt inspired and supported through them. The interaction and joint participative creative work changed my self-concept as artist and my way of practising art.

Social Media

Social media are characterised by a fleeting momentum. They need to be constantly nurtured to ensure attention from the public. We had to regularly and frequently feed the main blog *what-ifblog.net* with content and subsequently spread it across our social media channels. This required research on the most suitable topics to present in order to balance our field of interest with that of our community and to frame our posts in an appealing form that would pique the curiosity of our community members. Additionally we had to develop calls for entries, encourage people to participate in our challenges and quickly follow up comments, questions or submissions; all of this in addition to the research and development of the artwork. The enormous workload makes this model of participatory art via social media less viable for an artist who lacks significant financial backup and further human resources, especially in the field of contemporary art music, where money resources are scarce and honoraria small. *TransCoding* was only possible because the research and art production was based on substantial research funding from the Austrian Science Fund.

Crossover Culture

Since we were funded through the PEEK-programme of the Austrian Science Fund, the 'Programme for Arts-Based Research,' I was financially independent of the art market and could – with minimised risk – try new aesthetic and conceptual paths in the development of *TransCoding*'s artwork.

What are the influences of popular art in the overall project? I wrote story elements and narratives into both the artworks, *Read me* and *Slices of Life*, that emerged from the interaction with and the contributions from the community. Additionally, I used the human voice (without processing or sound manipulation) to directly convey the story. Both stand in contrast to the intellectual abstraction often favoured in Western contemporary art music.

I use illustrative elements of sound design throughout all segments of the composition *Slices of Life* to support the narratives, while consciously treating sonic phenomena as "complex entities with various layers and connotations, which [again] contrasts with a more abstract parametric approach to sound, that was dominant after World War II." (Ciciliani 2017: 33) However, I also often use sounds that are explicitly drawn from the sonic world of contemporary art music, such as extended violin techniques and microtonal harmonics.

The instrumentation of *Slices of Life* encompasses elements of classical, popular, folk and contemporary art music and crosses boundaries in many directions. I include an instrument that is a core instrument of Western classical culture, the acoustic violin. At the same time, I employ instruments from popular music such as analogue synthesisers and electric guitars to create the sonic world of *Slices of Life*; sounds of a broken accordion, inside-piano sounds and ringing bells with microtonal beatings could be considered representative of contemporary art music. The instruments merge with the voices of international community members who recorded the narration for me and with my own voice.

Remix was an issue not only in the calls for entry on the blog but also in the artworks themselves, *Slices of Life* and *Read me*. I worked with fragments of an Armenian classical contemporary song provided by composer and community member Anahit Mughnetsyan and her friend, the excellent soprano Heghine Ohanyan, and juxtaposed this with a Korean folksong beautifully chanted by community member Gloria Guns. With their permission I remixed their compositions and combined them with quotations from Johann Sebastian Bach, Afghan folk music and elements from pop music. I merged styles from classical romantic music with pop rhythms and electronic processing.

Additionally, the form of *Slices of Life* was inspired by pop albums. It consists of a series of short musical stories between two and five minutes long that together form the overall narrative. Soundscapes, documentary-style recordings, personal interviews, images that captured everyday life, and of course the texts of our community members were woven into the mix thus removing contemporary (classical) music and media art from their intellectual and secluded spheres into

realms that are associated with our lives, dreams and fantasies, our otherness and our belongings.

The primary question in the foreground of my artistic work was whether I would be able to further cross over between high art and popular art by offering creative and intellectual incentives, while on the other hand receiving, carefully listening to and channelling the community's own creative voices. Nevertheless, the intention was that the artistic outcome could stand its ground within the field of contemporary art music.

Artistic Research and *TransCoding*

Why was the discipline of artistic research the right approach to set up, shape, conduct and investigate this particular project? I would like to offer four reasons.

Knowledge gain and communication through the arts defines the discipline of artistic research at its core.
The entire model of *TransCoding* was constructed around communication through art. However, we enlarged the communicative spectrum from 'the artwork that speaks to its audience' to a direct exchange between the professional artist and the community. We communicated via chats, blog posts, comments, likes and joint artistic enterprises, and last but not least we also communicated and learned through the artworks created by our members, by me, and jointly by them and me.

Artistic research produces new insights from an inside perspective.
Artistic research in general and this project in particular enable me to investigate the nature of art and how to create meaning and gain knowledge through the arts. Through the challenges of artistic research in general, through the systematic analysis and reflection of my artistic activity and in particular through a research enterprise such as *TransCoding*, I have grown as an artist, expanded my boundaries and re-invented my role as performer: from a sole interpreter and 'servant' of classical music, I have developed into a communicator with my audience, and last but not least into a creator with my own compositional practice. My perspective has widened: from being somebody who 'just' reflects on the work of a classical performer, I have become a researcher who employs her own artistic work as the basis for knowledge gain.

Artistic research enriches its domain and feeds back into the field it investigates.
TransCoding was undertaken with the direct involvement of a community that influenced the resulting artworks. I was part of the field I investigated and fed insights directly back into the community. Community members had the

opportunity to gain a level of individual empowerment through the production of art in the framework of *TransCoding*. My interaction with them, on the other hand, changed my perspective on my own domain, contemporary art music. We expressed this process in the participatory and crossover artworks *Slices of Life*, *Read me* and the total of the participatory artwork of *TransCoding*. In doing so, we questioned the conception and (widely accepted) nature of an artist's exclusive authority in art production. The outcome of the process benefitted not only the (arts) domain but also of the people involved.

Artistic research is based on the notion that knowledge is inherent in aesthetic experience and is produced through the process of making and presenting art.
On the basis of the aesthetic and sensory dimension of artworks, insights can be experienced by creator, onlooker and listener alike and are open to a range of interpretations that can be turned into personal experience for individual users. In the case of *TransCoding*, that meant that through participating in the project, and through their general involvement and creative engagement with our common topic 'identity,' our members could (at least theoretically) gain deeper knowledge and extract new understandings of (participatory) contemporary art and of 'identity' from our own contributions, the submissions of others and the information the blog offered. Through the artworks, the act of performing, the participation, the online documentation and, last but not least, the live performances of the work, our audience, the online community and I myself could explore different forms of 'identity' with mind, body and soul. Thus, each of us could assess knowledge on multiple levels, something we wouldn't have achieved by reading an academic text alone.

Working in a mixed team combining multiple methods of (interpretive) research helped us to investigate from various perspectives – as observers from outside and participants from the inside – and approach knowledge from several angles. We claim to thus have come to a richer and more detailed picture in our findings, while having submitted our analysis and interpretation to a methodological reflexivity that was educated and trained in different research disciplines.

Who Benefitted from *TransCoding*?

We observed that our project fostered curiosity for our art, and that our community established a habit of watching, experimenting and co-creating within and beyond our project. Our numbers attest to this: there were over 20,300 views on the blog alone during 2014 and 2015; in the one week February 15–22, 2016 we engaged 141 people on Facebook; and with more than 1,200 followers on our various social media channels, we reached far more people

than would have been possible had we simply stayed within the contemporary music scene. However, what individual community members explicitly gained – and this includes all stakeholders, our online community, audiences and the *TransCoding* team itself – and on what level it altered them, was up to them.

In conclusion, I would like to quote Malika Sqalli, from Rabat, Morocco, a traveller and photographer, who wrote to me on Facebook on February 23, 2016:

Hi –
I had a look at the project and the link you sent me – I so love the collaboration of so many from creatives to scientists. ... sensing the space and time and questioning the lines that boundaries are. It made me think that your project is about ... words and description and boundaries of identity.

When we define something we draw a line around it through words which are ultimately lines when written and soundwaves when spoken. ...
I will get on your project - it will take me on a little wander in fairyland and come up with a new personal mythology! ...

Take care and I will be in touch soon.
xx
(Malika Sqalli in a Facebook message to the author on February 23, 2016).