



**UCT
GRADUATE
SCHOOL OF
BUSINESS**

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

Unlocking ‘Fixed Narratives’ in the Pursuit of Social Innovation.

A Research Dissertation submitted to
the Graduate School of Business
University of Cape Town

In fulfilment of the Master of Philosophy specialising in Inclusive Innovation Degree

by

Anne-Marie Hanna [HNNANN003]

Supervised by Warren Nilsson

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply grateful to have been accompanied on this thesis writing journey by Dr. Warren Nilsson at The UCT Graduate School of Business, who has been not only a sound supervisor but also a source of unfailing encouragement, teaching me to sit with the discomfort of uncertainty, to value the experience of doubt as one of learning and discovery, and to keep paying attention to what I pay attention to. His enthusiasm and passion has inspired me to persevere, and to dig deep for one last push every single time. I could not have stayed committed to this journey with quite the same level of conviction without him.

I would also like to thank the experts, co-facilitators and research mentors, who were so supportive of this work and of validating the research: Hannah Loewenthal, Mehul Sangham, Lise-Marié van Wyk, and Dr. Yusuf Parak. Without their passionate participation and input, the research could not have been successfully conducted. In addition, I could not have explored this study without the openness and permission of those who allowed me to conduct my research at their organisations. I am so grateful for the support of Elli Yiannakaris and Nareeman Africa at the Raymond Ackerman Academy, to Dane Amyot and his management team at Achievement Awards Group, to Dr. Parak for inviting me into his research space, and to Hannah Loewenthal, once again, for connecting me with the women in Nyanga. I am, of course, also deeply grateful to all the participants who gave me their time and so much of themselves in the research workshops. Without their participation, the research would not have been possible. I feel incredibly lucky to have been part of the MPhil class of 2015 – a passionate, insightful and progressive group of thinkers who have been a resource of great support and inspiration during this time.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the reader of this thesis. His/her comments on this work will be very valuable.

ABSTRACT

We live in an age where our most significant ‘story’ is becoming that of a growing population living on a resource scarce planet. The need for us to do things differently is clear, increasing our awareness of the importance for social innovation around the world, yet the overriding narrative of our time remains embedded in a value system that maintains things just as they are. By looking at the stories we tell and the ways we tell them this study seeks to understand the role that ‘narrative’ plays in shaping our world, the power it has to influence an alternative reality, and its significance in creating conditions that are conducive for social innovation to occur. This paper gains a deeper understanding of the value systems in which our storytelling behaviour seems to be fundamentally entrenched by exploring the differences between how we understand and make sense of stories of commercial, as opposed to social, interest. In doing so, it has tried to gain insight into how we have successfully managed to sustain and fuel the growth of a global culture that rooted in an extrinsic value system, while we have failed to engender a sense of social responsibility, justice and equality.

By conducting a series of participatory action research workshops across four different case study contexts, the research sought to challenge three core elements identified in the literature as occurring in narrative patterns: (1) narratives appear to be framed within either a negative or a positive framework; therefore, reflecting only a ‘partial story’, and perpetuating stereotypes or incomplete truths; (2) they are generally told by a single, external storyteller, with a very clear agenda; and (3) they are constructed to appeal to extrinsic values. The study set out to understand **how we might unlock fixed narratives in the pursuit of social innovation** – reconstructing new narratives that could in turn influence and perpetuate alternative realities.

The workshop approach drew on influences from three practice-based methods: Theory U, human-centred design and elements of mindfulness practices. They were designed to prioritise story creation by multiple storytellers from inside the case study context, encourage the exploration of both negative and positive aspects of an experienced truth, and appeal to intrinsic values by creating the space for emergence and honesty. The workshops took place at a non-profit organisation, a private

company, a public sector community health centre, and with an independent group of individuals from the same area.

The core finding of this research was that by gaining a sense of ‘agency’ over their own capacity to identify, shape and share their own story, participants appeared able to identify and deconstruct ‘fixed narratives’ and move towards reconstructing a ‘new, shared narrative’ that was more inclusive of everyone’s lived experience. A series of common factors appeared to play a consistently significant role in creating the conditions for this to take place. Some form of mindfulness, or body-based, practice was effective in encouraging participants to connect to ‘experienced truths’. The use of different media to identify and create their stories increased participants’ capacity to connect with their sense of control over shaping their own narrative, and the quality of listening within each group affected the quality of the story and the storyteller’s own level of engagement. This appeared to lead to what is referred to in this paper as ‘narrative agency’. The above factors also appeared to contribute to a common ‘journey’ or eight-stage experience. This consisted of fully entering the narrative workshop space (grounding), witnessing their authentic personal story (activating), articulating and sharing with a group honestly (connecting), embodying the emergent personal narrative (consolidating), gaining a sense of ownership and control over their own story (agency), integrating their own story with the experiences and stories of others allowing a new *shared* narrative to emerge (integrating), and demonstrating a desire to co-create a new narrative to inform new authentic actions (co-creating).

This research demonstrated that it can be challenging to separate ourselves from the ‘fixed stories’ we have come to claim as our own and truly create the space and time to connect with our deepest needs, thoughts and desires. Consequently, we often have no real ‘agency’ over our stories. The study indicated that a deeper understanding of how to create conditions that generate a sense of ‘narrative agency’ could contribute to emerging practices in the field of social innovation, such as human-centred design and Theory U, and potentially inform new products, processes and systems.

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	4
2.1 Introduction.....	4
2.2 Background.....	4
2.3 Narrative	5
2.4 The 'Story' and How it Influences Our Understanding of Reality	8
2.5 The Story of Africa and Our Understanding of Africa	10
2.6 The Storyteller's Voice in Africa.....	11
2.7 The Story of the Non-Profit Sector	12
2.8 The Way Social Stories are Told in Advertising and Marketing.....	13
2.9 The Story of Business in Society.....	14
2.10 Frameworks and Value Systems.....	15
2.11 Transformation and Innovation.....	17
2.12 Agency	19
2.13 Emerging Practices Within the Space of Social Innovation.....	21
2.13.1 Human-centred design (HCD), Theory U and mindfulness.....	21
2.14 Research Question	24
2.15 Conclusion.....	25
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY.....	27
3.1 Introduction.....	27
3.2 Case Study Research.....	27
3.4 Interpretive and General Qualitative Research Content Analysis	28
3.5 Methods.....	29
3.5.1 Ethnography.....	30
3.5.2 Participatory action research	30
3.6 Influencing Methods in Workshop Design	31
3.6.1 Theory U.....	31
3.6.2 Mindfulness	34
3.6.3 Human-centred design (HCD)	35
3.7 Research Sites and Case Study Contexts.....	36

3.7.1 Existing narratives.....	37
3.8 Convenience and Purposive Sampling.....	38
3.9 Workshop Structure.....	40
3.10 Data Analysis.....	43
3.11 Validity and Reliability	43
3.12 Limitations.....	44
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS	46
4.1 Case Study 1 – Non-Profit Organisation (NPO) Context: Raymond Ackerman Academy (RAA).....	46
4.2 Workshop Outline.....	48
4.3 Findings for Case Study 1 – Raymond Ackerman Academy	50
4.3.1 Workshop 1 (deconstruct): Material and findings.	50
4.3.2 Workshop 2 (reconstruct and choose)	61
4.3.3 Workshop 2 (reconstruct and choose): Material and findings.	61
4.3.4 Reflections.....	68
4.4 Case Study 2 – Business Context: Achievements Awards Group	73
4.4.1 Introduction	73
4.4.2 Workshop structure.....	74
4.4.3 Workshops and interviews.....	75
4.4.4 Findings for case study 2 – Achievement Awards Group	78
4.4.5 Meeting with leadership (deconstruct): Material and findings	78
4.4.6 Workshop 1 (deconstruct) – Material and findings.....	80
4.4.7 Contact centre observation (deconstruct) – Material and findings	87
4.4.8 Workshop 2 (reconstruct and choose) – Material and findings	89
4.4.9 Interview findings.....	96
4.4.10 Reflections	98
4.5 Case Study 3 – Public Sector Context: Vanguard Community Health Centre	103
4.5.1 Introduction	103
4.5.2 Workshop structure.....	105
4.5.3 Workshop outline	107
4.5.4 Workshop material and findings.....	108
4.5.5 Reflections.....	120
4.6 Case Study 4 – Independent Group of Young Women in Nyanga	123
4.6.1 Introduction	124
4.6.2 Workshop outline	124

4.6.3 Material and findings.....	126
4.6.4 Reflections.....	133
4.7 Conclusion to Findings	135
4.7.1 Common factors that contributed towards deconstructing ‘fixed narratives’	137
4.7.2 Narrative agency process framework.....	138
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION.....	142
5.1 The Significance of ‘Narrative Agency’ and its Role in Informing Social Innovation	142
5.2 The Conditions for Providing a Pathway to ‘Narrative Agency’	144
5.3 The ‘Materialisation’ of Story.....	146
5.4 Power Paradigms within Existing Narratives	148
5.5 Intrinsic Stories Rooted in an Extrinsic Value System as a Barrier to Social Innovation	150
5.6 Further Research into the Role of Narrative Agency in Emerging Practices and Social Innovation	152
5.7 Recommendations	153
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION.....	155
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	157
APPENDICES	166
Appendix One: Samples of Pictures Alongside their Voice Recordings from Workshop 1 (Raymond Ackerman Academy)	166
Appendix Two: Business Model Outline.....	168

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“Finance. Food. Fuel. Water shortage. Resource scarcity. Climate chaos. Mass poverty. Mass migration. Fundamentalism. Terrorism. Financial oligarchies. We have entered an Age of Disruption. Yet the possibility of profound personal, societal, and global renewal has never been more real.”

(Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013, p. 1)

Our existing global reality is one of ‘crisis’ and is a direct result of what Scharmer and Kaufer refer to as our ‘ego-system awareness’, which focuses on the well-being of one’s self (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013). Until now the idea of ‘self-interest’ has been the driving force underlying our global systems (Max-Neef, 2009; Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013). However, there is an increasing sense of awareness that the vast social, environmental and systemic challenges that have been largely ignored and suppressed are now surfacing, demanding that global businesses, governments and societies pay attention (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013).

As our need for social innovation becomes increasingly significant, there has been an emergence of practices and ways of operating that examine innovation in order to address our systemic failures. Some of these, such as Theory U and human-centred design, which remain largely unknown in theory, are briefly outlined in this work. Yet, efforts to approach social innovation in new ways remain largely ineffective in meeting the challenges faced by the global community.

This paper identifies that the power of ‘narrative’ appears to be generally overlooked, in particular its contribution to ‘locking in’ our ways of thinking and in turn our ways of being, and limiting our capacity to innovate or, more importantly, our capacity to imagine new realities outside of our existing systems. As there is growing focus on the need to create businesses, organisations and systems that are more reflexive, generative and inclusive, this study shows that the same thinking has not generally been framed in terms of our ‘narrative’ and identifies that the power of narrative in perpetuating behaviour and belief systems might be a barrier to achieving real social

innovation. By briefly outlining some common characteristics of the ways that our narratives are shaped and shared within the non-profit, as opposed to the private, sector, this study interrogates how we might ‘deconstruct fixed narratives’ and create conditions that are conducive to the emergence of new ones – narratives that are rooted in intrinsic values and inclusive of multiple stakeholders. In doing so, the research seeks to explore what ‘reconstructing new narratives’ might mean for the creation of alternative realities by interrogating **how we might deconstruct fixed narratives in pursuit of social innovation.**

The way we experience the world is largely influenced by how we understand the stories that are told of it. The way we repeat those stories influences and perpetuates the realities reflected in them (Adichie, 2009). This work sets out to look at the stories we tell and the ways we tell them, and in doing so build a deeper understanding of how our narrative behaviour has contributed to the formation of our world.

The realities of our environmental, political and economic failures are obvious and the need to take care of ‘all’ of society rather than just one’s ‘self’ – to redefine the way we operate in order to secure a sustainable future, is acknowledged (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013). However, global efforts to create social change remain inadequate. To tackle these challenges and change existing systems, we need to change our ‘way of being’, for which we, currently, have no real frame of reference (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013). This study seeks to understand the significance of ‘narrative’ in shaping our realities, and the role it plays in this transformation. If we are to disrupt what we know, then we will have no ‘language’ for what we are re-imagining (Max-Neef, 2009; Scharmer, 2009) and thus new ways of expressing and communicating our reality need to be explored (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013).

Across the world, capitalist and consumerist culture continues to grow exponentially, perpetuating a ‘narrative’ that entrenches needs and desires we may not actually have. We have successfully contributed to the growth and sustainability of our current systems, placing colossal pressure on the resources and environment needed to support them. Alternatively, the way we understand and behave, in relation to the need for ‘social change’, is considerably different. While stories of ‘commercial’ interest successfully engage large numbers of people, those related to ‘social good’ engage much less and, in comparison, do so quite apathetically.

By looking at the ways in which we perpetually construct narratives, this paper gains a deeper understanding of the value systems in which our storytelling behaviour is fundamentally entrenched. It demonstrates that, just as the development of our global systems has been driven by the beliefs and motivations rooted in ‘self’ interests, so are our narratives embedded in an extrinsic value system focused on ‘extrinsic’ needs for wealth, status and self-interest (Crompton & Kasser, 2010; Max-Neef, 2009; Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013). It has become evident in this research that, even if we are to focus attention on highlighting ‘social’ issues, we are embedded in a culture that has developed a global extrinsic value system to the detriment of our intrinsic values. These two value systems cannot develop at the same time, or in equal amounts, as one comes at the cost of the other (Crompton & Kasser, 2010; Darnton & Kirk, 2011).

The case study research took place in four different contexts wherein a series of participatory action research workshops were conducted. The study interrogates how we might deconstruct what can be referred to as ‘fixed stories’, and explores how to create conditions that are required for an inclusive, intrinsic, shared ‘new narrative’ to emerge and how we might disrupt the perpetuation of certain beliefs and behaviours within certain contexts, potentially influencing alternative realities.

The intention of this study is to gain insight into how our narratives might be better constructed to influence and shape socially responsible societies in the future. In doing so, the research offers awareness and appreciation for more human centred and emerging practices with a more reflexive and generative way of being. The study identifies the importance of our need to regain a sense of ‘agency’ over our capacity to identify, shape and share our own stories, and suggests that further research into ‘narrative agency’ could provide insight into re-imagining the way we approach ‘story creation’ and ‘story telling’ in order to inform the increasingly significant space of social innovation.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

As we are faced with profound social challenges, this chapter seeks to understand the role that narrative plays in affecting change and how it is currently applied within emerging practices in the space of social innovation. The section explores existing research to gain insight into the role that storytelling plays in shaping our experience of the world and influencing our realities. The literature will look particularly at differences in our narrative behaviour, comparing the way that we shape stories related to ‘social good’ and those more ‘commercial’ in nature; and consequently, what that means for our relationship with, and understanding of, both the private and non-profit sectors.

2.2 Background

“When people experience a transformational shift, they notice a profound change in the structure, atmosphere, texture of the social field. But in trying to explain it, they have to fall back on vague language, and even though people can agree on a surface description of what happened, they don’t usually know why. So we need a new grammar to help us articulate and to recognize what’s happening and why.”

(Scharmer, 2009, p. 231)

We are becoming increasingly aware that it is necessary to change the way we operate in order to contribute towards a sustainable future. Scharmer and Kaufer (2013) explain that the transition already taking place is not one that can be so much described or articulated but rather ‘felt’. “It is a future that we can sense, feel, and actualize by shifting the inner place from which we operate. It is a future that in those moments of disruption begins to presence itself through us” (2013, p. 1). The word *presencing* means: “sensing and actualizing one’s highest future potential possibility – acting from the presence of what is wanting to emerge” (2013, p. 19) and combines

the words ‘sensing’ which is ‘to feel the future possibility’ and ‘presence’ which is ‘the sense of being in the present moment’ (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013).

A significant part of our transformation would be to consider the importance of ‘narrative’ in shaping our realities. If we are to change the way we think and behave in order to influence an alternative reality, then we must change our ways of expressing and communicating those changes – our ‘story’ or ‘narrative’. Transforming the way we tell and share our stories is critical to not only communicate a new way of thinking and experiencing reality, but also if we are to truly transform the paradigm of our existence (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013).

2.3 Narrative

The act of storytelling has existed since the origin of language and can be found in the very act of making sounds and gestures. The exploration of ‘narrative’ can be traced back to the beginnings of philosophical discussion among third century philosophers around the power and value of narrative (Clair, et al., 2014). Narrative theory has focused largely on ‘storytelling’ or ‘stories’, whereby the format of a ‘story’ is made up of an Aristotelian beginning, middle and end, brought together by means of a ‘plot’ (Dailey, 2014; Polkinghorne, 1995). This ‘story’ format, in addition to the implication of causality and the sense of awareness of time and space wherein the events or happenings take place, is what distinguishes narrative from others forms of communication (Dailey, 2014). However, ‘narrative’ is not limited to stories and storytelling (Clair et al., 2014; Taylor & Van Every, 2000). Narrative can be defined “... as a representation that is situated in – must be interpreted in light of – a specific discourse context of occasion for telling” (Bontea, 2011, p. 350). Narrative research has expanded beyond looking at individuals’ stories towards looking at the relationship that exists between a collection of stories or ‘narratives’ and the construction of reality (Polkinghorne, 1991). This is what some communication scholars have referred to as ‘grand narratives’ (Clair, et al., 2014). It is how we process social information and make sense of our reality and as narratives are often linked to how we remember and relate to our experience of a certain reality, they can be emotionally charged (Bruner, 1986; Taylor, & Van Every, 2000; Ricoeur, 2004).

Whilst we make sense of our world through our interactions with the stories and narratives we experience, we understand ourselves individually by connecting our past experiences with our anticipated or imagined future within our social and historical context. “Narrative is used to give form and meaning to our lives as a whole” (Polkinghorne, 1991, p. 143) Both Polkinghorne and Schiebe linked the way we understand ourselves, and our own lives, to ‘narrative configuration’, connecting and interpreting our experiences as a narrative structure within the ‘plots’ that are our lives (Polkinghorne, 1991). “Self-concept is a storied concept, and our identity is the drama we are unfolding” (Polkinghorne, 1991, p. 149).

As we are constantly changing and evolving, Schiebe recognized that narratives of self identity are always changing and, although they are embedded in overarching universal forms, we populate our narratives of self identity with content that is specific to our immediate context (Polkinghorne, 1991). According to Crites, this ‘narrative structuring’ is linked to our sense of well-being, and “... the more complete the story, the more integrated the self (Polkinghorne, 1991, p. 144). Fisher (1985) proposed that the very foundation of human communication was based on a ‘narrative paradigm’. They agreed with earlier scholars that we are indeed ‘storytelling animals’, explaining that our understanding of the human experience is engrained in our interpretation of a network of symbols or ‘narrative context’, to which factors like ‘history, culture, biography and character’ all play a role (Fisher, 1985). “The paradigm asserted that narrative is ‘germane to social and political life’, not just the moral life as suggested by earlier scholars” (Clair, et al., 2014, p. 3). Heidegger described language as ‘the house of being’ (Clair, et al., 2014), which allows us to make sense of our reality and derive meaning for our lives, from places to people to objects (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). “In this manner language marks the coordinates of my life in society and fills that life with meaningful objects. The reality of everyday life is organised around the ‘here’ of my body and the ‘now’ of my present. This ‘here and now’ is the focus of my attention to the reality of everyday life” (Berger & Luckmann, 1992, p. 19).

Understanding that the influence narrative has over the definitions we have of ourselves and the world around us as that which is set in recurring habits and patterns, is what Gergen refers to as ‘*structured discourse*’ (Gergen, 1999). From this perspective “the moment we begin to “speak” we are already spoken determined by a

pre-existing structure" (Gergen, 1999, p. 64). Gergen looks at the way in which language is used to 'frame' the world and influence social realities by means of how people use it, and refers to this as the '*discourse as rhetoric*' lens (Gergen, 1999). The way language is used to influence social constructs by emphasizing certain realities reflects the way in which people are able to influence not entirely different but less 'fixed' realities that are 'favored' in one way or another (Gergen, 1999). Finally, what he refers to as '*discourse as process*' disregards the focus on any form of structure all together but instead focuses on the adaptive nature of 'conversations' or 'arguments' that contribute to change and evolution in the construction of our social contexts (Gergen, 1999). The way in which words are embedded in recurring 'patterns of action', 'material condition' and 'social institutions' all contribute to the way in which they shape our worlds, neither of which can be understood in isolation of one another (Gergen, 1999). These three lenses, as he calls them, all explore the way in which language and words shape our worlds.

Clair, who is a communication and narrative scholar, sought to understand this sense of a 'narrative construction of reality', and how it contributes to the construction of society by exploring the meaning associated with what is referred to as 'a real job'. Through a collection of stories, she found that the way people understood the colloquialism 'real job' powerfully influenced the workings of an organisation and its workforce and that, consequently, day-to-day talk was profoundly linked to 'grand narratives' around capitalism and communism (Clair, et al., 2014), ultimately influencing the understanding and communication or 'grand narrative' related to these systems, either propagating or disputing them (Clair, et al., 2014). Similarly, scholars Dempsey and Sanders (2010) found the narrative around 'social change' embedded in a narrative around 'self sacrifice' and 'unpaid labour' and in conflict with the motivation to achieve 'work-life' balance, suggesting that the intention for 'social change' cannot coincide with this balance. "In other words, the grand narratives influence the personal narratives we live by" (Clair, et al., 2014, p. 6).

According to Fisher, "... narrative is so pervasive in society that it goes without notice" (Clair, et al., 2014a, p. 4). In order to understand how an overriding narrative has come into being, it is therefore important to look at the clusters of stories that have contributed to its formation by interpreting and evaluating them in a way that is reflexive, and allows for a deeper understanding of ourselves and others (Clair, et al.,

2014).

2.4 The ‘Story’ and How it Influences Our Understanding of Reality

If we are to look at telling the same stories, or types of stories, repeatedly about a certain place or person, we may notice that it creates a bias towards that place or person. This can influence or shape the reality of that place or person, as they start to become the characters in the story that is told of them (Adichie, 2009). In 2009, acclaimed Nigerian author, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s TED Talk, ‘The Danger of the Single Story’ explained the power of stories in shaping the perception we have of our worlds, and most importantly how reiterating those stories influences and shapes our reality (Adichie, 2009). Scholars have paid little attention to the implication of repeated stories (Dailey, 2014). Whilst a deeper understanding of narrative repetition could make a valuable contribution to narrative theory, it is also interesting to note the significance of the absence of ‘story’ and the power of narrative by the very nature of its ‘non-existence’ (Dailey, 2014; Saleebey, 1994). “...Without a story, meaning, conviction and possibility fail” (Saleebey, 1994, p. 354).

Adichie (2009) points out that we cannot talk about this phenomenon of the ‘single story’ without talking about power. “Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person” (Adichie, 2009). For many outsiders, the idea of catastrophe has become the story of Africa. This is an incomplete story, but one that many associate with the continent all the same (Hart & Walker, 2014). Our access to stories and portrayals of our reality is what ultimately shapes our reality and how we see ourselves. Americans know who they are, not from current affairs but from the plethora of popular culture they access (Abani, 2007). What Nigerian writer, Chris Abani, refers to as ‘the agents of our imaginations’ are who influence and shape who we are. When speaking of writing African stories in his TED Talk presentation in 2007, he asks “How do I balance narratives that are wonderful with narratives of wounds and self-loathing?” (Abani, 2007).

Both writers, Adichie and Abani, refer to stories that are persistently told of Africa as incomplete, creating a perception of Africa and Africans that is not only limited but also ‘limiting’ (Abani, 2007; Adichie, 2009). “The single story creates stereotypes,

and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story” (Adichie, 2009). They warn of the damage done by persistently negative narratives of Africa, in shaping how Africans perceive themselves, and ultimately influence their own reality (Adichie, 2009).

Stories are the tool we use to interpret and understand ourselves, and it is through the creation and understanding of those ‘stories’ that we perceive and understand the world we live in. On that basis, our ‘social reality’ is formed (Hart & Walker, 2014). Looking at the African context as an example is relevant and useful as it contributes to our understanding of the relationship between narrative and reality. In examining how the same story of Africa has been told repeatedly, we might gain a deeper sense of how this has influenced our perception and, according to some, the reality of the continent.

2.5 The Story of Africa and Our Understanding of Africa

According to the National Bureau of Economic Research, in 2011 the rates of poverty in Africa were steadily declining, the death rate for children under the age of five years had decreased and, according to the McKinsey Quarterly, Africa was a region of fast economic growth. However, Africa is still portrayed as a continent of poverty and despair in most Western mainstream news stories (Rothmyer, 2011). Ugandan journalist, Andrew Mwenda (2007), has criticized Western media for disallowing stories of opportunity to make it to air and instead presenting the global audience with stories of misery and helplessness, stating: “The effect of that presentation is that it appeals to sympathy. It appeals to pity. It appeals to something called charity”. He believes that the Western perception of Africa’s economic dilemma is incorrectly contextualised (2007).

A TED Talk delivered in 2012 by global thought leader in economic development, Dr. Ernesto Sirolli, speaks of this notion of ‘pity’ to which both Mwenda and Adichie refer. Sirolli (2012) explains that the way Westerners traditionally interact with people in developing countries like Africa can be understood by looking at the Latin word for father, which is *pater*. “We Western people are imperialist, colonialist missionaries, and there are only two ways we deal with people: We either patronize them, or we are paternalistic. Although the two words come from the same Latin root ‘pater’, which is ‘father’, they mean two different things. Paternalistic, I treat anybody from a different culture as if they were my children. ‘I love you so much’. Patronising, I treat everybody from another culture as if they were my servants” (Sirolli, 2012). Sirolli believes that aid is fundamentally flawed because it imposes its own idea of the solution on Africa, rather than making Africa part of the conversation so that it can create its own solutions (Sirolli, 2012). Mwenda and Sirolli are not the only people to speak out about this anti-aid stance. In Dambisa Moyo’s controversial book, ‘Dead Aid: Why Aid is not working and how there is another way for Africa’, the Zambian economist insists that, despite sub-Saharan Africa being home to 60% of the world’s uncultivated and arable land, Africa has become inefficient at food production as a direct result of a ‘foreign aid dependency’ culture (Dambisa, London & Lane, 2009). Moyo criticizes Western aid agencies and African countries for their consistent development failures in Africa, and lack of accountability (Dambisa, et al., 2009; Moyo, 2012). ‘Foreign aid’ as part of the problem rather than the solution is a

seemingly new and controversial narrative, especially within mainstream channels (Dambisa, et al., 2009).

Mwenda (2007) contends that simply speaking of a ‘challenge of hope’ in Africa rather than a ‘challenge of despair’, or the need to see ‘increased wealth’ rather than ‘reduced poverty’ could have a profound impact on behaviour. It is believed that the way we have used language has ‘stripped Africa of self initiative’, and although the continent is prolific in its disadvantages it is also rich in opportunity (Abani, 2007; Adichie, 2009; Mwenda, 2007; Sirolli, 2012). However, in order to harness such opportunity it is critical in order to be able to depend on an internal framework that has not developed, largely as a result of aid in Africa and the prevailing narrative into which we have bought (Dambisa, et al., 2009; Mwenda, 2007).

2.6 The Storyteller’s Voice in Africa

It is believed by many that the voice ‘in’ Africa is most often not the voice of Africans. Identifying this is a significant part of imagining a new narrative framework. Reporters in mainstream media are drawn to particular stories in Africa because of their frames of reference. A study between 1998 and 2004 showed that stories on ‘Famine in Africa’ had increased by three times in United States journalism, even though the issue of famine in Africa had not worsened (Rothmyer, 2011). International aid groups and Western-based non-governmental organisations repeatedly tell stories of what ‘needs to be done’ rather than ‘what has been achieved’, in order to attract more funding. This makes it beneficial to depict Africa as negatively as possible, and for journalists to perpetuate that message (Rothmyer, 2011). These narratives also reinforce the idea of the NGO as the only ‘credible’ voice within these contexts (Kamler, 2011). Kamler (2011) writes about how “NGOs use ‘victim’ rhetoric to construe these individuals as being martyrs: sitting targets perpetually grappling with their underdog status. This rhetorical frame also creates a static image of these beneficiaries as being unchanging and un-improving”.

Repeated images of suffering and despair to attract support and validate a cause have left audiences feeling not only indifferent, but also as if they have failed to make any difference in their social efforts (Vestergaard, 2008). Vandemoortele, one of the

architects of the Millennium Development Goals, wrote “It is a real tragedy when respectable progress in Africa is reported as a failure by international organisations and external observers” (Rothmyer, 2011, p. 20). This does not only misrepresent what is happening but can also influence policy, sometimes negatively (Rothmyer, 2011). It is necessary for humanitarian organisations to create a new way of communicating and engaging with their audiences. “Thus, not only must the humanitarian organisation find new ways of mobilizing the public, in addition the logic of the market forces the organisation to rebrand itself to create a new kind of legitimacy, which is not compassion based” (Vestergaard, 2008, p. 472).

If it is, indeed, the case that much of the perception of Africa, created via the repeated narrative of Africa, has come from the non-profit sector, it is equally important to look at the ‘story’ we have come to associate with the non-profit sector itself.

2.7 The Story of the Non-Profit Sector

Dan Pallotta claims that the way we think about charity is ‘wrong’ and that the public perception of philanthropy impedes its ability to create any real social impact and thus non-profits are destined to fail (Germak, 2014). He points out that allowing consumer brands to showcase all the benefits of their products but never allowing charities to advertise the social good they do predetermines where the public’s spending will go (Pallotta, 2013).

In light of what Pallotta has said, it is interesting to consider where these perceptions and behaviours of charity come from and how these have, in turn, influenced the ‘narrative’ of the non-profit sector. Pallotta (2013) demonstrates the root of how we communicate, advertise and market in the non-profit sector by looking at the origins of ‘charity’ with the puritans who came to America for both religious reasons and financial gain. These puritan Calvinists believed that self-interest would lead to damnation and that it was important for them to do penance for the profits they made. If charity is rooted in doing ‘penance’ for making money, of course the idea of financial incentive driving the growth of charity would have been taboo, and four hundred years later nothing has changed (Germak, 2014).

Our engrained social behaviour tells us that ‘doing good’ and ‘commercial interest’ cannot co-exist. The problem with this is that it forces organisations to go without the things they need to really grow such as overheads, marketing and advertising that help to create market demand, risks that bring about new revenue generating ideas, long-term investment and, of course, profit itself. The more this narrative or behaviour is maintained, the more engrained it becomes (Pallotta, 2013). When any communication, marketing or advertising is done around the non-profit sector, Pallotta criticizes the media for almost always negatively framing the stories (Griffiths, 2005).

2.8 The Way Social Stories are Told in Advertising and Marketing

Often a lack of budget implies that limited talent can be applied to the creativity of marketing and advertising regarding social causes and NGOs, but what would happen to the narrative if world-class talent could be applied? (Rideout (2011) explores non-profit messaging in advertising by focusing on two particular NGO advertisements made by acclaimed agencies working on drastically reduced (or waived) fees, which allowed that level of production to take place. The first was ‘War Child and World Vision: Do Nothing’, a Canadian commercial around the issue of child soldiers (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SYbgWUcIoY>). The second was ‘World Vision UK: Water for All’ which focused on the issue of accessible, clean water in the third world (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HZaw_E9DMKQ) (Rideout, 2011). In both cases, despite the high-level advertising talent, negativity-based messaging was maintained. ‘War Child and World Vision: Do Nothing’ shocks the audience through the depiction of a Canadian community helping prepare care packages for child soldiers with ‘We’re supporting the problem if we’re doing nothing to stop it’ written on them (Rideout, 2011). ‘World Vision UK: Water for All’ shows a Caucasian middle class family enjoying every day activities with clean water, contrasted with statements on how ‘unclean water leads to disease that kills nearly 400 children a day’ (Rideout, 2011).

Rideout (2011) points out that non-profit sector advertising is most often dependent on pro-bono contributions. Therefore, advertising agencies are motivated by recognition and/or industry awards, often leading to the use of shock tactics. The

article observes that both examples of NGO advertising depict one blanket concept – ‘The Third World’, defined only by its problems. These are shown as being ‘opposite’ to the First World. They associate a colonial discourse that presents the story of Africa as a place of poverty and despair needing to be ‘rescued’ (Rideout, 2011). This also demonstrates that the ‘creative brief’ or the direction of the narrative, pre-decided by the storyteller (in this case the agency) determines and inspires the story, rather than the other way around.

In 1952, Wiebe brought up the issue of “selling social causes” being generally ineffective, and asked “Why can’t you sell *brotherhood* like you sell soap?” (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971, p. 3) He discovered that the more a social campaign or communication was similar in its approach to that of a product campaign, the more successful it would be, and believed a ‘social marketing’ approach was a largely successful framework (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971). Where the driving force of ‘commercial’ marketing is ‘financial’, the aim in ‘social’ marketing is social good but the approach, in practice, is the same (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971). However, on top of the limited resources available for these campaigns, there is also most often the issue of scepticism and mistrust. “The application of commercial ideas and methods to promote social goals will be seen by many as another example of business’s lack of taste and self-restraint” (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971, p. 3). This sense of scepticism and distrust continues to hold true (Elving, 2013).

2.9 The Story of Business in Society

Over the years, as pressure has increased on business to be more actively investing in issues of social and environmental concern, there appeared glossier, more symbolic messaging in corporate communication. These static corporate social responsibility (CSR) reports communicated some of the companies’ good deeds but were not considered strategic, and therefore carried little meaning (Porter & Kramer, n.d., 2002, 2011). More recently, it is no longer enough for companies to present a brand image without evidence that they are living the values being marketed. Businesses therefore increasingly recognize the importance of having sound CSR strategies, for the sake of their own sustainability (Türkel, Uzunoğlu, Kaplan, & Vural, 2015). Working with governments and non-governmental institutions to find ‘shared value solutions’ for

both their business and the communities around them is now critical to business practice (Porter & Kramer, 2011).

It is as critical to communicate these initiatives as it is to have them in the first place, and yet such communication is generally not prioritized (Podnar, 2008). Although most corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities are theoretically voluntary and may still feel 'charitable', this is linked to our increasingly more conscious society, wherein consumers demand to know how the products and services they buy are sourced and produced. As a result of this, businesses focus more on broadcasting their socially responsible practices (Elving, 2013). Despite social responsibility being more important for the consumer, this communication around CSR is, however, often sceptically dismissed as being nothing more than "window-dressing, green-washing (linking the organisation or brand with sustainability) and blue-washing (linking the organisation or brand with the UN)" (Elving, 2013, p. 278). This type of dismissal draws parallels to the NGO problem of the narrative voice's 'agenda' ultimately disengaging the audience, and making the communication counter-productive.

Businesses that recognize the importance of communicating social responsibility often turn to the marketing industry to support this. In doing so, they use the same marketing behaviour as they would to motivate consumers to buy products, and have failed to create any authentic change in behaviour (Crompton & Kasser, 2010). They have appealed mainly to the consumer's self-interest. This works with apathy rather than against it and perpetuates an ego-driven society, which in the long term is counter-productive as it appeals to our 'extrinsic values' (Crompton & Kasser, 2010).

2.10 Frameworks and Value Systems

Extrinsic values are related to social standing, material wealth, image and success. Intrinsic values, on the other hand, are concerned with our sense of community, caring and social justice (Crompton & Kasser, 2010; Hennessey, Moran, Altringer & Amabile, 2015). Repeated experiments have demonstrated an antagonistic relationship between these two sets of values and researchers have found that the more importance we attach to one set of values, the less we are able to attach to the other. This means that the more advertising, marketing and education engage our

extrinsic values, the less we are psychologically able to develop our intrinsic value driven behaviour, in the long term (Crompton & Kasser, 2010).

Negatively framed messages have been found by some studies to be more effective when it comes to marketing and advertising charity (Chang & Lee, 2010). Providing negative information within a negative framework gives a sense of ‘what is at stake’ rather than ‘the possibility of what can be achieved’. Audiences are more likely to engage with negative framing because we experience and sympathize with loss more strongly than with gain (Chang & Lee, 2010). However, this poses the risk of evoking a sense of total paralysis – a feeling like there are too many challenges and no use in changing behaviour (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

An alternative approach, ‘Appreciative Inquiry’, advocates articulating and approaching problems using a positive framework (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). “Words do create worlds” (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, p. 18), and in that case negatively framing our reality only serves to perpetuate a negative reality. The power of the image has been extensively researched and proven to create physical responses.

Scharmer identifies that it is important for us to focus our attention on what we want to happen rather than what we want to avoid (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013). If, as Rothmyer said, the focus of non-profit messaging has largely been what is lacking and ‘needs to be done’ rather than the achievements and progress that has been made, then it is possible that the continuously negative stories of the non-profit sector has contributed to the growing difficulties the sector faces. If we are to recognize that messaging and imagery can perpetuate the reality that we create, then surely to create a better, more socially conscious world, messaging that reflects more balance and positivity, would be more effective in the realisations of such a place (Cooperrider, 1987).

Despite the increase in visibility around social issues and the amount of progress that has been made in addressing issues like global poverty, public United Kingdom (UK) behaviour and engagement around social issues has not significantly changed (Darnton & Kirk, 2011). The public seemingly make decisions based on how they are affected in the immediate or short-term future, and therefore do not shift behaviour around long-term challenges like climate change or poverty (Darnton & Kirk, 2011). To understand what underlies this lack of authentic engagement, Darnton and Kirk

explore how ‘framing’ activates our value systems, and determines a more socially conscious way of being, or not being. “A word is not just its dictionary meaning but also all the other things we know, feel or have experienced in relation to it. When we hear a particular word or encounter a specific situation, the dictionary meaning and all those other bits of knowledge and experience are activated in our brains. This is the ‘frame’ for a word or scene – and hence it is thought that frames can activate values” (Darnton & Kirk, 2011, p. 7).

As cited earlier, extrinsic and intrinsic values cannot be simultaneously activated nor can they be mutually developed (Crompton & Kasser, 2010). The NGO public engagement pattern, however, is to engage the public by appealing to consumerist or ‘extrinsic’ values, whereby they highlight the concept of ‘donation’, and the sense of ‘receiving praise’ for ‘donating toward a good cause’ (Crompton & Kasser, 2010). Research has demonstrated that this ‘consumer marketing’ model, which has been applied to engaging the public in socially related campaigns, strengthens extrinsic values of wealth status and power and, in fact, suppresses intrinsic values that are required for affecting truly conscious behaviour (Darnton & Kirk, 2011). It is therefore critical to shift this model of engagement by placing less emphasis on an immediate ‘transaction’ and more on a long-term process of ‘transformation’ if we are to fundamentally change our thinking and behaviour (Darnton & Kirk, 2011).

2.11 Transformation and Innovation

Changing the behaviour or belief system around something is considered to be innovative (Winograd, 2006). Mulgan speaks of the pattern in our ‘script’ for each century (Caulier-Grice & Mulgan, 2010) and Max-Neef echoes a similar sentiment, whereby each generation or period of time can be identified with a specific ‘language’ (2009). During the second millennium of Western civilisation, the language of ‘efficiency’ did not yet exist. Instead, the importance of something lay in there being a sense of ‘divine calling’. A language of ‘economics’ dominated the twentieth century, and over the past three decades our overriding ‘language’ has been rooted in a ‘neo-liberal discourse’ (Max-Neef, 2009).

According to Max-Neef, it is critical for the overriding ‘language’ of a certain time

period to be coherent with the challenges of that time, which is dangerously not the case today (Max-Neef, 2009). Whilst we remain burdened with increased global poverty, debt, exploitation, resource scarcity and environmental destruction, the leaders and decision makers "... prefer to look in the opposite direction" (Max-Neef, 2009, p. 5). Today, our script is evolving still and remains seemingly disconnected from the challenges we face (Caulier-Grice & Mulgan, 2010; Max-Neef, 2009). "We need a new language that opens the door of understanding: not a language of power and domination but a language that emerges from the depth of discovery ourselves as an inseparable part of a whole that is the miracle of life" (Max-Neef, 2009, p. 5). In order to find these new ways of being, an increasing amount of research is being explored to find new ways of 'innovating'. Scharmer (2009, p. 227) believes that, "doing so will require a new quality of awareness and attention: attention not only to what we do and how we do it but to the inner source from which we operate – which for most of us is a blind spot".

Innovation lies in bringing a new idea into effective, on-going and sustainable application (Tidd & Bessant, 1998). While the work of the most renowned innovators has often had impact in both private and public sectors, significantly less attention has been given to 'social innovation'. Instead, the understanding of innovation has been focused on business and science (Mulgan, Tucker, Ali & Sanders, 2008). 'Social innovation' responds to a social need and, although it is not something that happens exclusively in the non-profit sector, it is usually driven and applied within social purpose organisations (Mulgan, et al., 2008). It has been described as a 'buzzword' – a term that is used frequently yet is not yet fully understood and, according to many academics, is nothing but a passing trend – too vague to be fully understood or applied to academic research (Pol & Ville, 2009). However, economists believe that while innovation contributes fifty to eighty per cent in economic growth, social innovation plays an equally important role in social progress and is becoming increasingly more important for economic growth (Mulgan, et al., 2008). Unlike the backing that commercially related innovation receives to meet sometimes 'fabricated' consumer needs, promising ideas in social innovation seldom benefit from funding and development opportunities. As a result our capacity to make progress in tackling global social issues remains considerably less than it could be (Mulgan, et al., 2008).

'Innovation' is born out of identifying where needs are not met (Tidd & Bessant,

1998) and successful innovators are usually good at listening, engaging in conversations and being able to interrogate beyond the obvious, in order to understand what people need (Mulgan, et al., 2008). In addition to creating new products and processes, successful ‘social innovation’ also redistributes power and resources, challenging and dismantling the basic belief structures of the social system in which the innovation occurs (Westley, 2010). Westley identifies that for social innovation to occur, “... they demand a complex interaction between agency and intent and emergent opportunity” (Westley, 2010, p. 2).

As it becomes increasingly obvious that solutions are often disconnected from the reality of the situations into which they are applied, there is an interest in deconstructing the power paradigms in innovation processes (Trobe & Melbourne, 1995). This places an increased focus on building a sense of ‘agency’ in the recipients, for which the innovations are intended.

2.12 Agency

A sense of ‘agency’ allows us to govern our own lives, make our own decisions and determine our own ways of being within the context of how we understand our own reality (Hasselberger, 2012). The term ‘agency’ has remained somewhat vague, but it has been considered a process of social engagement whereby one is consciously informed by past experiences, positioned towards the future and able to imagine alternative realities whilst immersed in the experience of the present moment. Agency draws on past and present experiences to evaluate and contextualise what has been, what is, and what might be (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Locke believed the possibility of agency to be what gives humans the capacity to actively determine the conditions in which they live. This led social thinkers like Adam Smith, Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill to consider ‘agency’ as underlying freedom and progress within a Western context (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998).

Agency relates to the capacity to make decisions and initiate goals, based on one’s own understanding and perception of the social and material world around them (Deans, Mcilwain & Geeves, 2015). It is therefore believed that ‘agency’ can only be fully realised within a ‘social’ context (Hasselberger, 2012), and is not defined by

‘acting alone’ but rather to act ‘for something’ (Trobe & Melbourne, 1995). As our understanding of ourselves lies in how we experience the world, the way we make sense of it is based on the meanings we derive from the stories and narratives to which we are exposed. Our interpretation of those narratives demands a degree of ‘agency’ if we are to adapt them in order to create plots or characters that we can relate to better (Saleebey, 1994). However, according to Saleebey (1994), theorists and practitioners have not clearly linked an individual’s construction of narrative and the larger narratives of environments, organisations and the culture of societies. Whilst the study of agency has deepened our understanding of the social phenomena that are determined by individual choices, we are considerably limited in our understanding of the interpretative processes that takes place before choice making (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998).

A lack of ‘agency’ has been found as one of the core contributing factors in failing to engage the UK public in socially focused issues (Darnton & Kirk, 2011). The sense that ‘nothing they do to tackle poverty seems to make any difference’ causes them to almost surrender and disengage. It is also important to reiterate how the value systems that narratives engage influence our level of agency. Intrinsic goals are those that satisfy our innate desires and beliefs. They come from a deeply personal sense of achievement that is completely independent of any external affirmation. “They arise from the psychological needs for relatedness, autonomy and competence” (Darnton & Kirk, 2011, p. 18). Extrinsic goals, on the other hand, are related to receiving praise or reward from an external source. It is therefore critical to pay attention to the reality that consistently engaging an extrinsic value system triggers behaviour that is rooted in this extrinsic value system, and is therefore essentially without agency (Darnton & Kirk, 2011).

More reflexive approaches, increasingly active in the space of social innovation, place the most critical importance on agency and power being in the hands of the ‘user’ or ‘consumer’. Some of these include emerging practices like human-centred design and Theory U.

2.13 Emerging Practices Within the Space of Social Innovation

It is more important than ever before that we meet the needs of people in a way that does not privilege certain types of knowledge, where there is no imposed agendas, where multiple disciplines are included, and where a process of self-reflection is part of recognizing that every viewpoint brings in its own blind spots and oversights that in turn create consequences (Rasmussen, 2007). “Is it still possible to re-vitalise the original intentions of human-centeredness and transform them to a framework that is more appropriate to cope with current and prospective complexity and paradoxes facing our world today and in the future?” (Rasmussen, 2007, p. 472).

It is crucial to understand the needs of people more deeply (Neilson, et al., 2008). Consequently, there is an emerging field of practices that are designed to increase our capacity for reflexivity, in order to create more generative systems. This study looks at human-centred design, Theory U and mindfulness; however, these are still largely practice-, rather than theory-based, with a very limited amount of academic literature and critique available on them. These will be outlined briefly in this section, and explained in more detail in the methodology section of Chapter 3.

2.13.1 Human-centred design (HCD), Theory U and mindfulness

Traditionally, designers and researchers have created solutions ‘for’ people, and therefore operate from a place where they consider themselves to be ‘experts’, and the people they are designing for to be ‘subjects’. In order to conduct human-centred design, it is necessary for designers to see the people they design for as the true experts who ‘co-design’ with them in a participatory way (Liem & Sanders, 2013). Designing in this way requires the gap between expert and user to be removed (Liem & Sanders, 2013). Despite the value that is recognized in this approach, so many projects that have taken a human-centred design approach have failed due to the inadequate translation of people’s needs and desires, and an inability to build the authentic voice of the user into the design (Liem & Sanders, 2013).

IDEO, the first company to propose HCD as a methodology, lists the key factors they consider to be important when conducting interviews in their field guide. Their four

key recommendations are to: ensure that there are no more than three researchers present at the interview so as not to overwhelm the interviewee and to give each a specific role (writing notes, asking questions, taking photographs); to be prepared with a set of questions, beginning with broader ones and then gradually getting more specific; to write down exactly what is said and make sure that interpreters don't paraphrase; and to read body language and observe the context they are in (Bash, 2015). Many have argued that, in addition to the difficulty that many people find in sharing their honest needs with an interviewer during the information gathering process involved in HCD, it is also important to recognize that many are not aware of what their real needs actually are (Van Kleef, van Trijp & Luning, 2005). IDEO describes interviewing as the best way to gather insights from the people they design for (Bash, 2015, p. 40).

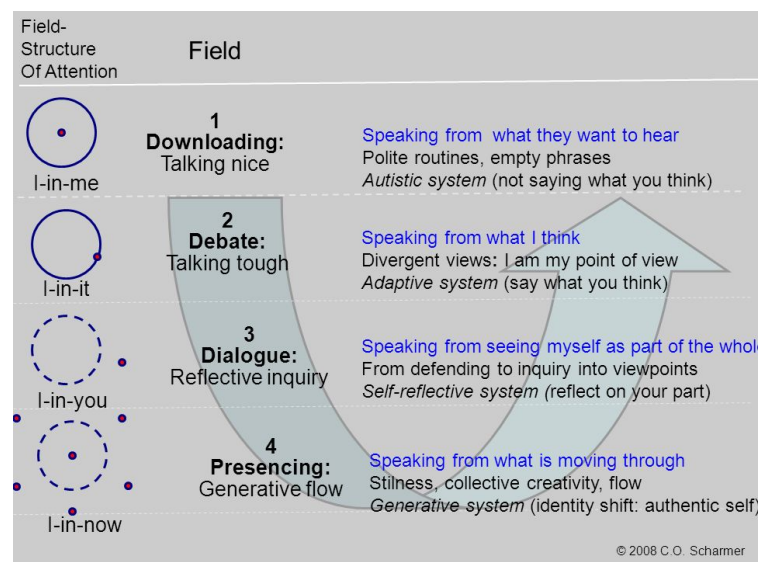
In order to connect with a deeper understanding of our own needs and to create the conditions that enable people to share these needs, there is an increased focus on the importance of self-awareness and intuition. Theory U, developed by leading economist Otto Scharmer, speaks of 'sensing the emerging future', and focuses on the human interior condition as that which determines the outcomes of our work (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013).

Theory U has sought to understand ways of connecting to a deeper source in order to redefine our 'way of being' and to 'sense the emerging future'. The shift that we notice taking place is a transformation in the 'social field', for which we do not yet have adequate language (Scharmer, 2009). Lewin, an innovative social scientist, understood the social environment to be a construct of the interaction between the subconscious and the environment. He believes that our environment affects our psychological experience and our subconscious influences our environment (Lewin, 1997). Despite the direct relationship we have with the construction of our own social reality, human beings remain largely unaware of their role in this, and engage the world as if it is something that 'happens to them' rather than something that they create (Scharmer, 2009). Scharmer talks about how the world continues to try and solve problems by having the same types of conversations, which ultimately result in the same decisions, and lead to the same outcomes (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013).

The work of Theory U explores the importance of 'presencing' in enabling us to see

ourselves as part, rather than outside, of a system. This deeply motivates individuals to be part of generative conversations, whereby individuals start to move towards generating a narrative that resonates with who they are on a deeply authentic level, and allows them to connect with one another, becoming part of a collective truth (Scharmer, 2009). Scharmer outlines four stages in his ‘Four Fields of Conversation’: downloading – speaking from what they want to hear; debate – speaking from what I think; speaking from seeing myself as part of the whole; and presencing – speaking from what is moving through. The diagram below illustrates how this happens as part of the ‘U’ journey, in Theory U.

Figure 2.1: Four Fields of Conversation



Source: Scharmer (2009)

By connecting with a deeper source, the work of Theory U intends to understand a new way of being, thinking and approaching the creation of new systems and processes, leading to true innovation (Scharmer, 2009). This is deeply rooted in our capacity to connect with what our experienced truth is ‘right here, right now’. The practice of Theory U, therefore, cannot happen without the practice of mindfulness.

‘Mindfulness’ leads an individual to pay attention to their ‘current’ situation in a deliberate and purposeful way. This allows them to treat every experience as new, and

gives way to new means of seeing and experiencing that situation (Pagnini & Philips, 2015). This is much like the intention in HCD, to experience a subject or environment with fresh eyes, free of bias and assumptions (Bash, 2015). Being ‘mindful’ means we recognize the world around us as constantly changing, re-framing and experiencing a person, place or thing as if each time it is different and new. This ability is critical to being ‘present’ (Dirubbo, 1992). Langer and Kabat-Zinn defined the two major theoretical frameworks around ‘mindfulness’ in the 1970s. While Langer characterises mindfulness as the act of creating new meaning and identifying new things about a situation rather than relying on automated responses, Kabat-Zinn focused on the act of purposefully paying attention to the ‘present moment’, without any attachment to pre-existing ideas, without judgement or evaluation (Pagnini & Philips, 2015).

Due to its contribution in aiding with ‘present moment focus’, mindfulness has been increasingly implemented across a wide range of fields and contexts. Critics have indicated that the benefits of ‘mindfulness’ cannot be truly realised unless it is rooted in its spiritual Buddhist roots (Hyland, 2016). Within the Buddhist context, the practice of mindfulness fosters a sense of compassion and social harmony, encouraging the dissolution of the idea of the ‘separate self’ and invoking a sense of oneness with the world around us (Loy, 2016). However, the increased use of ‘mindfulness’ outside of the practice of Buddhism has been denounced for posing the risk of accepting the status quo as it is, rather than transforming it, thus ultimately reinforcing the injustices of consumer capitalism (Loy, 2016; O’Donnell, 2015).

While various practices, like meditation (the act of non-doing), have been associated with the concept of ‘mindfulness’, it is important to note that ‘mindfulness’ refers to a ‘way of being’ and its achievement is not rooted in any one particular exercise or set of activities but rather in any practices that engage the individual with the ‘present’ moment (Dirubbo, 1992; Pagnini & Philips, 2015).

2.14 Research Question

By looking at the stories we tell and the ways that we tell them, the following research question intends to understand the power of narrative, how it has contributed to the

formation of our world as it is, and how it can be better constructed to influence and shape more socially responsible societies and organisations in the ‘emerging future’. A deeper understanding of how to change our repeated narrative patterns could contribute to authentic and long-term behavioural change – an integral part of transforming the world as we know it. In order to understand how new narratives might contribute to the formation of a new world, it is necessary to understand how to deconstruct engrained narrative patterns that appear to be ‘fixed’ in our existing systems, and allow new, inclusive and intrinsic narratives to emerge that influence realities rooted in intrinsic and generative value systems.

In light of the above, the following research question is posed:

How do we unlock ‘fixed narratives’ that perpetuate existing realities, and create the conditions that are conducive for social innovation to occur?

2.15 Conclusion

This section aimed to establish a sense of the role that narrative plays in the construction of our realities, and explored how storytelling shapes and influences our world. By looking at the African context as an example of this, a brief overview was given of how stories of Africa have been shaped, told and repeated in mainstream media channels, predominantly by the non-profit sector – a storytelling paradigm that remains rooted in an engrained colonial discourse. The chapter also interrogated the relationship the continent has with the Western world and with aid, and what that has meant for Africans in perpetuating an inaccurate representation of their continent, and of themselves. Readings that refer to advertising and marketing examples, particularly in the non-profit sector, gave insight into how beliefs and behaviour around causes/initiatives are influenced by how stories are framed, in order to depict them. It has also given insight into the differences between the way we understand and interpret the non-profit, as opposed to the private sector, as a result of the ‘narrative’ used to depict them, and what that means for our behaviour in response to commercial versus social messaging. By identifying the drivers of the various narrative constructs and the contributing factors shaping and inspiring stories within the examples used, this section has briefly talked about the role of the storyteller and how thinking,

behaviour, perception of self, and ultimately reality is influenced by the storyteller and his/her own agenda.

As we are confronted with the extreme failures of our existing systems to overcome global poverty, inequality, resource scarcity and climate change, the literature has investigated the way we are seeking to innovate, and transform our way of being. Social innovation practices that reflect this way of thinking include Theory U and human-centred design, and yet they remain largely unknown in mainstream and existing systems. We have seen that there has been a tendency to tell a story in business that showcases social responsibility and commitment to a sustainable future, encouraging conscious customer behaviour. The literature has tried to understand why, despite these efforts, this approach has failed to truly transform the ‘story of business’ or influence an alternative reality that it also shapes.

Key factors that have shaped the ways stories have been told, particularly within the non-profit sector in Africa have been identified as being constructed within frameworks that: favour part of, rather than a full, story; are shaped by a single storyteller who has his/her own agenda; and, even when trying to motivate an audience to engage with social good, appeal to extrinsic values or self-interest.

The literature has also touched on the increasing focus on agency, or lack thereof, which drives our choices in a world where extrinsic value systems often govern behaviour. It is clear that the value system that narratives engage influences the capacity for ‘agency’. While intrinsic goals are independent of any external affirmation, narratives around social behaviour, thinking and interventions continue to appeal to extrinsic value systems, and are dependent on the need for reward and status, which by its very nature is lacking in ‘agency’. This suggests that not only is it critical to gain a sense of agency in order for social innovation to take place but also to ensure that the narratives that inform and influence innovations appeal to a value system that does not further incapacitate a sense of ‘agency’ by further depleting the intrinsic value system. The danger of this is that we become trapped in a cycle of informing innovations that are rooted in extrinsic values, further reducing our own levels of agency, and maintaining a limited capacity for truly ‘social’ innovation.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an understanding of the chosen methodologies, outlines the methods that have influenced the research approach, and explains why this approach is well suited to the study. The intention of this research is to understand the role of storytelling in shaping reality, and how to create the conditions required for an ‘inclusive narrative framework to emerge’ that might influence a world driven by an intrinsic value system, committed to finding solutions for our global social challenges. Based on an understanding that there is a link between the stories we tell and the world around us, the research explores how an alternative ‘narrative framework’ might contribute to an alternative reality or experience.

To understand and explore this area of interest more deeply, the study applied a case study research methodology using ethnographic and participatory action research approaches. Additionally, the methods of Theory U, human-centred design and mindfulness practices were strong influencers in the design of the participatory action research workshops. Finally, an interpretative content analysis approach was applied to the analysis of the content.

3.2 Case Study Research

As a qualitative research approach, case study methodology is predominantly used to deeply understand a phenomena and the relationships it has within its context (Suryani, 2008; Yin, 2013). My area of interest was to better understand the relationship between narrative behaviour and its influence over shaping reality by looking at the stories that are told, and perpetuated, within different contexts. I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between repeated patterns in narrative behaviour and the context in which they arose, and how they could influence a person, place, or situation. In doing so, my focus was to explore how I might create conditions that were conducive for ‘intrinsic, inclusive narrative’ to emerge. For this reason, a case study approach was considered be relevant and necessary, as it would

allow observation of the relationship between story creation and reality, within several different contexts.

As it is conducted over time in iterations, case study research was particularly suited to the research, allowing the observations made in one case study to inform the other (Yin, 2013). As case study research allows for a very unstructured approach, wherein the researcher relies heavily on his/her intuition and interpretation of data (Runeson & Höst, 2009), Yin (2013) warns that researchers may be accused of not following systemic procedures that lead to biased views, and ultimately manipulate or influence their conclusions. This made it critical for me to clearly articulate my decision at each stage of the research.

The researcher collates and interprets data using a range of methods, which include interviews, images, observation, note taking, recordings and archival documentation (Runeson & Höst, 2009). This simultaneous interpretation of data allowed me to adapt and respond to the research as it happened, giving the case study more credibility. The adaptive freedom and generative nature of case study research was well suited to this research, as the intention was to understand how to create the conditions necessary for a story-creation process to take place that would be inclusive and honest (Suryani, 2008).

3.4 Interpretive and General Qualitative Research Content Analysis

Case study research can apply to either a qualitative or quantitative research approach (Yin, 2013). In this case, the research approach was qualitative. Qualitative research relies on human perception, interpretation and understanding. Applying an interpretative content analysis approach, observation was rooted in uncovering meanings from the data and identifying themes or patterns. This helped to clarify the relationship between what emerged and the context in which it took place (Kohlbacher, 2006; Patton, 2002). Patterns were examined within each case study, where old narratives would emerge – narratives that were rooted in the repetition of ‘fixed stories’, rather than actual and authentically experienced truths. Additionally, patterns of what might influence a shift towards new narratives were sought within each context. I also paid attention to patterns in similarities or difference between the

reoccurring factors affecting the way participants identified, shaped, and shared new, or alternative narratives.

During the first case study an interesting theme emerged, which looked at the role of narrative in informing the formation of something tangible. This observation focused the research in the case studies on gaining a deeper understanding of the role of narrative in informing the creation of products, processes, services or systems.

Typical of qualitative case study research, observations and findings in this study are based on the researcher's own interpretation of the data, patterns and reoccurring themes that occurred in each of the case study contexts (Kohlbacher, 2006).

3.5 Methods

Action and ethnographic research are among the major research methods closely related to case study research, and it is often difficult to create a clear distinction between the two. While case study research is rooted mainly in 'observation' of the subject, action research engages with, and actively focuses on, the change process under study (Runeson & Höst, 2009). Ethnography, on the other hand, is specifically applied to observing and understanding people and their experiences and is usually conducted over long periods of time (Riemann, 2005). It is not always possible, nor does it always serve research best, to use one single methodology. Case study research commonly contains elements of other research methods, drawing on tools like ethnographic open-ended interviews for data collation (Riemann, 2005).

Drawing from a combination of methods gave the study the freedom it needed to understand 'how to create the conditions for honest inclusive narrative to emerge'. Ethnographic and participatory action research methods provided a rich combination of being able to immerse oneself in the observation and interaction with people, while creating the conditions for those involved in the study to actively contribute to the research, therefore ensuring that it is relevant and inclusive of their needs and desires. The adaptive and flexible nature of case study research was well suited to the need to create conditions for narrative to 'emerge' within each group, rather than to control it, and allowed for a range of methods to seek out the creation of data.

3.5.1 Ethnography

Ethnographic principles were applied in the research. Traditionally, ethnography has been used as an approach that is well suited to understanding cultures, behaviours and socially constructed realities. It is used to observe and understand patterns and behaviours in groups of people and their experiences through observation, interviews and research (Sangasubana, 2011). The researcher's findings are ultimately based on their interpretation of the observations they have made and the collated data (Sangasubana, 2011). These ethnographic principles were combined with participatory action research characteristics to conduct the research. This allowed me to link my on-going 'ethnographic' observations and learning back to the on-going development and designing of new activities for the 'participatory action research' workshops within the case studies.

3.5.2 Participatory action research

Participatory action research is a form of action research utilised particularly by researchers looking at social change. Coghlan and Brannick (2014) describe action research as a methodology with the purpose of knowledge and understanding to be experienced in reality. "Action researchers work on the epistemological assumption that the purpose of academic research and discourse is not just to describe, understand and explain the world, but also to change it" (Brannick & Coghlan, 2006, p. 143). It is for this reason that participatory action research was not only suitable but also critical for this study.

The most defining quality of participatory action research is the assignment of 'power'. Participatory methodologies are most often described as those that are driven by the people they intend to comprehend, enabling them to engage in and influence a process of understanding that moves upwards, rather than 'top-down' (Jewkes, Wcih, Promotion, Unit, & Medicine, 1995). It also requires the researcher to relinquish control and gives way for deeper learning (Jewkes et al., 1995). The 'iterative, flexible and reflexive' way that a participatory research approach is applied is far less

restrictive than the usually more linear approach of other methods, and by using participatory action research methods in this case study research, participants were able to engage more deeply, informing the research process.

In seeking to understand how to create the conditions required for a new narrative to ‘emerge’, the power paradigm specific to this research method was critical. “Participatory research is primarily differentiated from conventional research in the alignment of power within the research process” (Jewkes, et al., 1995). To understand how to create conditions that are most likely to facilitate an honest, emergent, narrative to be experienced, it makes sense that the people involved in the study would need to drive the research, in order to have this rather than a controlled and manipulated experience. Participatory action research was therefore a suitable method to determine my ‘workshop container’ approach.

I conducted a series of workshops that took place within four different contexts. Each was designed to be participatory, whereby what ‘emerged’ contributed largely to the direction the action research vehicle (workshop) would take, and also the overall direction of the research. The design of the participatory action workshops was further influenced by three core methods: Theory U, mindfulness practices, and human-centred design principles.

3.6 Influencing Methods in Workshop Design

The below section will briefly outline the three methods that strongly influenced the approach to each participatory action research workshop.

3.6.1 Theory U

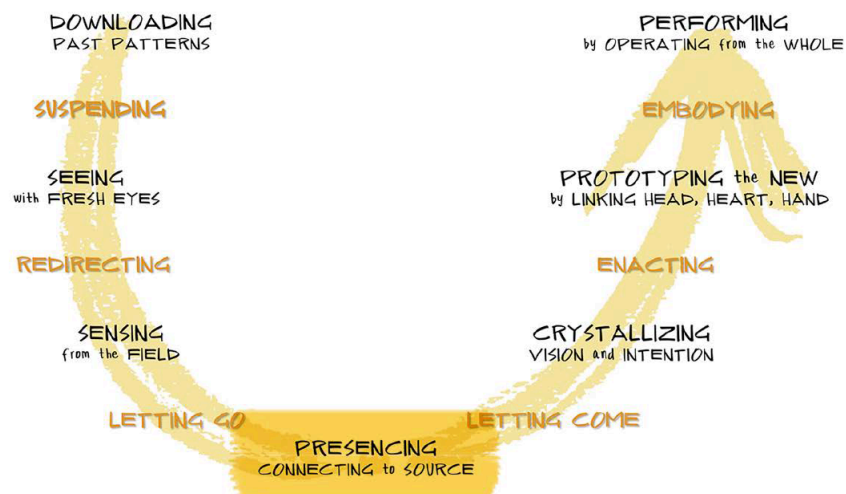
Theory U refers to the work of Scharmer and Kaufer, which was previously discussed in the literature review section. Since its emergence in about 2006, Theory U has been considered as not only a method of facilitating ways of leading change, but also a way of being. Theory U suggests that by connecting to the deeper and more authentic aspects of our selves, the quality of our work in changing social systems will be directly influenced by the quality of our attention to it (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013).

Scharmer speaks of connecting with our future through ‘presencing’ and, in doing so, creating the capacity to ‘lead from the emerging future’ (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013). Unlike most methodologies, which rely on lessons from the past, Theory U operates on the premise that in order to connect with future possibilities, we need to authentically let go of the past (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013). The theory provides a framework to connect with what we sense is emerging, in order to prototype new systems and solutions. The principles of Theory U follow the belief that ‘energy flows where attention goes’ and that in order to create new and improved social systems we need to move our focus away from what we want to ‘avoid’ and towards the realities we want to ‘create’ (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013). In order to do this, Theory U suggests a journey made up of three sections, in the form of a U:

1. **The left-hand side of the U** is where we observe our existing reality and immerse ourselves in the context of the situation we are observing.
2. **At the bottom of the U**, we “retreat and reflect, allow the inner knowing to emerge”. This is where we come to a place of complete stillness and practice deep listening. At the bottom of the U, we connect with creating the future rather than holding onto the story of the past.
3. **Going up the U** is when we act quickly, based on what has emerged at the bottom of the U and explore this future possibility by ‘prototyping’. Taking some action to do something small, quick and without too much deliberation allows for us to test, gather feedback and build on the idea.

(Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013)

Figure 3.1: Theory U diagram



Source: Scharmer (2009)

The U in Theory U was a strong influence in the design of my workshop structure. The ‘U’ in Theory U reflected the wish to explore the way participants might let go of fixed narratives, connect with the truth of an experienced narrative, and create new narratives in order to shift and shape new realities. The overall approach of the workshops, and the order in which they were planned, was driven by the Theory U approach.

The below diagram will provide a very brief outline of my overview approach to the workshop structure in the research. The details of each workshop will be explained in further detail in the following sections.

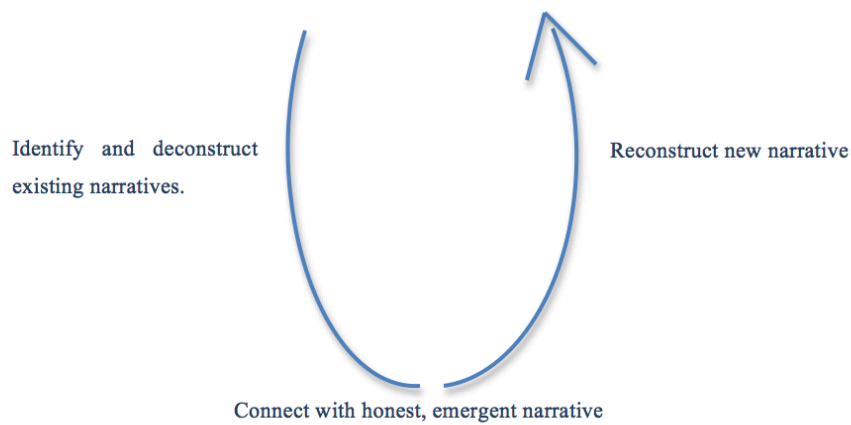


Figure 3.2: Deconstruct fixed narratives, connect with emergent narrative, reconstruct and choose new narrative

3.6.2 Mindfulness

Instead of responding or behaving to a person, place or process by referring to automatic set responses and behaviours, mindfulness refers to the act of paying attention to the present moment, free of assumptions, judgements and preconceived ideas (Pagnini & Philips, 2015). Bringing ‘mindfulness’ into the workshops during this study was a critical part of the research process. In order to create the conditions that were conducive for ‘honest, new narrative to emerge’ it was necessary to understand how participants might become more ‘aware’ of their tendency to adopt and repeat certain narrative behaviours. I believed that this ‘awareness’ might make the ‘unlocking’ of automated behaviour easier.

Most importantly, in order to connect with what is authentically experienced in order to create ‘new narrative’, a sense of being present in the current situation was essential. As all of this is governed by mindfulness, the study incorporated activities that encouraged participants to connect with their bodies, either through certain movement exercises or meditation. These were guided by Hannah Loewenthal, a movement practitioner and dance educator, who has spent the past seven years applying dance and movement meditation practices to work with the youth, refugees, and victims of abuse and terrorism, worldwide. For over ten years in both Africa and abroad, Hannah focused her work on understanding the role of the body and movement in social change.

3.6.3 Human-centred design (HCD)

Human-centred design is the practice of design whereby the end user of the product, process or service is placed at the centre of the design process (Steen, 2011). It requires a careful balance between combining the knowledge and expertise that exists within the users, who are informing the design, with the designer's own knowledge and ideas. Additionally, the designer needs to not only understand the current reality but also to consider what might arise in alternative future realities (Steen, 2011). The word 'human' in 'human-centred design' is particularly important as it focuses on understanding the 'user' in a more holistic way. 'User-centred' design approaches have been criticised for maintaining a very limited focus on people, by simplifying their roles to 'users', rather than establishing a deeper and more integrated understanding of what they need (Steen, 2011).

Bringing the world of researchers and designers closer to that of users has always been difficult. In order to attempt to bridge this gap, human-centred design incorporates ways of engaging multiple stakeholders to take part in a process of 'mutual learning' (Steen, 2011). This intends to deconstruct the power paradigm that usually exists between 'designer' and 'user' and allows people to be directly involved in finding solutions that best serve their needs (Steen, 2011).

Human-centred design considers several approaches when applied, some of which include: participatory design whereby the participants or 'users' are involved in designing the intervention/product/service at hand; ethnography, which is the observation of 'user' behaviours and needs out in the field; co-design, which brings together a multidisciplinary team of 'everyday' people to combine their creative ideas and explore these together; and empathic design. Unlike ethnography, where the designer and researcher 'observe' the current situation of their 'user' maintaining a distant sense of objectivity, empathic design encourages the researcher to put themselves into the 'user's' shoes, identifying more closely with the user's actual experience (Sanders & Stappers, 2008).

IDEO was the first company to propose a 'methodology' and outline a set of guidelines for the 'human-centred design' approach, called 'The field guide to

human-centred design'. In their guide they outline three phases in a human-centred design approach: 'Inspiration, ideation and implementation' (Bash, 2015). Within these phases they explain a methodology that involves, amongst other things, adopting a new mind whereby everyone can be a designer once they have established a sense of creative confidence, understanding the people being designed for by implementing a series of tools including 'empathy', being open to the potential for learning that lies in 'failure', and the importance of 'reiterating' (Bash, 2015). The five-step methodology includes: (1) understand; (2) observe; (3) visualise; (4) evaluation and revision; and (5) implement, using tools for 'fieldwork', 'prototyping', 'user testing', and 'brain- storming' (Yamazaki, 2014).

The concept of HCD places user values at the heart of the design and, although this seemingly conventional approach makes sense, human-centred design has repeatedly failed to deliver or has been considered to have been 'diluted' when executed in reality (Yamazaki, 2014). It has been argued that people may not only find it difficult to easily articulate their needs, but also may not be aware of what their real needs are. Furthermore, it is considerably difficult to establish enough trust for the user to share their needs honestly with an interviewer (Van Kleef, van Trijp, & Luning, 2005).

The inclusive nature of the thinking behind HCD and the importance of 'co-creation' in creating something that is sustainable and relevant was a core influence in the structure of my workshops and the thinking behind my research.

3.7 Research Sites and Case Study Contexts

An important part of my research approach was to conduct workshops within different narrative contexts, in order to explore differences or similarities in the narrative patterns between an NGO, a private company, a public institution, and an independent group of individuals. The way that 'narratives' pre-exist within these contexts can contribute to the perpetuation of a certain storytelling pattern and ultimately the shaping of a reality.

My inquiry is in identifying what underlies those differences; understanding what the factors are in influencing those narratives; and whether alternative story creation processes may unlock these 'fixed narratives', giving way to new narratives and the

possibility of alternative realities and long-term behavioural shifts. Below, I will introduce the case study contexts on which the participatory action research workshops are based and explain why these were chosen.

3.7.1 Existing narratives

As the literature in earlier sections has demonstrated, we have in many cases become used to buying into and engaging with already established narratives that powerfully influence the perpetuation, and shaping, of a certain reality. I will use the term ‘fixed narratives’ to describe these existing story patterns. This term helps to demonstrate the purpose of the workshop approach, which was to explore what would be required for ‘unlocking’ of these narratives to take place.

The non-profit sector in Africa has traditionally been known for a narrative that is constructed within a negative framework. The story of the NGO has been predominantly told by a single, external storyteller, who is very often not from Africa, and has not been, or needed to be, the beneficiary of the organisation’s work. This overriding narrative has maintained an imperialist construct and perpetuated a story of the powerless African victim needing help from someone else, from somewhere else. Another significant aspect of the story of the global non-profit sector is that authentic social good cannot sit side-by-side with any commercial interest, and that it cannot easily be justified, if at all, to put donor funding towards ‘advertising’, long-term planning, taking risks or competitive market related salaries.

On the other hand, the story of business in the private sector is rooted in the accepted narrative that business is about money, power and growth. The for-profit sector attracts and financially rewards talent who contribute to its financial success. It invests in marketing and advertising in order to generate more sales. It takes risks and makes long-term strategic decisions on the best opportunities for more financial growth. This story of business, being about money and not people, is so deeply engrained that the recent focus on CSR and best practices has been largely experienced, in some cases unfairly, as ‘inauthentic’, maintaining the story of business as one of ‘profit’.

Finally, the story of the public sector is that it is ‘at the service of its citizens’, and yet

the overriding narrative of the public sector within an African context is deeply rooted in the story of 'failed aid' and relates to stories of inefficient systems, a lack of infrastructure, corruption and poor leadership.

My decision to conduct workshops within each of these contexts was to investigate whether any of the above-mentioned narrative patterns might arise, or influence the stories of the workshop participants. I wanted to understand whether these pre-existing stories of a people or place might pre-determine the storytelling behaviour and personal narratives of the people who exist within these contexts. If these engrained narrative frameworks did become apparent within these contexts for the workshop participants', I wanted to explore what was necessary to deconstruct such narratives and, if we could, what might emerge.

3.8 Convenience and Purposive Sampling

Convenience and purposive sampling were applied when selecting cases for the research. Both of these are common in qualitative research studies. Convenience sampling is the selection of participants based on how accessible and readily available they are to the researcher (Salkind, 2010). I selected the contexts based on existing relationships with the Raymond Ackerman Academy, Achievement Awards Group, Dr. Parak at the Vanguard Community Health Centre, and a group of girls in Nyanga.

Although this type of sample is usually fairly easy to obtain and low in cost, it limits the researcher from 'generalising' the findings across other contexts (Salkind, 2010). However, when areas of interest are fairly under-developed or interventions are still in 'pilot' phase, this approach remains popular and effective (Salkind, 2010). Purposive sampling is the way in which a researcher selects a sample based on a set of criteria (Palys, 2008). This type of sampling has been criticised for running the risk of enabling bias, but on the other hand has been encouraged in areas of research where more field studies are required. Purposive sampling is considered better than selecting samples based on convenience alone (Vogt, et al., 2016).

I intended to conduct my research within specifically different contexts, with certain characteristics, and used my own judgement to select the cases believed suitable. As mentioned, it was important to conduct the research in places where there were

evidently engrained narratives at play, and where participants might demonstrate the expectation of a certain story of something to exist first, before considering the actual lived experience of the context they were in.

I identified places where there was a sense of an embedded inequality and power dynamics, much like what is often reflected in an NGO context where there is most often someone being ‘helped’, ‘rescued’ or ‘funded’. In addition, a corporate context provided an opportunity to explore whether the story that emerged would be different from its non-profit counterpart, and if in fact the story of an elusive corporate giant that is exploitative and insensitive to human needs might emerge as an existing and assumed narrative, or not. By identifying a group of people independent of any specific organisation, I wanted to explore if any common narrative might emerge, such as the area or gender they had in common.

Case study contexts that allowed me to conduct my research workshops to be included in the thesis were as follows:

- Non-profit organisation: Including two workshops with 18 students at the Raymond Ackerman Academy, along with an on-going observation over two months.
- Private company: Consisting of three workshops and one observational session with ten employees and ten managers at Achievement Awards Group.
- Public sector day hospital: One workshop with three patients at the Vanguard Community Health Centre.
- Independent group: One workshop with 12 young women from Nyanga and observations from a series of on-going conversations and interactions before the time.

Alongside these workshops, I conducted interviews with co-facilitators, employees and management at each organisation. Further details of the case study contexts themselves will be explained in the following chapter.

3.9 Workshop Structure

This section explains the intention and structure of each workshop, and how the methods and theories outlined influenced the participatory action workshop approach. Firstly, the concept of the ‘U’ in Theory U was applied to the overall structure of each workshop: observing an existing narrative, sensing an emergent narrative, and co-creating a ‘new narrative’. My intention was to create a container where this could take place.

Secondly, mindfulness and meditation are critical in the ‘presencing’ work of Theory U and therefore needed to be considered in the design of the workshops. This would help to ensure that the participants were fully embodied and present during the exercises, and would engage on a deeper and more authentic level. It was also critical to create a fertile space for allowing a story to ‘emerge’ – a narrative that felt aligned with the real and honest experience of the present moment.

Thirdly, I considered each workshop to be a design challenge. Human-centred design is the practice of design, whereby the end ‘user’ of a product, process or service is placed at the very heart of the ‘design process’. It is shifting processes from ‘designing for’ to ‘designing with’ and in theory replacing the act of ‘interpreting’ what people need with really ‘understanding’ what they need – by ‘co-creating’ the design that serves them, together (Liem & Sanders, 2013). My intention was to enter a space without any agenda or bias, and to be constantly self reflective in making sure that I did not privilege my own experiences, whilst facilitating the conversations amongst storytellers. The human-centred design thinking strongly influenced the storytelling activities put forward to the participants, as they could choose, influence, or change what happened during the workshops based on what emerged for them. This was instrumental in attempting to encourage the co-creation of an inclusive narrative to surface amongst the groups whereby a story creation process was emergent and co-created. The intention behind the structure of each workshop container was to:

1. **Identify and deconstruct the current existing narrative:** Design ways to research, deconstruct and understand the fixed narratives that the participants have of themselves, through exercises in self-witnessing and observing.

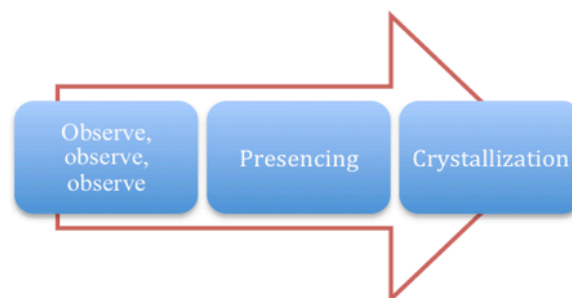
- In Theory U, this could be considered as included in the first part of the U, where we ‘Observe observe, observe’, travelling down the U in order to ‘download the existing patterns, see with fresh eyes, and sense from the existing field’.
 - From a human-centred design perspective, this would be part of the ‘discovery’ or ‘inspiration’ phase where we learn how to better understand a place, people, and challenge, gaining a profound insight into the obstacles we are looking to overcome.
2. **Connect with an emergent narrative:** Participants become conscious of this storytelling process, gaining new insight and awareness.
- This part of the workshop can be related to the ‘presencing’ phase in Theory U, where we allow inner knowing to emerge.
 - From a human-centred design perspective, this could be likened to the ‘ideation’ phase, where we make sense of what we have observed.
3. **Reconstruct new narrative:** Participants recognize the choice to shift and shape narrative accordingly (choices around what and how I tell the story of myself), as well as the choice around how to frame the story for different listeners.
- This could be compared to the section of ‘crystallisation’ as one leaves the bottom of the U in Theory U, and starts to move towards the ‘prototyping’ phase.
 - In human-centred design practices this could still relate to the ‘ideation’ phase.

In every workshop enquiry, three core elements, identified in the literature review, were challenged, as depicted in the following table.

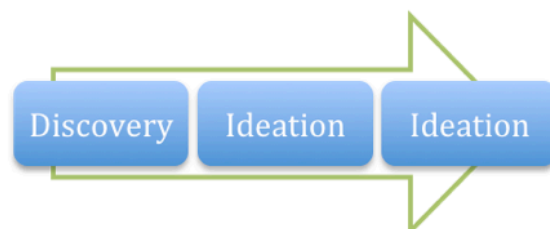
Table 3.1: The three core elements

Existing narrative patterns:	The research approach would encourage:
Framed within a negative or a positive framework, reflecting only a ‘partial story’, and perpetuating a partial reality.	The exploration of both positive and negative aspects of an experienced truth, giving way to more authentic and balanced narrative frameworks.
Told to an external singular storyteller with an agenda.	Multiple storytellers from within the organisation/context to shape the narrative, without an agenda.
Appeal to extrinsic values.	Appeal to intrinsic values by connecting with and communicating honest and authentic experiences that the listener can relate to on a personal level.

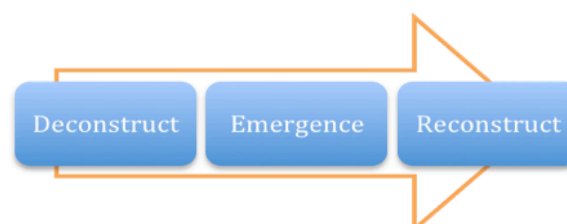
Figure 3.3: Theory U, human-centred design and mindfulness workshop approach



Above: Theory U approach



Above: Phases of a Human Centred Design approach



3.10 Data Analysis

Data-collation methods in case study research can include interviews, observation, surveys, and any existing material on the subject (Yin, 2013). I collected insights using multiple sources of data in the workshops including voice recordings, photographs, vision boarding, word storming, journaling (by both myself and participants), interviews, and mapping. Various emergent themes were clustered throughout the process. Applying an interpretative approach, I identified themes and observations during each case study, as well as a second order of analysis across all the different case studies. In doing so, I tried to identify any emergent processes that might repeatedly occur and what factors allow, or disallow, them from happening. I tried to interpret what happens once fixed narratives appear to unlock, and what indications there are of new narratives emerging, as opposed to the narratives with which participants entered the process. In the findings section in the following chapter, additional detail is presented on data collection and analysis. For each case study, the specific themes that emerged from the data over time are depicted and, in the conclusion to the findings section, I go on to show second order patterns that led to the development of the ‘narrative agency process’ framework.

3.11 Validity and Reliability

Case study research is largely associated with ‘field studies’ and ‘observation’ and has been criticised for being rooted in subjective or biased opinions of researchers, or for being difficult to draw generalised analyses from, due to the lack of a controlled environment (Suryani, 2008). However, a qualitative research approach benefits from the depth of understanding that it acquires of the subject that is being researched (Runeson & Höst, 2009).

Unlike quantitative research, where a measuring instrument determines the validity of the research, in qualitative research the instrument is the researcher. The ‘validity’ and ‘reliability’ of the research therefore refers to the researcher’s efforts and capabilities, which determines the credibility of the research (Golafshani, 2003). It is

therefore believed that ‘validity’ and ‘reliability’ cannot be thought of as two separate concepts in qualitative research, nor can these be thought of in the same way (Golafshani, 2003). Consequently, researchers have identified terms like ‘trustworthiness’, ‘worthy’, ‘relevant’, ‘plausible’, ‘confirmable’, ‘credible’ or ‘representative’, which are believed to be more suitable when ‘validity’ and ‘reliability’ are being considered (Winter, 2000).

In order to determine the ‘validity’ of qualitative research and, in doing so, also ensure reliability, it is important for qualitative researchers to employ methods of ‘triangulation’. Triangulation can be applied in the following ways: using multiple data sources or collecting the same data at different occasions; having more than one observer present during the study; combining different ways of collecting data; and/or using various theories or points of view (Runeson & Höst, 2009). “Engaging multiple methods, such as observation, interviews and recordings will lead to more valid, reliable and diverse construction of realities” (Golafshani, 2003, p. 164), and gives the researcher a deeper understanding of the broader picture by approaching the subject from different angles (Yin, 2013).

To ensure the validity of observations, the study included another researcher or facilitator in each of the observations, whose area of interest would be relevant to the context at hand, used multiple data sources and combined multiple ways of collecting data. The details of how triangulation was applied to the study will be reflected in more detail during the following chapter.

3.12 Limitations

Before moving into the research findings outlined in the next chapter, it is important to point out some of the limitations of this study. The participatory action research workshops were conducted in four different contexts and, although each company, organisation, institution and group openly agreed to participate, the amount of time available to spend with the participants involved was considerably limited. More time would be necessary to fully explore this research and further understand the findings that have emerged. The study is also limited in its sample size, and an on-going series of workshops with a few groups of different participants, happening in

parallel, within the same context, would provide a deeper understanding of whether different participants within the same context might experience the same things.

The influencing methods and the thinking behind them, like Theory U for example, was completely unknown to the participants. More time to engage participants with these ways of thinking would deepen the exploration of how to shift 'fixed narratives' and whether they can effectively 'shape alternative realities'. Again this would involve a longer research period.

Additionally, a combination of more group sessions and more sessions with individuals would add to this research and allow a deeper understanding of the process involved in 'identifying existing narratives' and what it takes to 'deconstruct them'. More time with individuals and groups could allow for a deeper understanding of the relationship between 'personal' and 'group narratives', how they influence one another and what that means for the reality that they might shape.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

I have chosen to present my findings in a way that is aligned with the chronological storytelling ethos of this piece of research. My own experience of deconstructing and reconstructing new narratives becomes apparent through the emergent nature of my own research journey. It is, therefore, important that the way I have written my findings is an authentic reflection of the process I went through. Consequently, I have written the analysis of each case study in chronological order, explained how my experience informed or influenced the case study, and have synthesized my overall findings at the end.

In this chapter, I will go through each of the case studies where I applied my research, outline my research workshop approach, detail my observations, and explain my reflections on the findings in each case study.

4.1 Case Study 1 – Non-Profit Organisation (NPO) Context: Raymond Ackerman Academy (RAA)

Case study 1 sought to examine the narrative within a non-profit organisation. The first group of participants for the narrative workshops consisted of 18 students from the Raymond Ackerman Academy of Entrepreneurial Development.

The Raymond Ackerman Academy (RAA), founded and funded by the Raymond Ackerman Foundation, offers a six-month tertiary program in entrepreneurial skills and development to those who have a matric qualification but are not able to afford university (“Raymond Ackerman Academy of Entrepreneurial Development”, n.d.). Ellie Yiannakaris, Director of the Academy, explains that the youth are often under a lot of pressure to enter the market quickly to support not only themselves but also their families, and that the foundation provides them with access to entrepreneurial and business skills, as well as personal development for those who would not be able to afford the cost or the time that it takes to complete a tertiary education degree (Rowe, 2015).

The Raymond Ackerman Academy began operating in Cape Town in 2005, and in 2009 started a second campus in Soweto, enrolling up to 140 students across both campuses each year. Every six months, 30 out of an estimated 120 applications are accepted to complete a six-month program and, according to Yiannakaris, more than eighty percent of these graduates so far have gone on to work, study or start their own businesses after the program (Rowe, 2015).

Nareeman Africa, the administrator, explains, “Mr. Ackerman has always been working for the people of South Africa. Coming from a long history of struggle for the black people of our country it was almost natural for him to start the Academy”. Africa describes the experience of the students saying, “It makes them see their self worth as an individual and what they can offer to their communities and their businesses”.

The most prominent existing narrative of the Raymond Ackerman Academy for Entrepreneurial Development is that it provides the youth with education and opportunities that they may not otherwise have had access to. “The Academy strives to help young people rise above their social, financial, time and academic constraints to achieve a quality education in entrepreneurship” (“Raymond Ackerman Academy of Entrepreneurial Development,” n.d.).

“To finish the six months and stand with your fellow classmates shaking Mr. Raymond Ackerman’s hand, receiving your certificate. For the students this is one of their biggest dreams when they start, then at the end it’s about building relationships, connecting with people, being the best student that you can be.” – Nareeman Africa, Administrator

The marketing and communication material of the academy focuses largely on ‘assisting’ the students, ‘helping’ them to improve their lives, and ‘empowering’ them with skills. This sense of the ‘disadvantaged students being rescued from an alternative fate, where they would not have had access to opportunity’, resonated with the existing narratives, present within an NPO context. This does not mean that the most represented story of the Raymond Ackerman Academy and its students is not true, but simply that it may not be its only story, or possibly it may not be the most dominant story of their experience of being there.

The students who participated in the workshops were approaching the end of their full time six-month entrepreneurial development program – coming close to completing their exams, graduating, and entering into the world of work. Two half-day workshops were arranged to explore what narratives would emerge from within the group, within that context. The idea of the workshops was to identify any fixed narratives, to explore various ways to shift those fixed narratives and to broaden perspectives of what could potentially emerge from within the group as ‘a story of the Raymond Ackerman Academy and its students’.

4.2 Workshop Outline

Below, I will outline each workshop inquiry, describing the activities and the experiences of the participants. In some cases, activities were adapted according to what was happening in the room at the time and the quality of engagement of the participants. Whilst my intention was to create a container where the participants were focused on the conversation at hand, it was also important to be fluid and adapt to what was real for them. My focus, as the researcher, was simply to explore how to create the conditions necessary for authentic and inclusive narrative to emerge.

Workshop 1: Deconstructing the existing narrative

The exercises for the first workshops were developed loosely around simply introducing yourself – the ‘story of self’ – and looking at:

- What we say when we are asked to tell our ‘own’ personal stories or present ourselves to another or a group.
- How we frame ourselves within those stories.
- How we shape these stories according to who the ‘listener’ is.

The workshop explored the designing of ways to research, deconstruct, and understand fixed personal narratives that the students have of themselves, and serve as an exercise for self-witnessing and observation.

To ensure that I was not imposing a narrative agenda onto the group or influencing what stories might emerge, the participants were given very little direction. They were told only to keep the stories they share:

- Personal
- In the present tense
- Authentic and honest
- Simple (not to over-think it)

The activities allowed the students to use different forms to tell their story of ‘who they are today’: Presenting to the group, sharing with a partner, using photographic images, and making voice recordings. The workshop activities listed below will be explained in more detail during the workshop findings section.

- Mindfulness – walking triangle
- Tell your story – one sentence introductions
- Listen – share your partner’s story and hear your story told.
- Photograph and voice recordings of the story of ‘who you are today’
- Closing circle

Workshop 2: Reconstructing new narratives

The second workshop was developed around the idea of moving from the singular/individual narrative to what the shared narrative of the group may be. Again, it was important to bring the students fully into the space and to encourage them to be fully embodied for the exercises, or at least be mindful of connecting with what feels true for

them physically.

- Mindfulness – meditation
- Embody how you feel
- Embody the feeling of the future you
- Connect with others and give language to your embodied experience
- Sharing and emergent group discussion

4.3 Findings for Case Study 1 – Raymond Ackerman Academy

The below section will run through each of the workshop activities outlined above, demonstrate how the participants engaged with these activities, and explain observations and findings that I made, as a researcher. The discussion section will consolidate the emerging patterns and findings that apply to both the workshops and the case study as a whole.

4.3.1 Workshop 1 (deconstruct): Material and findings.

1. Mindfulness - Walking triangle

This was a movement exercise that asked groups of three participants to maintain an equal distance apart in the shape of a triangle as they moved around the room. Each group kept moving until they were completely in sync. This exercise was intended to bring focus to the room, to connect the participants with one another, and to bring everyone fully into the present moment.

The participants reacted with surprise to the nature of the activity, as it was perceived as trivial. However, they found it to be more challenging than initially expected. Gradually the participants became more focused on one another, on their occupation of the space in the room, and more conscious on their spatial relationship to one another. The activity brought the participants into the room and made them more conscious of one another, of themselves, and of the present moment. Interestingly, it

gave the participants a clear sense of ownership over the room. On entering the room, it felt like it was a space they were asked to come into and visit. There was a feeling that they were half in, half out. On completion of the exercise there was a sense that they were no longer ‘visiting’, that they in fact saw us (facilitators) as visitors, and that there was a sense of being contained and separate from what was happening outside.

2. Tell your story – One sentence introduction

Sitting in a circle, participants were asked to introduce themselves in one sentence with no agenda or brief given. ‘Please introduce yourself and share anything that you feel is an honest representation of who you are in this present moment’.

Although the participants were told they could talk about anything at all with regards to themselves, during the introduction to the group participants introduced themselves mainly within the context of what ‘work’ they have done, what they had ‘studied’, or what direction they wanted to take with regards to their professional careers. The context we were in appeared to directly influence the content they would share in their story, and the way they would express this content. It is interesting to consider whether they would have been less focused on their work identities if the workshop had been held outside of the context of the Raymond Ackerman Academy.

Another noticeable pattern was that in the free space of defining one’s self according to what is true or important in the present moment, most participants focused either on their past or future. Despite our emphasis on sharing from the context of the present moment and sharing anything that represents the story of who they are in the present, all participants framed themselves according to where they come from, and what they experienced before, or where they are going in their future, mainly within the context of their working professions. Collectively, their previous and future professions or studies, was a dominant narrative.

There was a pattern among the students during Workshop 1, and in informal discussions with them, of perpetuating the idea of being given the opportunity to ‘better themselves’. The undertone of what they assumed to be the context of our discussions was to focus on how Raymond Ackerman Academy was an opportunity

to transcend what they would have been able to achieve without having been there. This was similar to the story of the Academy staff and any marketing material I had come across. Participants did not talk about interests that were not related to their identities within the context of RAA, or outside of their professional aspirations. Although they acknowledged why they were at RAA, or what they were gaining by being there, they did not talk about how they initially came to be there.

The four examples below demonstrate how all of the participants framed themselves according to where they came from in their past, where they were going in terms of their career, and who they were within the context of RAA:

“My name is Ashwyn Jooste originally from Vredenburg. I was born in Cape Town but raised there. I want to be a motivational speaker and I believe that I can become the best there is. I know I can make a difference in the lives of the young children who are lost and are seeking to find a place to stay, a place of comfort but they tend to go to the wrong people or end up in the wrong circles and I have the solutions for that.” – Ashwyn

“Good morning, I am Akubakhr Jacobs from Mitchells Plain Cape Town. I am 20 years of age and am currently studying at the RAA. Things are intense now because of exams and assignments and so on but I feel that in the end it will all be worth it and it will be a great experience that in the long term will be beneficial for myself and for my future.” – Akubakhr

“I am Nicole and the reason I am here is because I have had struggles in my life and I am here to learn who I really I am and grow as a person.” – Nicole

“My name is Walton. I want to travel the world but first I need to educate myself, and better myself, and better my future, and that is what I am going to do here.” – Walton

3. Listen – Tell your partner’s story and hear your story told

The group was asked to split into pairs. Each person was asked to say something to their partner that they felt would represent themselves. On returning to the group each person would relate the story of their partner to the full group. Finally, the subject

would share any feelings or thoughts about how they were represented and the experience of hearing it told to the group by their partner.

Some partners self organised and swapped during this exercise. As a facilitator, I did not try to control these logistics, and was more focused on what it might take to create a container where emergence could take place. I accepted that the very act of swapping partners might create conditions where honest sharing can take place.

It was interesting to notice that most of the groups pulled elements of what they had heard from their partners and repeated an incomplete story. During the group discussion afterwards, it emerged that what the participants' respective partners chose to repeat would sometimes be what they had in common. This is interesting as it indicates that if we choose to hear and repeat only what we can relate to, then the very nature of our listening contributes to the perpetuation of an incomplete truth. Listening is, therefore, not only related to receiving a story but also to the creation of that story, influencing whether the storyteller will include just parts of, or an entire, experienced truth.

The exercise of sharing your story, passing it on and having it repeated by another, is a powerful demonstration of the responsibility that lies in storytelling. There is immense power in sharing the story of another person, in applying your own choice of language to that story, in choosing what parts of their story to select when repeating it. These choices deeply affect the perception of something / someone / some place and, in turn, can powerfully shape the reality of that person, place or thing.

The level of listening between partners appeared to play a factor in the content of the stories participants would share, as well as tone. Participants who felt listened to tended to share more honest and personal experiences, while those whose partners were not fully engaged in listening to them would make jokes or choose not to participate fully.

Examples of what the participants said are listed below.

Akubakhr and Khetty:

“This is the story of Khetty. She is passionate about helping young children and the community and is very involved in Love Life and through Love Life that is

where she helps the children.”

“This is Akubakhr. He wants to change the mind set of young people.”

This is an example of how the participants repeated aspects of their partners’ story that they felt they could relate to, and did not appear to retain the rest of the story that they could not relate to as easily. Both Khetty and Akubakhr are interested in working with the youth, and want to be role models for young South Africans one day. This was the only thing either of them shared in their introductions of one another, despite having told one another about their families and backgrounds.

Blane on Mzingisi:

“Mzingisi worked at a company called forever plastics. He is a very proud man and has a clan name. Can someone help me with the name (the class laughs and all pronounce his clan name at once).”

In the discussions afterwards it emerged that these two have very different backgrounds. It is interesting that Blane could not remember other details of Mzingisi’s story and cut the introduction short with humour.

Bukho on Fernando:

“Fernando is originally from Angola. He is very eloquently spoken and speaks many different languages. He is very rooted and is proud of who he is and where he comes from.”

Bukho was one of the participants who swapped partners during the exercise and chose to introduce Fernando rather than Ashwyn, who introduced him later (below). This is seemingly another example of hearing something you can relate to. In the

group discussions it became apparent that both Bukho and Fernando have travelled a lot, which is what Bukho chose to focus on in his introduction of Fernando although, as with the others, it is not the only thing that Fernando had shared about himself.

Ashwyn on Blane:

“Blane is feeling angry because he has lost a lot of people who have been there for him and he is not able to be there for their last day of rest. His two friends died in a car accident and they are having their funeral in Kimberley today, so he is feeling anger not to have a chance to go to Kimberly to go and lay them to rest. He is distracted by that today because it is their funeral at the moment and obviously we have exams and stuff so he could not be there.”

Ashwyn on Bukho:

“This story is about Bukho and what inspires him. He always finds ways of bettering himself by studying and by seeking more.”

As mentioned above, Ashwyn was originally Bukho's partner and chose to present Blane as well. This was an interesting example of how his representation of Blane was seemingly more detailed and personal than it was of Bukho. He seemed to take longer when presenting Blane and implied that it was the summarized version of a longer, more detailed conversation. In the discussions afterwards with the group, it emerged that Blane and Ashwyn felt as if they had both experienced loss in their lives and that Ashwyn could relate to Blane's experience of losing friends in an accident. In contrast, Ashwyn's description of Bukho was short and considerably less personal, although Bukho had apparently shared several other personal details. My observation is that Ashwyn felt a connection to what he could relate to, which was rooted more in Bukho's desire to keep learning and improving himself than the other personal information. As a result that was what he shared in his introduction of Bukho to the group.

Leslyn on Crosby:

“I will tell you about Crosby Tashie Hunda. He came from Zimbabwe and found his heart here in Cape Town. He is a go-getter.”

This is another example of Leslyn being able to relate to something specific in her partner’s story. In informal group conversations it emerged that Leslyn sees herself as a ‘nomad’, who has moved around a lot and found Cape Town to be a very ‘special’ place. Interestingly, Crosby did not describe Cape Town as a place where he ‘found his heart’ but simply as a place he really likes and now calls ‘home’. The language Leslyn uses is more descriptive of her own relationship with Cape Town.

Crosby on Aubrey:

“Aubrey is someone who has gone through a lot of emotional rides so part of the things that he has told me today is that he just wants to ignore and kind of like just lay down and forget about everything happening in his life right now and probably recuperate and tackle life again.”

Nicole on Abu:

“Abu’s story is one those shy guys but you can feel the passion he has inside of him. When he speaks you know he has a clear vision in mind and he knows what he wants out of life. His vision is to work with computers but he also wants to help the youth with the new technology coming into the world.”

Walton and Angelique:

“This is Angelique. She is from Greytown in KZN and is passionate about DJ-ing.”

“This is Walton. He is passionate about travelling and he is also open to new opportunities.”

Leroy on Joshua:

“This is the story of Joshua Uys. He always wanted to join the marines and has always wanted to succeed and that is what fuels him and is what has brought him to the RAA.”

Assisipho on Unela:

“I am going to share a story about Unela. She is grateful for the people she has met in Cape Town and her MBA friend she met and the taxi driver, the driver who drives her around and she is happy to have met someone who is loyal to her (laughing).”

I asked participants to think about what they experienced when they heard other people tell their own stories back to them and to share how it made them feel during this exercise.

“I don’t understand why she made it mainly about how I spoke about the driver and why she made it sound that way. She made me sound like a diva. Now, everyone thinks I am a diva.” – Unela

Another participant, Robin, who had not had his own story repeated to the group, reflected on previous experiences of his own:

“I always hear people talking about me being a council worker for years and I don’t really like it but I just realised that people remember that about me because that is what I always tell them. Maybe I need to stop always saying that about or talking about myself as someone who was a council worker and focus more on who I am now.”

This created an opening for an informal discussion about how taking responsibility for your own story is important, as it can shape not only how you are perceived in that moment but could potentially shape the reality of who you might become in the future. We also talked about how the act of sharing a certain story of someone, some place, or something, makes it possible for other people to perpetuate that story and how stories shape not only perceptions but also realities.

Robin acknowledged that he would like to change how he presents himself to others so as not to perpetuate a certain story of himself. Bukho also asked about how he could apply that within the business context of his new business idea:

“Well we just design these simple leather straps that can be used by commuters in public transport like buses or trains to stick onto a rail so that you can reach it, because it is adjustable, and also it is more hygienic. It is more for like a city that has better public transport like London.”

I asked the group to share what they might take away from his story of his business and what they would take to pass on to other people:

“He doesn't give it enough credit so you don't really take it that seriously. I don't know if I would tell others about It.” – Anonymous

“I think that is actually a really good idea but he makes it sound like he doesn't think it is really for here in South Africa.” – Anonymous

Bukho expressed the need to defend what he said and start over to explain it in a different way, as he was concerned that his business had been unfairly interpreted. As the participants became more aware of what their peers took away from what they said, or of how it sounds when what they say is repeated by someone else, they appeared to start recognizing a sense of responsibility in the act of sharing a story. It also became clear that repeating a story that is only a partial truth actively shapes perception and, in doing so, influences the reality of what that might become.

4. Photograph and voice recordings of the story of ‘who you are today’

The participants were asked to take a photograph of anything they felt represented the story of ‘who you are today’ as well as a voice recording, saying anything that also represented that story.

There was a significant difference between the way the participants framed their stories when introducing these to a partner and group, compared to how they documented their personal story on a voice recording, where the tone was more intimate. Despite knowing that it would be heard, the act of recording it on their own seemed to encourage them to be more considered and open about themselves. This tone gave the sense that the participants were almost confiding in someone, or in some cases admitting something to themselves. The group presentations, on the other hand, had all adopted a particular format – where they came from and what work they wanted to do. It seemed that the more control they had over the process of recording and delivering their own story and the format they engaged with, the more honest, open and vulnerable they would allow themselves to be.

Images that were quite literal visual symbols of their story accompanied their personal story insights. Robyn’s Casio watch was accompanied by his story about recognizing that it was ‘time to make a change, that time is limited’; Bukho’s image of himself climbing stairs, spoke about being self-driven to be the best version of himself; Fernando’s image of a lion was accompanied by him speaking of having moved around a lot and now equipping himself with new skills. During the workshops Fernando made reference to being a ‘survivor’ and being able to ‘adapt’. Samples of the pictures, alongside their voice recordings can be found in Appendix 1.

5. Closing circle

The group came together to allow topics and thoughts to emerge in a discussion. At the end of the session we had a quick conversation that informally walked through their experience of anything they noticed in themselves during the course of the workshop. The discussion once again focused on the responsibility of presenting

yourself the way you want to be received, and how it feels when someone carries your story forward.

“We have had a lot of workshops where we did vision boards, and were taught to do a pitch and tell the story of our business idea but I never really thought about myself as being a ‘story’, or how to tell it, as in the story of ‘me’. Storytelling is usually thought of as sitting around a fire telling a story.” – Bukho

“Yes, that’s what I think of as well. Sitting around a fire telling stories, or poetry circles or writing something that will be performed.” – Lesyln

The participants appeared to connect with a new awareness of ‘themselves’, as well as of the notion of a ‘story’. The four activities in Workshop 1 aimed to identify and deconstruct the group's current narrative, by allowing the participants to:

- Tell their own stories and experience their story in that moment.
- Recognize the responsibility in telling their stories and what it means to hand it over to another person, for them to tell your story and represent you.
- Listen to that story repeated back to them. This, in turn, meant hearing their story with someone else’s experience attached to it.
- Be the listener and begin to witness his or her own story.
- Occupy a space where they can hear themselves, noticing what they learnt about ‘that person’ (self) when they hear it as a witness.
- Be fully present in their bodies and recognize any apparent physical discomfort.
- Interrogate whether they would change how they had originally shared the story and why.
- Uncover emerging stories.
- Acknowledge the power not only in ‘story’ but also in the act of constructing, framing and sharing a story.
- Connect with a new awareness.

4.3.2 Workshop 2 (reconstruct and choose)

The reconstruction of story relied on two types of activities:

- Mindfulness practice, which allows participants to fully connect with their honest experience of the present moment. This creates space for a narrative to emerge that one may not be able to articulate or clearly connect with easily.
- Visualization practices, which allows participants to stay fully present in an experience of their ‘future selves’ connecting with, and articulating, a new emergent narrative.

While Workshop 1 looked at deconstructing the existing narrative, Workshop 2 looked at how to allow a new narrative to emerge that was authentic, in order to reconstruct new narratives. The emergent nature of it coming from within the group allowed the group to choose their own story, and therefore look at shaping their own reality.

4.3.3 Workshop 2 (reconstruct and choose): Material and findings.

1. Mindfulness

A lying down meditation exercise was necessary as the group had just come from completing an exam and was particularly distracted on the day. All the participants lay on the floor for a few minutes for a guided meditation to bring them back into their bodies and into the present moment.

For the second workshop the physical exercise was not pre-decided and was determined simply by the energy in the room on the day. As mentioned, the students had just arrived from completing one of their final exams and the room was charged with mixed emotions and a frenetic energy. It was felt necessary to ground the participants and bring their focus back into the room, in order to be able to engage them in the work for that day. We decided on a guided floor meditation that marked their letting go of the exam and its pressures, the excitement to have finished, and

their stepping into what lies ahead. The meditation brought complete stillness and calm. The way the practice changed the behaviour of the participants affected the direction for the rest of the workshop and informed the more embodied focused exercises. I decided that the more we could create a container where the participants could connect with what was happening inwardly, the easier it might be for them to authentically connect with one another, and therefore move towards identifying an honest group narrative.

What was particularly interesting for this workshop was that, although the overriding intention of the workshop was always to reconstruct a new shared narrative, the activities were only loosely decided beforehand and were in fact ultimately chosen based on where the participants appeared to be energy-wise on the day. For me, this was necessary for the intrinsic nature of the content that might emerge within the group.

2. Embody how you feel in the present

The group was asked to stand in a circle facing outside away from one another and take a moment to fully connect with how they were feeling on that day in that room as RAA students. Having just come from writing a final exam and recognizing that they were almost at the end of their time as RAA students, this was particularly relevant. Once they connected with that feeling, they were asked to get into a shape with their bodies that told the story of that feeling and then to open their eyes to see the shapes of their peers.

When the participants were asked to move into the shapes of their present selves they hesitated. Some of the shapes were closed, one participant got onto the floor. The shapes were mostly soft, with their arms hanging to the sides and their heads down. The slowness to take their shapes gave the sense that there was a disconnect between the experience of being their present selves and what they wanted their 'story' of their present selves to be. They resisted stepping into the honest experience of their present selves and, when they did, there was a feeling of deflation. The participants either physically lowered themselves by lying on the floor, or became disengaged by letting their arms or head just 'fall'. There was a sense of 'resignation' and a depletion of

energy.

3. Embody the feeling of the future you

The final body exercise required the students to close their eyes and imagine how they may feel when they leave the Raymond Ackerman Academy and become their ‘future selves’. After thinking about this, they were asked to make a shape with their bodies once again. While still in the shape, the group were required to take some time to really experience themselves in the new shape and think about how connected or disconnected they were in their current reality to where they want to be in their future. They were then asked to open their eyes and look at the rest of the room, while maintaining their shapes.

Figure 4.1: Workshop 2 – Embodiments



When the participants were asked to create a shape of their imagined future selves, they formed shapes quickly and with conviction. This was very different to how resistant they were when taking the shape of their present selves. They embodied strong shapes and appeared to be very grounded. Those with their arms at their sides lifted them into the air. Others made fists. One participant stood up from lying on the

floor. There was a visible change in confidence and energy. The participants were happier to step into being the version of themselves they imagined in their future. They were more comfortable with the ‘story’ of who they would become than the ‘reality’ of who they were.

It was during this activity that the participants’ narrative visibly started to shift from what it had been in the previous workshop. Previously, the stories of who they were in informal conversations appeared to consistently be within the context of the ‘future entrepreneurs’ that the Academy was ‘helping’ them to become. At this moment of the workshop, when the participants focused internally on the embodied experience of their present and future selves and became conscious of the how difference felt, the previous overriding narrative dismantled.

4. Connect with others and discuss

The participants were asked look at their peers and identify anyone whose shape resonated with them. They then formed groups with those whose shapes were similar and gave language to their embodied experience. The groups were asked to write down any words or phrases that emerged in their group discussions that told the stories of any similarities, mutual experiences or common feelings. Later they were required to share those words with the larger group, to tell the stories of their shared experience.

Figure 4.2: Group discussions



further education, nervous, destiny, wow amazing feeling, financial freedom, pressure, fear, inquisitive, knowledge/education, passion, growth, step of faith, crappy jobs, no work, pressured, for change, then: for others/now: for ourselves, sceptical, inspired, serendipity, better ourselves, risk, emotional, professional, empowered, growth, and proud.

5. Sharing and emergent group discussion

After presenting the words that arose within the groups, the participants were asked to share the thoughts they had relating to the experience of the words. As the themes and words were posted on the board, they started to map a shared journey for the group. Together as a group the words were clustered and refined to become one thought that resonated for everyone in the room. Gradually, a shared narrative emerged. The exercises appeared to allow participants to move away from a pre-existing or expected story of their current experience as RAA students. Instead, they connected with their own honest and personal story of where they were in that moment, and started to reconstruct a new, shared narrative. All participants talked about their experience of being at the RAA and their feelings about leaving. They expressed that the most important and pressing issue for them currently would be to think of what happens when they leave RAA, and what it would take to realise what they had been learning about for the past six months. As a group, the participants chose words to describe what they would need after leaving the RAA programme. As a group they suggested more words to describe their feelings.

Figure 4.4: Sharing and emergent group discussion



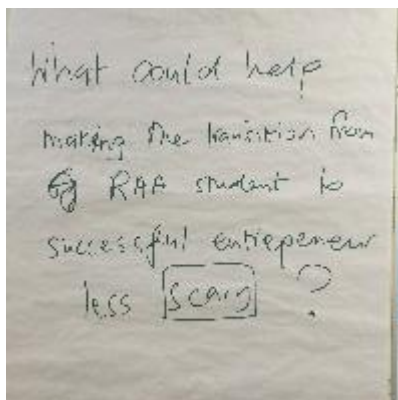
The words were as follows:

Finance, hardworking, faith, positive attitude, strong, resistant, discipline, stay calm, relax, confidence, to overcome all distractions, hard work, committed, positive, love, internal motivation, performance, energy, money, belief, grit, support structure, confidence, strength and passion, patience, mentors, fearless, action, determination, puppets, in it to win it, fun, focus, resilience, and wisdom (sponge).

We asked the students to share what resonates with all of them, and a discussion around the sense of feeling ‘lost’ and ‘scared’ to leave the Raymond Ackerman Academy became the focus of the group discussion. Finally, one common question emerged:

What could help to make the transition from RAA student to successful entrepreneur less scary?

Figure 4.5: The common question



The second workshop inquiry seemed to gradually adopt a different undertone. The focus on their future careers and the idea that RAA was their lifeline to a better future subsided. As they became more relaxed and engaged in the space and with one another, they began to articulate their honest experiences of what it means to leave RAA. Loewenthal describes the change that she observed:

“The students’ narrative seemed initially to be a set of abstract ideas connected to

the future. Stories that perhaps they felt would be impressive to 'the world'. They seemed to gain authority around changing those stories, which suddenly showed them the possibility that they have autonomy over their own over and the stories they choose to create and tell to the world."

Through an inclusive story creation process, Workshop 2 allowed participants to choose and reconstruct a new narrative that tells another part of what was previously an incomplete version of their current narrative.

4.3.4 Reflections

An important theme that appeared during the first case study was how the flexibility and emergent aspect of the workshop affected the direction the narrative would take. The context was directly linked with the level of authenticity the participants would engage with. I realised that for me to observe an honest narrative emerge from within the group of students it was important to:

- Notice where participants' attention go.
- Follow that attention and recognize what they are telling us.
- Adjust the activities to ensure that these are in line with where the participants are engaged instead of forcing them to adjust their engagement in a way that is not honest for them in that moment.
- Notice how the physical space and the occupation of that space affect, influence and add to the narrative itself.
- The mindfulness and body-based activities were very effective in unlocking the articulation of their experiences: being informed by shape, sensation, breath and presence.
- Allowing the story of the workshop to be emergent in order to keep it honest and inclusive for the participants was an important part of the participants having agency over their own process and staying engaged.

During the second workshop the students' shared narrative of themselves, and their ideas of what lay ahead for them after a six-month programme at the Raymond Ackerman Academy, was rooted mainly in words that described internal, abstract tools. During discussions on what would happen after graduation the students spoke of things like staying 'positive', being 'motivated', 'believing in themselves' and having 'confidence'. They spoke exclusively of concepts and ways of being, without once referring to any practical ways of doing these.

My experience of this particular group was that the process of storytelling over the two half day workshops could be described as a process of the students 'unlocking' what they expected to talk about based on the context of where the workshops were held, and accessing a more honest and personal narrative as they became more physically present and comfortable with the environment. The more embodied they were in what was honest and real for how they were feeling in any given moment, the more they opened up to discussing their authentic experiences. The shared story of the group moved from speaking of the Academy and how it will help them 'create a better future', to their experience of leaving as 'an unanswered question' and of 'fear'.

Below is a summary of the factors that I noticed as influencing the narratives participants shared during the two workshops and the common narratives that appeared in each workshop.

In both workshops **mindfulness and body-based practices** were critical in determining the level of engagement, as well as the content and the authenticity of narratives.

- Workshop #1 found it seemingly more difficult to stay present, which reflected in their narrative. They introduced themselves according to where they came from in their past, or where they were headed to in their future, both times within the context of work or career. Their narrative seldom related to their honest experience of the present.
- In Workshop #2 it became clear that the more present and embodied the participants, the more likely they were to connect with what is real for them in the present moment. This was evident when the body based exercises led

directly into group sharing discussions.

The medium that participants used to shape and share their stories influenced the content as well as the tone of the storyteller. It appeared that the more control over the delivery format they had, the more authentic they would become.

- In Workshop #1, this was seen in the difference between their personal voice recordings and photographs, compared to their introductions.
- In Workshop #2, the body as a medium gave way to very expressive, honest and articulate personal narratives.

Listening appeared to be directly linked to the possibility of ‘unlocking fixed narratives’. In both workshops, feeling ‘heard’ gave participants the sense that their story mattered and the more they felt this way, the more agency they claimed in engaging with, and shaping, their own authentic story.

- In Workshop #1 the level of listening influenced the quality of content delivered by the storyteller, and how honest they would be.
- In Workshop #2 the level of listening was a visible catalyst in allowing a new, shared narrative to emerge.

In the first workshop a common narrative existed for the participants around the idea of ‘bettering’ themselves, as well as around the aspiration to help others through their work. This changed in the second workshop and a common narrative was found to exist among participants across two themes: firstly, a sense of fear to make the transition from student to entrepreneur; and, secondly, the need for practical tools when making this transition.

The new narrative that emerged could potentially inform further developments at RAA. This indicates that ‘emergent narrative’ can be used as a ‘prototypic tool’ to inform an innovation. The innovation that ultimately results from that, whatever it

might be, becomes the 'story'. The process of using this 'inclusive, emergent narrative' to potentially inform an innovation is what I refer to as the 'materialization of story'.

For me, what was most interesting was that by the very nature of encouraging the storyteller of the workshop itself to be internal, the story of my own research began to focus more on the 'materialization of story' being more important than the act of 'documentation' or 'communication'.

I had entered my research with an approach that intended to focus on 'telling a story' or 'communicating' in a more inclusive and emergent way by:

- Including more internal voices rather than a single external voice with an agenda.
- Insisting on a narrative framework that includes aspects of both negative and positive experiences of the story, so as not to perpetuate stereotypes and incomplete truths.
- Appealing to intrinsic values and, in doing so, engaging an alternative stakeholder experience and ultimately, influencing alternative behaviour.

The 'materialization of story' refers to a recognition that in fact the notion of 'story' is not limited to what is delivered through the act of 'telling' a story using 'communication' formats. Rather, it refers to anything that is informed by the sharing of thoughts and experiences. Therefore, everything we create is a form of 'story'.

Interestingly, if 'story' is the result of a 'story creation' process that includes honest, multiple voices, representative of an entire truth rather than partial truths, then it is possible that 'story creation and storytelling' is a critical tool in informing the creation of products, services and processes. The products, services and processes are therefore the 'stories' that have materialized through an inclusive and intrinsic story creation process. I became interested in story creation and storytelling to 'inform' rather than 'document'.

The focus of the research moved more towards how important it is to look at the story

creation process as a tool to inform business and system innovation. The importance of the role of storytelling and story creation becomes to inform the formation, rather than the documentation or communication, of something.

Being responsive to the emerging narrative within the RAA workshops allowed us to adapt to a continuously changing narrative within the group, as the participants connected more with themselves and the experience. This was critical for the evolution of the shared expression of their experience together. The emergent story of the RAA group was the experience of uncertainty, fear, and not knowing what comes next, which they expressed as one question that resonated with the group: ‘How can the transition from RAA student to successful entrepreneur be less scary?’

I believe that we entered the point of witnessing an authentic story emerge from the group and it was necessary to have more time with the students to explore this idea in more detail. By applying the same ‘inclusive story creation’ approach, I believe the group could look at the question posed, and co-create possible solutions for making the transition ‘less scary’. What emerged for me was an interest in the potential of an alternative narrative framework and story creation process to serve as a tool for innovation: the ‘materialization of story’.

This informed the second case study and encouraged me to look at understanding how important it is for the focus of business to be more understanding of the role of narrative in informing the creation of successful products, processes and services. My own emergent narrative evolved from wanting to explore ‘alternative narrative frameworks’ in order to create ‘inclusive communication’ to ‘alternative narrative frameworks as a tool to inform social innovation’ – ‘the materialization of story’.

As a result of the observations I made in the first case study, the following case studies focused on inclusive and emergent narrative as a prototypic tool.

4.4 Case Study 2 – Business Context: Achievements Awards Group

Where the first case study with the Raymond Ackerman Academy looked at an NPO, the second case study sought to examine the narrative within a business-based context.

4.4.1 Introduction

The second case study was a series of narrative workshops held at Achievements Awards Group contact centre. Achievement Awards Group is a leading provider of performance improvement strategies, catering to a diverse range of clients including financial, liquor, automotive and the retail sector with one of the country's largest call centres (Achievement Awards Group, 2016). With 30 years of industry experience, the company employs an estimated 200 permanent employees and up to 300 contractors.

“Success depends on people, understanding people and what motivates them. This is at the heart of every human performance solution we design. Combining the latest findings in motivation theory, neuroscience and psychology, we provide solutions that are highly personalized and purpose-driven, and that deliver real returns for our clients. Ultimately, AA Group creates meaningful business results to our clients through our people engagement solutions.” – Dane Amyot, Project Manager

The company prides itself in being an industry leader in understanding human behaviour and ‘holistical human management’, boasting more than thirty years of experience in delivering ‘human performance and engagement solutions’. The overriding narrative of Achievement Awards Group is that they truly understand people. They have the insight, track record and most up-to-date research at all times in human behaviour: what engages people in the most effective way, what motivates certain behaviours, and what it takes to make them feel truly valued. They deliver performance solutions to their clients for ‘engaging, motivating and rewarding’ their clients’ employees across a multitude of diverse industry sectors, and at the core of everything they do is their profound insight and understanding of ‘people’.

“People who are both rational and emotional; individual and social; People who are motivated by both tangible and intangible rewards”. – Achievement Awards Group

The company also has one of South Africa’s largest contact centres, and with the company’s insight into how to ‘engage’ with people, the story of the contact centre is that it is well positioned to maintain sustainable customer satisfaction for their clients’ solutions.

“AA Group is a fantastic company to work for, we have always had a strong culture of high performance, team work, innovation, quality and mutual respect.”
– Dane Amyot, Project Manager

During my participatory action research workshops, I learned that the Achievements Awards Group management had employed a team that they intended would not only design and create a benchmark engagement product for their own contact centre but also innovate something that was relevant for the global contact centre industry.

The team for this workshop consisted of UX designer, Lise-Marié van Wyk, and innovation lead, Mehul Sangham, who planned to design the product using a participatory and co-creative approach. This presented a good opportunity for me to explore how an inclusive story creation process could be applied in a business context, and look at what value it might bring to informing the innovation itself.

4.4.2 Workshop structure

As in the first case study, the intention behind the structure of the workshop containers was to deconstruct, reconstruct and choose. It followed the same approach within a different context, drawing on the same influencing methods (Theory U, mindfulness practices, and human-centred design principles). I also continued to challenge the story creation process that encourages a framework that favours parts of a story (either positive or negative) rather than the complete story, a single external

storyteller and an extrinsic appeal.

1. Deconstruct: Design ways to research, deconstruct and understand the fixed narratives that the call centre staff has of themselves, their work environment (in this case a call centre), and their role within the call centre, through exercises in self-witnessing and observing.
2. Reconstruct: Participants become conscious of this storytelling process, gaining new insight into the role and context of the listener and the form the story takes, according to the frame the storyteller gives it.
3. Discern and choose: Participants recognize the choice to shift and shape narrative – choices around what and how I tell the story of being a contact centre agent, as well as recognizing the role that the narrative framework plays in shaping new realities.

The study continued to encourage:

- The exploration of both positive and negative aspects of an experienced truth, recognising that these are just aspects of an emergent and adaptive narrative, rather than creating a partial story that perpetuates a partial reality and claims to be the whole story.
- The inclusion of multiple internal storytellers, rather than a single external storyteller with their own single agenda.
- To appeal to intrinsic values by connecting with and communicating honest and authentic experiences, rather than appealing to extrinsic values.

4.4.3 Workshops and interviews

I facilitated the narrative workshops alongside UX designer, Lise-Marié, who would be taking the stories that emerged from the group to inform her UX design. As in case study #1, whilst my intention was to create a container where the participants were focused on the conversation at hand, it was also important to be fluid and adapt to

what was real for them in that present moment. Our role was to understand the current and most authentic story of the experience of being an AAG contact centre agent.

Prior to Workshop #1 we met with leadership to establish their current narrative of the contact centre, and how they understood the environment of the contact centre to feel for their employees. This was a free discussion and meeting format with the use of some word brainstorming on Post-It notes. I was merely an observer in this process and only facilitated the section of the meeting that asked participants to use post-its to document words or phrases that they believe describe the company and the call centre. For me, these meetings were part of deconstructing the existing narrative and allowed me to understand what the story of the company was for the leaders.

For the AAG case study the narrative insights from the workshops were taken by the UX designer and the innovation lead to inform the design of a rewards and engagement programme. This would be developed internally at Achievements Awards Group and rolled out internally within the call centre.

Lise-Marié van Wyk was the lead on user experience and interface design for this project. Mehul Sangham was innovation lead, and the project manager on the client side was Dane Amyot. It was the first time all three of them were taking an approach where a focus on personal narrative was applied in this way. I interviewed Sangham, van Wyk and Amyot to gain their feedback on the role of narrative in informing innovation.

Below each workshop and observation is outlined. Although these workshops were set up with an outcome in mind (to inform the design of an engagement programme), it was still critical that there was no agenda for the direction of the narrative within the workshop itself. The focus continued to be on what was required to facilitate the necessary conditions for authentic and inclusive narrative to emerge.

Workshop 1: Deconstruct existing narrative

The intention of the first workshop with employees was to introduce ourselves as completely neutral outsiders and establish trust. Most important was for us to get them fully

into the room, both in terms of their spoken stories and how they embodied those stories.

The workshop activities listed below will be explained in more detail during the findings section.

1. Introducing your neighbour.
2. Tell the story of being part of the AAG call centre.
3. Embody the story of AAG.
4. Visually map the story of how you feel – using string.
5. Homework – creating a photo journey of a typical workday.

Observation: Deconstruct existing narrative

For the second session, the UX designer and I spent three hours with the participants in the call centre environment, where participants were asked to:

- Tell us the story of your personal call centre experience by showing us what you feel is relevant to depict that.

As in case study #1 participants were not given much direction other than to keep the stories:

- Personal
- In the present tense
- Authentic and honest
- Simple (not to over analyse it)

Workshop 2: Reconstruct new narratives

The intention of the second workshop was to move from sharing and acknowledging individual stories towards identifying a shared narrative:

- Tell the story of your workday – using photographs.
- Portraits: perceived story of you versus the experienced story of you.
- Emotive role-play with call centre script.
- Sharing and emergent group discussion.

4.4.4 Findings for case study 2 – Achievement Awards Group

The below section details the observations and workshop activities outlined above, demonstrates how participants engaged with these activities, and explains observations and findings made as a researcher. The reflection section consolidates the emerging patterns and findings that apply to both of the workshops and the case study as a whole.

4.4.5 Meeting with leadership (deconstruct): Material and findings

Prior to the workshops with contact centre staff, three sessions were held with the management team to acquaint ourselves with them and to understand their intention for the project, as well as what, for them, was the current narrative of the contact centre.

Figure 4.6: Meeting with the Achievements Awards Group



We discovered that Achievements Awards Group had already done a considerable amount of work internally, developing an approach to the contact centre engagement product, and that they had a sense of what they imagined it might look like.

“We need you to understand the background work we have been doing on this and see whether you might come to the same conclusions about what is needed.” –

Anonymous, AAG

The story they were sharing unintentionally was that, although they wanted to include employees in the creation process, they might ‘know better’. We were given insight into the story of their relationship with their own contact centre staff. Words used included: ‘Open-door policy’, ‘rewards’, ‘exchange’, ‘rockstars’, ‘training’ and ‘self improvement opportunities’. Management was proud of their open-door policy and believed that staff was comfortable to approach them with difficult issues. They rewarded contact centre staff with dinners from Debonairs for working late, for example, and made their employees feel good with small touches like a ‘Rock Stars’ sign to demonstrate how they value their hard work.

The narrative of the management team was that they not only valued their contact centre staff but that they were willing to develop even further, creating an innovative product that motivates and rewards not only their own contact centre agents, but also those all over the world. Their narrative was fixed within an almost exaggerated positive framework.

The meetings took place in the same context where the participants were accustomed to making decisions and taking on a leadership role. In this case the leadership team had assigned a paid project team to develop an ‘innovative product’ and during a series of presentations from management, Mehul and Lise-Marié were updated on what technical approaches the internal team had been looking at, and the kinds of tools the management team imagined would be necessary in the development of such a product.

In order to make space for innovation it is necessary to remove existing ideas within a

fixed narrative. During the meetings with the leadership team it became significantly clear that the deconstruction of an existing narrative, within the meeting or workshop space, is more difficult when there is a power structure in place.

After completing meetings with AAG, three days of observation and workshops with contact centre staff were planned. The management team agreed not to participate in any of the workshops to ensure employees felt free to share their honest thoughts and experiences.

4.4.6 Workshop 1 (deconstruct) – Material and findings

All participants, including Lise-Marié and I, sat in a circle. Each seat had a stationery pack that included colourful Post-It notes, a variety of pens and Prestik, and there was a pile of magazines at the centre of the circle. There were refreshments and some snacks available for the participants and the room was set up to feel fun, contained and safe.

1. Introduce your neighbour

Participants were asked to introduce the person to their right by giving their name, position at the call centre and suggesting an animal that they associate with that person. This was to get a sense of the level of participation we could expect from the group. The participants were then asked to break away into teams based on the industries they work in: liquor, cell phones, automotives and financial.

Seven out of eight participants were open to engaging in the exercise of introducing their colleague and suggesting an animal that may represent who they are. This started the workshop off on a light note that communicated some close friendships within the group, and a general sense of ease between participants. One participant was very resistant to participate. As the conversation with participants started to become more relaxed and honest she revealed that she had been at the company for the longest (five years) and was reluctant to give anything of herself if it was not absolutely necessary. This gave her a sense of having some control of what she gave of herself to the company.

2. Tell the story of being part of the AAG contact centre

Each participant was asked to write their answers to the following questions on their Post-It notes, and then stick these on the whiteboard. After this, participants were asked to volunteer to explain their words.

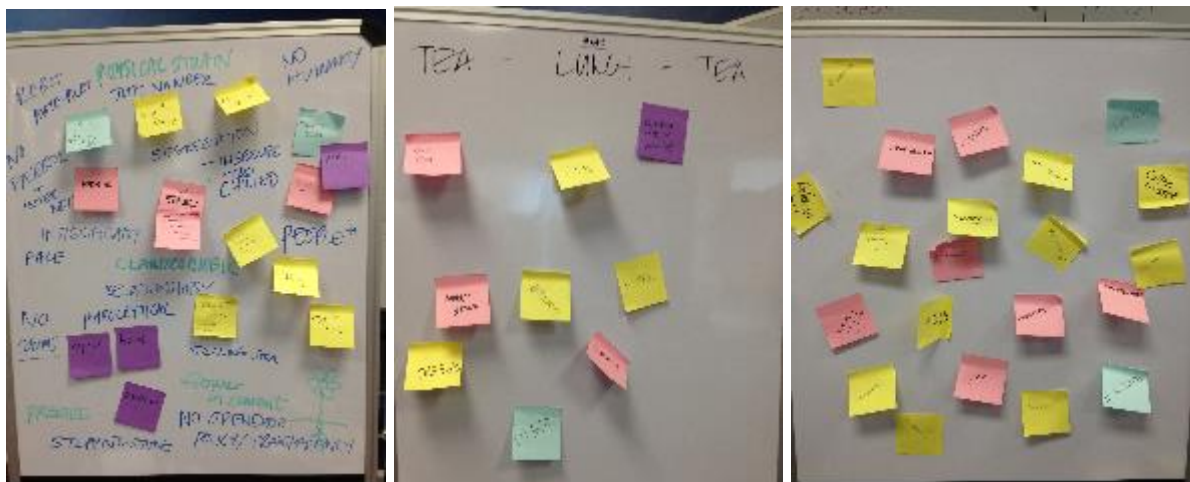
What is 'contact centre culture' to you?

- One word
- A colour
- An emotion

What is AAG all about and what is their purpose of AAG?

- A word or phrase

Figure 4.7: A word or phrase about the AAG



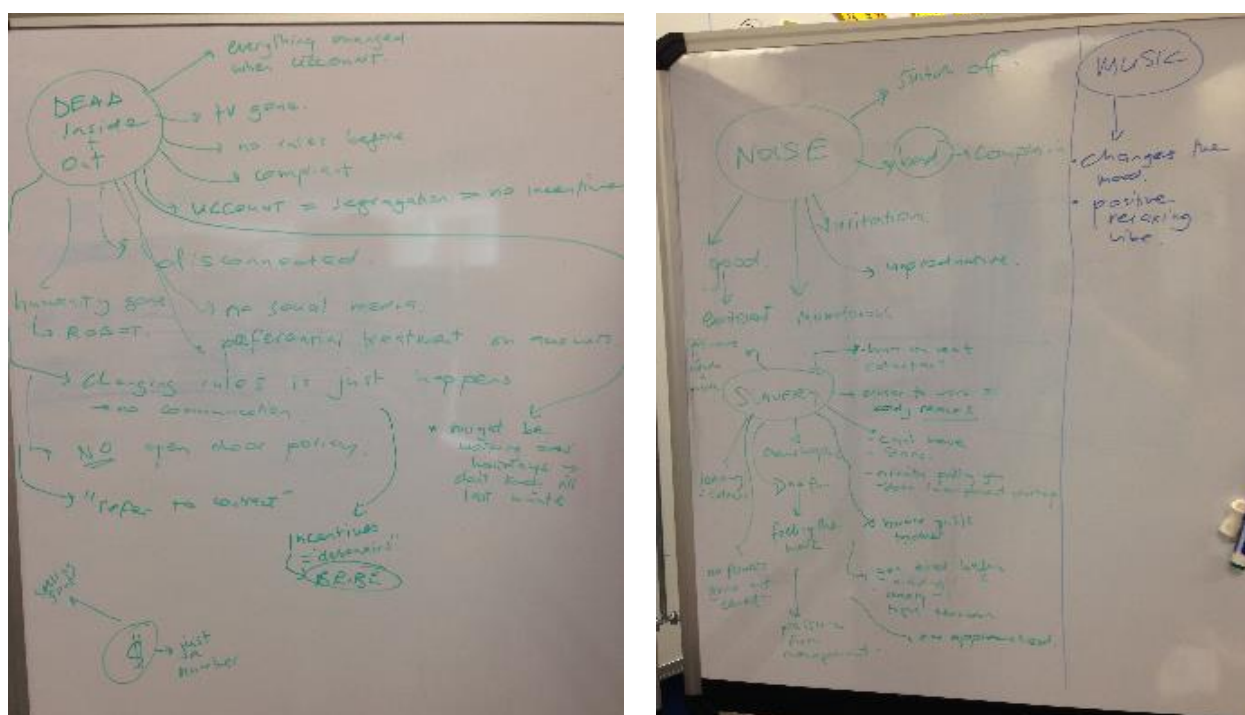
Words: Robot, physical strain, autopilot, noise high-school, help, line, intrusive, no humanity, no Facebook, segregation, insignificant, fake, slavery, ok, people, broke, mediocre, insignificant, claustrophobic, repeat, hold, avoid, stepping stone, pressure, selling soul, flower in cement, no open door culture.

Colours: Dark grey, muddy brown, green, black, brown, red, grey and white, grey.

Emotions: Misunderstood, frustration, crazy, patience, groggy, angry, unsupported, unappreciated, sad, mixed, demotivated, complacent, slaves, mistreated, underrated, roller-coaster.

Discussion emerged among the participants about how they did or did not resonate with what had been written. Three participants were asked to anonymously volunteer to tell the story of their words and the experience these represented.

Figure 4.8: AAG discussion board



“A robot means you are dead inside. A lot has changed at the company since the XX (not permitted to record the name) account landed and that is how I feel about the call centre now. I never used to.”

“Incentives feel like bribes. Like getting free Debonairs pizza for dinner when you are asked to work late. It’s not even healthy for us. What does that say for how they care about what we eat?”

“Preferential treatment is given to certain accounts, so unless you are one of those you are just a number.”

“It feels like there is always noise – people’s complaints, pressure from management, irritating sounds on hold, it is a constant noise.”

There was a discussion around the difference between noise and music. Participants explained:

“Noise feels like it can get on top of you. Music changes the mood. Even if you are feeling unhappy, it can create a positive relaxing vibe.”

In contrast to their management team, the contact centre staff immediately expressed an overly negative narrative and were intentionally hostile in their descriptions of the contact centre, as well as the experience of being an agent. I was conscious of discouraging a pattern of ‘venting’. I wanted to ensure that participants would connect with what was real for them, and would not allow their own expressions to be influenced by others’ stories or experiences.

The more participants realised that even their most abstract descriptions of experiences were listened to by both facilitators and one another, the more they engaged.

3. Embody the story of AAG

Participants were asked to physically embody the feeling of working in a contact centre by getting into a shape with their body. The participants took a moment to take these shapes. They entered the physical shape of their experience and stayed there for a few moments with their eyes closed. Five out of the eight shapes were on the floor, closed, inwards and tight: curling up, crouched down on the floor and pushing up against something above them with their hands, kneeling on the floor and pulling their hair, being pulled, and being pushed down toward the floor. The shapes demonstrated a strong sense of being restricted, of having no real sense of freedom, and of

constantly dealing with ‘forces’ – being either ‘pushed’ or ‘pulled’ in some way.

Two participants (both male employees) stayed seated on their chair: one had his arms open hanging by his sides with his feet on the ground, the other sat with his legs stretched out and crossed at the ankles and his hands crossed on his lap. These two seemed to demonstrate a sense of resignation, and an air of being totally disengaged. The story their bodies told was that they were totally passive in their environment.

After this exercise we asked volunteers to tell us the story of their shape and explain what they were telling us with their bodies. The sentiments echoed a sense of the ‘restriction’. Below are two examples of quotes from the participants, which they felt described their physical experience of being in the contact centre.

“It feels like you are a flower in cement. How can a something beautiful grow out of something that feels stuck and heavy?”

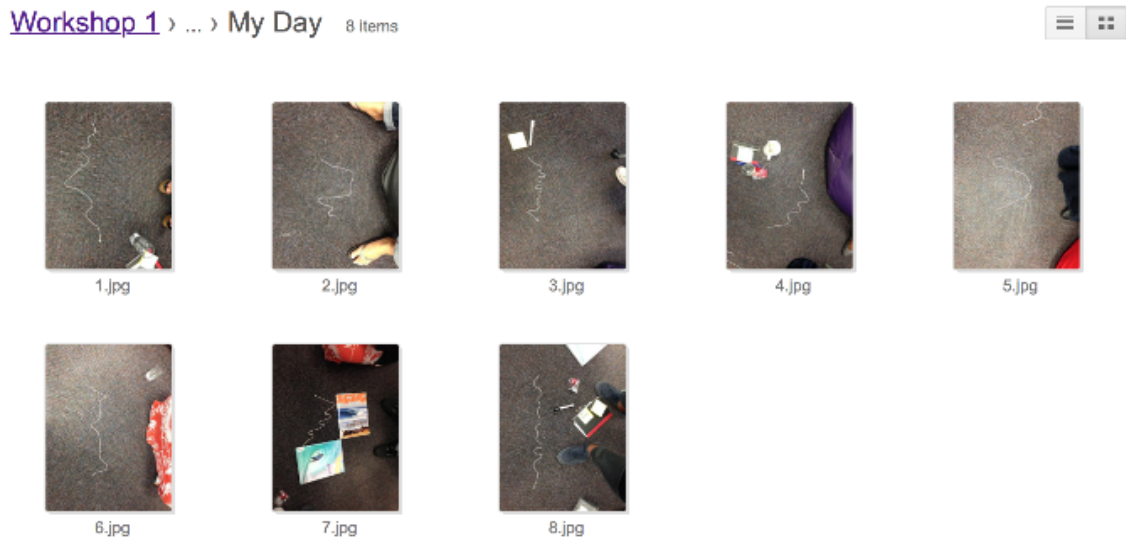
“We don't have access to anything like Facebook. As soon as you go into the call centre you feel cut off from the world.”

Participants were visibly interested in looking at one another’s shapes and listening to each other’s explanations. The more they related to what their colleagues were experiencing the more they participated in the discussion.

4. Visually map the story of how you feel – string

The participants were asked to use a piece of string to illustrate a graph of their energy throughout the day and to tell the story of where they experience highs and lows. This activity intended to make the experience they had just embodied physically and applied language to, more visual.

Figure 4.9: String exercise



The pieces of string showed energy peaks outside of their work day in the morning when spending time with family, at tea breaks, lunch breaks, cigarette breaks and home time. Some dips were more dramatic than others. One string story (2.jpg above) was the depiction of Monday to Friday, showing that the participant feels at her lowest energy for the duration of the week until the weekend, explaining that there is nothing to look forward to that energizes her during the working week. Eight out of eight participants made a very clear distinction between work and personal life. In most of the stories the participants saw and experienced themselves as completely different inside of work compared to outside. The representations suggested that they see themselves as their best selves outside of work and are mostly a resigned version of themselves inside of work.

“I have to make sure that I have fun outside of work or I will lose myself.”

“I will be more myself at work if there is something that is ‘me’ to enjoy during the day, like even a place where I can go to have free Wi-Fi or something. Now I just get through the day and get out of here as soon as I can.”

5. Homework – Photo journey of a typical work day

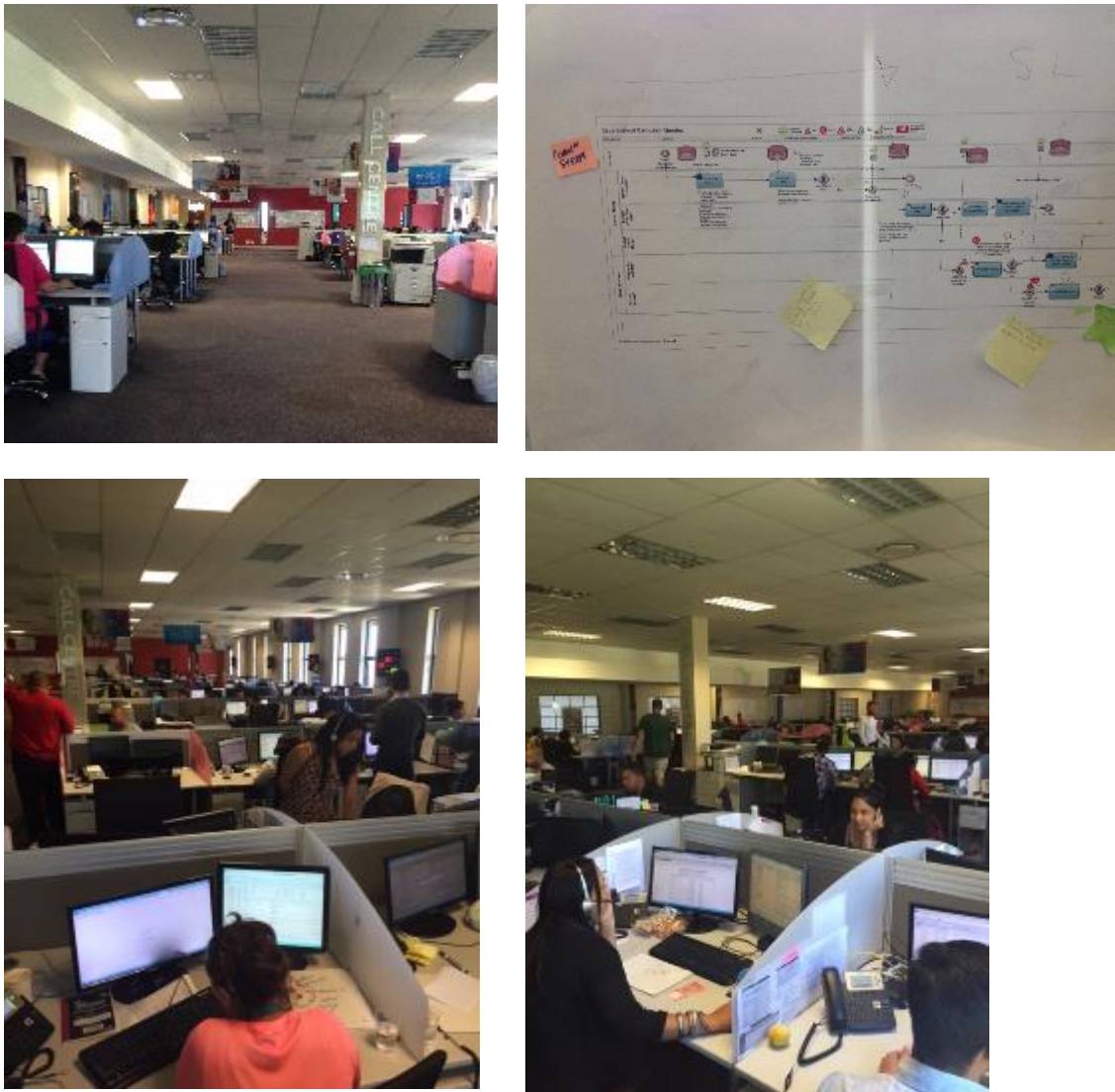
We gave the group an exercise to do for the following week. The participants were asked to take a series of three to four photographs using their phones that would tell the story of their workday as an agent.

The three activities in the workshop aimed to identify and deconstruct the group's current narrative by encouraging the participants to:

- Tell the story of their experience as a contact centre agent.
- Connect with the physical experience of their story.
- Give language to their embodied experience, and articulate their experience even more honestly.
- Visually share their embodied experience.

4.4.7 Contact centre observation (deconstruct) – Material and findings

Figure 4.10: The customer service centre



1. Tell us the story of your personal contact centre experience by showing us what you feel is relevant to depict that.

We asked four call centre agents, who had attended the first workshop, to show us the story of their experience of their contact centre work environment. The participants were enthusiastic to show us their desks and workplace. All four agents introduced us to their neighbours and showed us their desk and seating area. Two out of four participants invited us to listen to a call and explained what it was about. One call centre agent initiated a walk around the whole room and took us to other areas to

show us the centre and how it works.

What was interesting about the call centre journey was what the participants did not share. One participant showed us the room as a whole, and the system in its entirety, in order to share his story of the call centre. The story of his 'personal experience of the contact centre' had nothing to do with him 'personally' at all. He removed himself, as if he was not really an integrated part of the environment. Instead, he pointed at things from a distance and explained an overview of the reason things are there and how they are used.

Three out of four participants focused only on their desk, immediate neighbours and phone calls. Their story of their workplace was limited to their cubicle, phone and computer. The physical experience of being shown this was interesting. As they all led the way to their desk areas and isolated their explanation to that specific area, I felt like I needed to stand in one spot so I did not get in the way or encroach on other people's space. I, myself, felt restricted to what they were showing me not only in terms of the space I could occupy, but also in trying to hear them without being distracted by, or distracting to, the agent on a call next to me.

How the participants experienced their physical working environment formed a significant part of their story of being a contact centre agent. The story of their contact centre experience was not only created through what they shared but also through what they did not share. From the observation exercise, it emerged that the common narratives were a sense of physical isolation and a disconnection from the bigger picture.

During the observation exercise it was important to:

- Notice where the participants' attention would go when sharing the story of the contact centre.
- Recognize what they are not sharing.
- Notice how their occupation of a physical space contributed to their narrative.

4.4.8 Workshop 2 (reconstruct and choose) – Material and findings

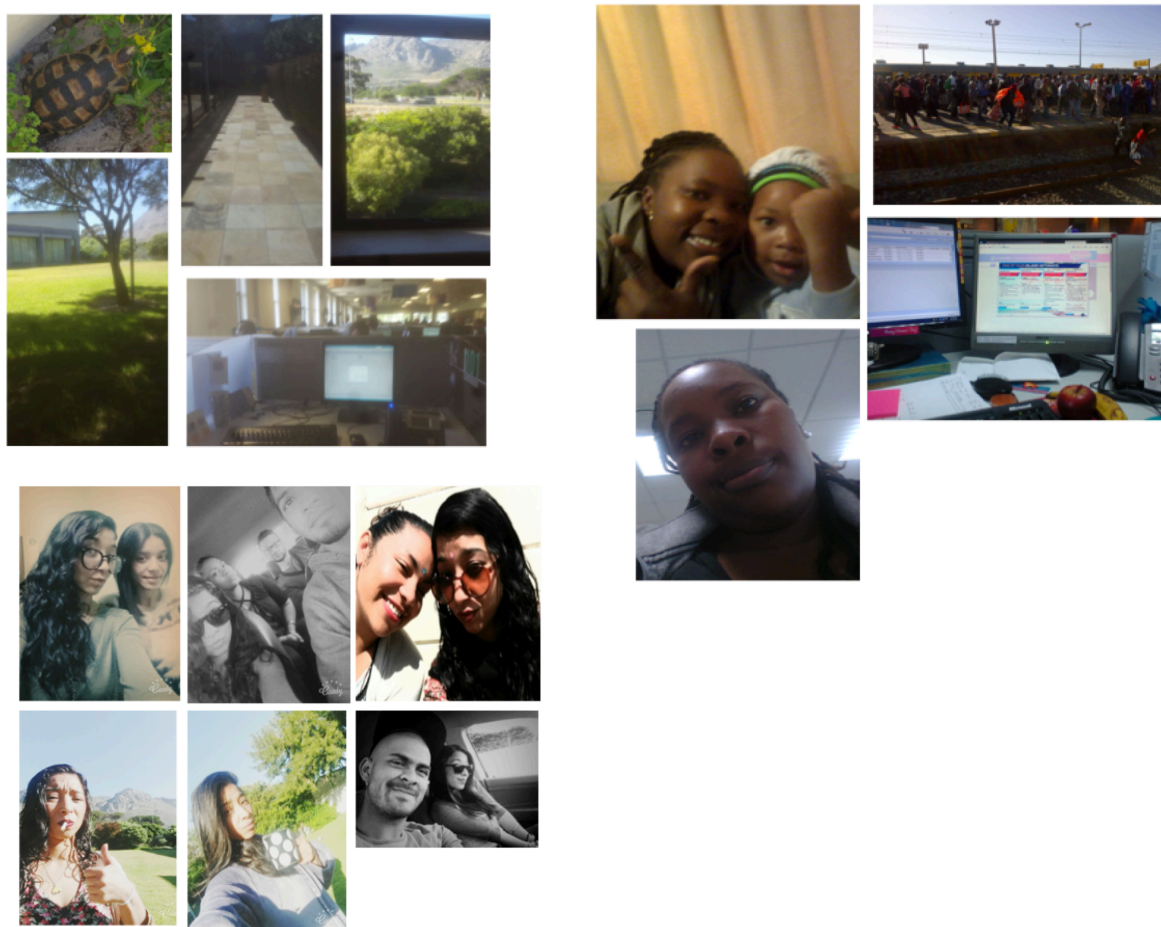
Seven out of the eight original participants attended the second workshop. The one who did not attend was the employee who, in the previous session, had expressed that she does not want to share any personal thoughts unless absolutely necessary. An additional three call centre agents volunteered to attend the workshop making a total of ten participants.

The contact centre management team selected the participants, who were told the second workshop was entirely voluntary. After what the absent participant had shared in the previous workshop, it felt to me that she was making a deliberate choice to give only what she absolutely had to of herself, and wherever she had the opportunity to refuse something she would. She had chosen to be silent but not invisible. She would choose not to participate and, in doing so, her narrative was inadvertently shared or implied. She appeared to be protective of the freedoms and choices she had left, which according to her previous participation had been gradually becoming less over the years she had been there. In not coming she was maintaining that narrative of ‘needing to assert her boundaries’ where possible.

1. Tell the story of your workday – Photographs

In the previous workshop the participants were asked to take photographs that told the ‘story of the life of a contact centre agent on a typical week day’. Sitting in a circle, the participants shared these and told their story to the group.

Figure 4.11: A workday in photographs



A key insight in this exercise was how little attention was paid to the actual experience of being a contact centre agent. Those who shared their pictures and story focused on experiences of before and after work: spending time with families or children; and during the breaks when they have a cigarette, drink coffee, enjoy the view of the garden and mountain. The contact centre was mentioned briefly in each case as something in the middle, with very little detail.

2. Portraits: Perceived story of you versus the experienced story of you

The participants were asked to choose images from the pile of magazines. They would create two self portraits: one that tells the story of what they believe as others' perception of what they do as a call centre agent, and one to tell the story of how they

experience the reality of this. On completion of their self-portraits the participants who wanted to presented their portraits to the group.

Figure A



The participant behind Figure A told the story of her chosen pictures, saying that the stamp depicts how routine work feels sometimes. The caricature of the man pulling his hair out is how she feels about being bored and frustrated. The map and smiling woman at a dinner table is the image she feels she portrays to the outside world. Her friends and family think she is happy and always keen for an adventure or social event.

Figure B



The participant described Figure B as two images telling the story of how different he sounds on the phone to customers, compared to how he really feels sometimes. On the outside he has to smile, sound happy, and give good service when in reality he often feels like he has to restrict himself physically when customers are rude and abusive.



Figure C

Figure C was explained by the participant, who said that the image of the broken computer tells the story of how they are always ‘dealing with a mess’ at work, for example phones often don’t work and they can barely hear what the customers are saying, or her team being stressed. The image of a woman thinking of a baby is the happy peaceful face she puts on to inspire her team. She described her own son, as her

‘happy place’. Thinking of him helps her keep a positive appearance: how she believes her colleagues see her.

In each of the portraits depicted above (and shared by those who were willing to volunteer), the participants mentioned or implied the need to maintain an outward appearance of being happy, friendly or in control. There is a significant difference between their portraits of the ‘perceived’ and ‘experienced’ self. It is interesting to notice that there were no portraits where the two share similarities. This suggested that the participants commonly experienced a ‘disconnect’ between who they want to be, and experience themselves to be, which causes frustration, dissatisfaction and discontent.

3. Emotive role-play with call centre script

Participants were given the real versions of their call centre script and asked to read it saying what they really feel, using a tone that feels authentic and honest. This exercise generated a lot of energy and fun. The participants all volunteered to read part of a call centre script without adhering to protocol. There was a common theme of wanting to be treated with respect, wanting to release frustration, and be given a choice to press hold and be invisible sometimes. The exercise became theatrical as the participants volunteered to go more than once, swapping partners.

In-between the role-play the group laughed and commented on shared experiences that came up in phone calls. The participants’ tone and narrative changed from speaking about themselves as a group who worked in the call centre, or speaking as call centre ‘experts’. Demonstrating what they have to put up with and how they have been trained to handle calls in the call centre generated a sense of pride and expertise, and opened up a positive conversation about what it takes to be a call centre agent. Participants connected with a holistic story of their role as an agent and a positive discussion about their goals within the company emerged. They related to one another and expressed compassion for themselves and one another.

4. Sharing and emergent group discussion

Participants naturally came together in a circle and talked about how they felt during their emotive phone call. This was not a structured or pre-planned activity but evolved into a prototyping word exercise.

A productive discussion emerged where the participants were framing their stories of their goals and ambitions within the call centre in a positive way. As this happened, participants were asked to identify some themes that had come up over the two workshops that made them think about the experiences they had in common, and to suggest what would help to create a call centre environment where they could imagine achieving their goals and ambitions.

Participants that remembered something specific would volunteer their theme. The first participant started her sentence with the words ‘I would feel better if...’ and we wrote that as the theme on the board.

Words: ‘longer lunch’, ‘affordable canteen’, ‘time off’, ‘relevant training’, ‘skilled teachers’, ‘inclusion’, ‘free lunch’, ‘13th check’, ‘clear phones’, ‘working resources’, ‘Halaal food’, ‘Facebook time’, ‘Wi-Fi free’, ‘social media’, ‘games’, ‘connected’, ‘communication’, ‘included in activities’, ‘end of year functions’, ‘funded team building’, ‘not feel like worker bee’, ‘longer lunch: lunch in contract is 1 hour – only get half an hour’, and ‘screen saver’.

These words told the story of:

- Having food choices respected and offered at the canteen to acknowledge their religion and health.
- To be given relevant training from trainers that they felt were equipped and “... someone who is not just there because they were someone’s cousin”.
- To feel included in the company.
- To receive rewards that offered them real enjoyment, e.g. free lunch, time off, and/or free internet access during breaks.
- To feel like they were connected to the outside world and free to use social media.

The group talked about how their daily work satisfaction was found in working and achieving a goal together as a team. Four out of ten participants highlighted that they would like to make a career of being an agent, but the lack of job security deterred them.

“I also want to grow and become permanent as I’ve been working here well over two years.”

When we inquired about goals they wanted to achieve at work, six out of ten participants wanted to advance – move to different departments or be applied in their field of study. The other four wanted to become better agents – hone their telephone skills, know how they can add value to the company and grow professionally.

“I would feel better if I was given relevant training by trainers who I feel are experts, and not someone who is there just because they were someone’s cousin.”

“I would feel better if I could go somewhere in my tea break where there is free Wi-Fi and I can connect with the outside world.”

“I would feel better if I didn't have to pay for team building activities out of my own pocket.”

The participants shifted from being passive, within a system they cannot influence, to becoming more active within an environment they can shape. The previous role-play activity encouraged the participants to recognize that they were professionals with specific expertise. As soon as they engaged in discussing something from a position of valued experience, they started to take more responsibility for affecting change. A mostly negative narrative started to become more positive as soon as the participants experienced a sense of agency over their own workplace experience.

4.4.9 Interview findings

The purpose of the project was for the innovation lead and UX designer to use a design thinking approach to innovation, specifically the development of a new system for contact centre management. The emphasis of the design challenge was to shift management and operational structures from a top-down structure to a more self-organising and learning perspective. The narrative insights and stories that were captured during the workshops were taken by the UX designer and the innovation lead to inform their design and strategy approach.

“Although approaches like this are often used in design interventions; the narrative frame aimed to unearth deep seated social structures that are often overlooked. This was facilitated using awareness-based approaches that allowed participants to reveal the underlying social structures through reflective and dialogue practices. In this way participants were empowered to understand, deconstruct and reconstruct key breakdowns in their own lived experience.” – Mehul Sangham, Innovation Lead

“Usually, user interviews are conducted to determine user needs but having a user story instead, was way more insightful and helpful in determining our design approach. A narrative approach puts the user experience designer in the shoes of the user and enables them to have more effective compassion with the user to create a better user experience.” – Lise-Marié van Wyk, UX Designer

“Effective user-centred design is highly dependent on user feedback and insight into the psychology behind what a user really needs. The narrative workshop did not only give invaluable psychological user insight and a glimpse into their daily story, but was incredibly helpful in determining which platform we needed to design for that would meet the exact needs they had. I believe that having the quality of user feedback we gathered using this method will change the way applications are created and ensure the design is more user-centred.” – Lise-Marié Van Wyk, UX Designer

“The narrative framework uncovered an underlying narrative – this is powerful because it revealed many layers of rich understanding into the design context. This was unique in that it captured the complexity of the problem space in a unique

way; furthermore it allowed the participants to explore this problem space in a co-creative and participatory manner. They helped shape deep insights into the human dimension of the product development.” – Mehul Sangham, Innovation Lead

“This was distinct to traditional UCD processes in that the narrative frame allowed to un-earth deep organisational and social design challenges. These were often met with some discomfort with the management and sponsors of the project – however they did uncover important, often misunderstood aspects of the project.”
– Mehul Sangham, Innovation Lead

Approaches like this, wherein workshops are conducted with end users within a participatory context, are often used in design interventions, however both Mehul and Lise-Marié believed that the focus on creating a container for personal stories to emerge was significantly different to their usual user-centred design approach, and that a focus on personal narrative and storytelling was particularly useful when applied in this way.

Mehul explains how the narrative workshops informed his design work on the project:

“The narrative workshops developed key insights into the needs of the user, that could inform a design strategy that integrated both end user needs and business needs. They helped shape deep insights into the human dimension of the product development. These groups should be the lifelines for any product development process. It allows insights to be progressively developed with the key users in a participatory and creative manner. This mitigates key risks in the product development lifecycle. The narrative structure is unique here in that it allows for the understanding of the ‘broken narrative’ and allows the users to co-create a ‘new narrative’ that is in a dynamic becoming.”

Dane Amyot, the project manager and program designer said that, although some insights were difficult to hear, the personal stories from workshops informed changes they had not anticipated:

“While the sentiment from the control group was mostly negative, I believe it created an emotional response out of the leadership team that resulted in some immediate actions to be implemented to fix environmental factors.”

Although Achievement Awards Group found the approach that the design team took insightful, the company ultimately took an alternative direction to what Mehul and Lise-Marié suggested:

“The narrative research conducted was truly eye-opening and really helped me understand the contact centre culture and how individuals were feeling about themselves, the department, the company, and leadership as a whole. It was important to get this perspective, as people engagement solutions need to be designed for the actual participants of the program and not from a pure systems-approach point of view.” – Dane Amyot, AAG

“The final presentation of work was extremely professional and we used this insight to empower the members of the Contact Centre to tackle immediate ‘hygiene’/environmental factors (not motivating factors) that would rapidly improve the work environment. It also created a sense of ownership in solving what the members of the contact centre deemed to be their biggest issues with the environment. This gave everyone a voice and allowed them to be heard. As for the employee engagement solution, the business has decided on a different direction to the solution presented for several reasons.” – Dane Amyot, AAG

4.4.10 Reflections

As the workshops progressed, it became clear that participants would only share stories of themselves if they trusted an honest intention to implement their feedback, and that the objective of project was transparent. There was a significant difference between the story that the management team told of what it was to be contact centre staff at AAG, and the accounts shared by the staff themselves. It was critical for the management team not to be fixed in their own narrative when receiving feedback.

“My story of the contact centre did change, it painted a very different picture to

what I had perceived. I always knew that the job was a tough one, and that the work environment was inflexible in terms of work hours, personal breaks and participant contact management; however, what came out of the workshops was a picture far more negative than my original perceptions. The group we used for the workshop sat at the extreme end in terms of feeling disengaged and disconnected from the overall strategy of the business. Having said that I think those who sit in the extreme ends, i.e. highly engaged and highly disengaged, are really good at giving a voice to the majority who sit somewhere in the middle of this spectrum.” – Dane Amyot, AAG

During the workshops, it was important at all times to maintain that the space was not a container to complain or vent about work and management, but rather to simply connect with and share their honest experience of the contact centre, and what it was to be a contact centre agent. As the narrative started to become exaggerated or focused on one perspective, it was useful to bring the focus back by taking a break, having a social informal discussion, or doing a mindfulness practice to shift the energy in the room.

At the beginning the participants appeared to have a very fixed narrative that implied the company only cared about accounts that made a profit, that nothing could be done to change that. They felt there was no point in sharing their stories because management did not really care. Towards the end of the workshops they appeared to become more positive about collectively articulating small shifts that would encourage a sense of an ‘exchange’ they could engage with. Gradually, the group began to take responsibility for co-creating their own story and work environment, rather than withdrawing from it. Again, the storytelling process began to take the form of a prototypic tool.

“I do think it is important to pay attention to groups like this. I would have liked to have the time to open the experience up to a larger group of individuals (be it people from AA Group’s Contact Centre or an external company) to get a more diverse range of opinions and to be able to delve deeper into the insights provided. A larger sample group would have allowed us to create more personas and more in-depth personas as well.” – Dane Amyot, AAG

Similar to the first case study, being flexible with the workshop and activities was an important part of the process. Not having a script and allowing the discussions and themes to be fluid and emergent played a critical role in trying to create a space where the narrative would come from the participants themselves. The context was, once again, directly linked with the level of authenticity with which the participants would engage.

Below I have summarized the factors noticeable in influencing the narratives shared by participants during the interactions with them, as well as the common narratives that emerged and an additional finding specific to this context.

Mindfulness and body-based practices appeared to be significant for ‘unlocking’ the articulation of real experiences and led the participants towards a sense of agency over their own narrative. It was also interesting to notice what did not happen when mindfulness and body-based activities were absent. During the meeting sessions with management there was no mindfulness practices. This absence may have contributed to the limited capacity to ‘unlock fixed narratives’.

- In Workshop #1, creating the shape of their lived experiences was very effective in encouraging participants to articulate their experienced truth.
- In Workshop #2, the role-play activity where participants physically acted out their experienced truth appeared to be a significant catalyst in them gaining agency over their own story. Their partial (mostly negative) narrative framework moved towards one that included both positive and negative aspects. Similar to the first case study, a sense of agency was instrumental in ‘unlocking’ a fixed narrative.

The use of different **media** (photographs, writing, role-play, embodiment) once again appeared to activate different ways of connecting with personal stories and affected the content and the tone of stories shared by participants.

- In Workshop #1, using the body as a medium and then translating that visually by using a piece of string seemed to visibly help to connect language to their

lived experience.

- In Workshop #2, the use of visual media created an opening for participants to share detailed and honest personal stories.

Listening continued to be critical in order to encourage participants to share their stories. The level of listening amongst participants determined what they would share, and how honest they would be.

- At management level, their sense of feeling ‘heard’ and ‘listened to’ was critical in order to trust us with the project.
- Among observation and workshop participants, as the level of listening among them gradually deepened, their trust for one another and engagement grew, bringing about more honesty.

The common narratives found within leadership was that they understand their employees, what drives them and what they need to feel rewarded. During the observation common narratives found to exist for the participants were a sense of physical isolation and a disconnection from the bigger picture. Similarly, participants in the first workshop also seemed share a common narrative of disconnectedness and isolation. Another common narrative was a feeling of being stuck. In the second workshop, common narratives found to exist were the need to be recognized as experts in their field, to have a sense of being connected to the rest of the world, and to actively feel part of the rest of the company.

This case study demonstrated that a story creation process within an organisation that is honest, inclusive of multiple storytellers, and depicts the full experience rather than parts of it, can be an effective tool in informing innovation and systems within a business context. However, it also demonstrated that, in order to make room for the personal narratives at all levels to authentically inform the product / service / system being developed (or in this case re-direct it), it is critical for management to be unattached to their own story of what is real for their employees.

Case study 2 at AAG allowed me to start understanding how an alternative story creation process can be applied within a corporate environment to inform an innovation or project. This case study therefore started to explore the ‘materialization of story’. The storytelling process as a tool to effectively inform the innovation, however, can only be authentically applied if the narrative among management is not fixed. In order to fully understand how the narrative and story creation process has informed innovation within a corporate setting, further narrative inquiry would need to be done once the participants have experienced the systems/changes that have been implemented. This would depend on the willingness of the client to cooperate in that process.

Previously, in case study #1 with the Raymond Ackerman Academy, the narrative that the participants shared initially appeared to be rooted in a very ‘positive’ framework. As the participants connected with their honest experience of their own personal stories, they began to include more negative sentiments as they connected to, applied language to, and had agency over their own story. In contrast, the participants in the second case study at Achievement Awards Group initially adopted a negative narrative, and ultimately shifted towards a more positively framed narrative as they gained more agency.

Both case studies demonstrated that participants would engage initially within the framework of an ‘adopted’ or ‘assumed’ fixed narrative – The NPO that is ‘bettering their lives’ or the business that is focused more on profit than the well-being of their employees. Both case studies also showed that, with the inclusion of multiple storytellers connected with their authentic lived experience, an unlocking of that narrative could happen, and a new, shared narrative could emerge.

An emerging theme was that the ‘unlocking’ of fixed narratives had been connected to creating the conditions required for participants to be fully embodied and present in their own experience of their own stories, and that this was linked to their capacity to connect with, have agency over, and apply language to their own story. Connecting with the physical experience of a story maintained my focus on appealing to intrinsic values.

Both of the above case studies had also taken place within organisations, and were carried out in contained spaces, where we were able to create a sense of safety. It was

also important to consider that the participants knew who the leadership bodies were of those organisations. I wanted to understand whether the deconstruction of fixed stories could happen around a ‘system’, or the ‘experience of a system’, where the governing bodies were not necessarily individuals that participants felt they could relate to. I was also interested to understand whether the ‘unlocking’ of fixed narratives would take place without the same level of focus on mindfulness and body-based practices as part of the process to connect with their own experienced truth.

With this in mind, the next case study was the Vanguard Community Health Centre. I intended to investigate whether a ‘new shared narrative’ might emerge in a context where I was unable control the conditions for a ‘workshop container’.

4.5 Case Study 3 – Public Sector Context: Vanguard Community Health Centre

The third case study was based at the Vanguard Community Health Centre. The initial meeting with patients was due to an unexpected request from paediatrician and fellow Masters in Philosophy student at the University of Cape Town (UCT), Dr. Yusuf Parak.

4.5.1 Introduction

Dr. Parak, is currently looking at the challenges he faces regarding the amount of time spent with patients trying to understand their medical history, as well as locating their medical history records. This takes a considerable amount of time away from actual patient consultations. He is also looking at how this influences the doctor-patient relationship, and what role the patient plays in keeping record of their own health.

“I’m an MPhil student undertaking research on patient held records in the hope of gaining an understanding of how they influence the doctor patient relationship.” –

Dr. Yusuf Parak

Dr. Parak had done a considerable amount of research interviews with medical practitioners and archivist experts. However, he was having difficulty gathering insights from the patients themselves.

“I needed to gain an alternative perspective to confirm/abrogate my research findings, which the narrative research approach achieved quite effectively. The purpose of the narrative workshops was eliciting patient perspectives on the use of health record keeping from a neutral source (non-medically aligned)” – Dr. Yusuf Parak

When Dr. Parak, who works in public healthcare in the Western Cape, speaks about his experience of public healthcare he focuses on the large numbers of patients that he and his colleagues see on a daily basis. With the pressure of seeing so patients each day, the amount of quality time he is able to give to each patient is limited. On top of this, he is often forced to spend most of that time establishing and understanding their medical history, which is either unclear or misplaced.

“You end up having about ten [minutes] with each patient sometimes, and out of that you need to spend half the time trying to understand their medical history. Often they have come from other areas, or don't speak English. You end up with very little time for the actual consultation and diagnosis.” – Dr. Parak

Dr. Parak’s overriding story of the system he works in is that it is ‘over stretched’ and ‘under strain’. The available content on various communication portals reiterate that the public healthcare sector services 80 percent of the population, mostly those in the poorest communities, and although they deliver a ‘comprehensive healthcare package’ to the poorest communities, public healthcare is constantly faced with a shortage of staff and funding (South African Government Healthcare, 2016).

“Although some of the best doctors in Cape Town are employed in the public system, the long queues and a depressing environment often steer those with the means toward the private sector”.

(Healthcare in Cape Town, 2016)

The overriding story of public health services is that they are for people who have no choice but to accept what is available, and that what is available becomes inadequate due to an ‘under resourced’ system. The Vanguard Community Health Centre services the surrounding community of Bonteheuwel. This case study was an interesting context to not only observe whether the participants would perpetuate the fixed narrative associated with the a public sector context, but also to look at whether the elements previously identified as key factors in an inclusive and authentic story creation process of the other two cases might be influential by the nature of their absence.

4.5.2 Workshop structure

As in case studies #1 and #2, the intention behind the structure of the workshop was to deconstruct, reconstruct and choose. The nature of this case study considerably limited the activities I was able to give participants and, as a result, the influence of Theory U and mindfulness practices was less visible though still guided my method. The very nature of ‘journey’ thinking is deeply rooted in human-centred design, and was the core focus of my approach in this session.

I also continued to challenge the story creation process that encourages a framework favouring parts of a story (either positive or negative) rather than the complete story, a single external storyteller and an extrinsic appeal.

Deconstruct: Design ways to research, deconstruct and understand the fixed narratives that patients had of their ‘doctor visit’ experience and the healthcare service they had access to, of their role in their own health, and their relationship with their health record, through exercises in self-witnessing and observing.

Reconstruct: Participants become conscious of this storytelling process, gaining new insight into their role as a storyteller, of the context in which their story is shared, and of the form the story might take according to the frame the storyteller gives it.

Discern and choose: Participants recognize the choice to shift and shape narrative – choices around what and how they tell the story of their own health, recognizing the

role they play in their own experience of a visit to the doctor, and acknowledging the role that their own narrative plays in shaping new realities.

Just like with the two previous case studies, it was important to continue focusing on encouraging:

- The exploration of both positive and negative aspects of an experienced truth, rather than creating a partial story that perpetuates a partial reality.
- The inclusion of multiple internal storytellers rather than a single external storyteller with their own single agenda.
- To appeal to intrinsic values by connecting with and communicating honest and authentic experiences, rather than appealing to extrinsic values.

Using the same ‘Deconstruct, reconstruct and choose new narrative’ approach, the intention of the workshop structure was for the patients to share their story of their visit to the doctor and to look at how they understand their role in keeping records of their own health. Due to time restraints, there was only one session for the patient workshop. In this case study we also used whatever space was available on the day and were not permitted to book a room or space in advance. Additionally, we were unable to invite participants before the time and needed to invite patients that were in the clinic on the day to participate in the workshop.

These limitations, in a very restricted amount of time, also restricted the range and quantity of activities. A large part of my exploration on ‘how to create the conditions required for authentic narrative to emerge’ had focused on creating a ‘container’, an environment where the storytellers would feel safe to connect with and share their honest stories, and where there would be the space to embody those stories, in order to connect with the language that they may otherwise not have accessed. I was interested to find out whether this would be a significant factor in influencing the narrative journey of the participants.

4.5.3 Workshop outline

Dr. Parak and I introduced ourselves to the patients in the clinic, explained that we were trying to understand their experience of a doctor's visit, and that it was valuable for them to share their stories with us. We asked the patients where they came from and if they were willing to share some of their experiences and thoughts about their visit to the doctor, and explained that it was voluntary. I was not permitted to take pictures of the participants or this location.

I intended to encourage the participants to connect with their experience of visiting the doctor, and to articulate that. By giving language to what they thought and felt at each stage of their journey, I wanted to observe whether they would claim the same sense of agency over their own narrative that participants in the earlier case studies had experienced and, consequently if an 'unlocking' of the fixed narrative might occur.

Workshop 1: Deconstruct existing narratives and reconstruct new narratives

The intention of the workshop was to understand the patients' relationships with their own health record, what they understand the function of the folder to be and how much engagement they have not only with the folder but also with taking responsibility for their own health.

This list of activities below will be explained in more detail during the findings section below.

1. The story of my visit to the doctor.
2. The story of a health record.
3. The story of how I am involved with my folder.
4. Emergent discussion as a prototypic tool.

4.5.4 Workshop material and findings

In this case, the physical location was allocated to us according to what was available and we were occasionally interrupted by people knocking on the door who did not know the room was being used. This prevented us from feeling like it was a contained space. The workshop process was interrupted several times and, consequently, limited the participants from fully immersing themselves in the present moment, and from connecting with the experience of what they were discussing.

The last minute room allocation meant that I, as the facilitator, was as new to the space as the participants were and did not have as much time to prepare it. Additionally, the fact that the participants were not aware of the group before the day brought a sense of 'being caught off guard' and, with that, possibly a stronger sense of resistance than they would have otherwise had.

The room was very small and we were not certain how long we had the participants for, as they were all waiting to be seen by their follow up doctor. The awareness of time restraints and being in a space that was not fully contained restricted patients from being fully present, and therefore made it challenging for the participants to connect with how they felt physically and emotionally when exploring stories of the experiences we were discussing. As a consequence it was considerably more difficult and took longer for personal stories to emerge, for participants to embody the stories they shared, and for them to tell those stories honestly.

1. The story of my visit to the doctor

Each patient was given a pad of Post-Its and a pen. The purpose of this activity was for patients to share the story of their journey from the moment that they feel sick, to the moment they sit and speak with their doctor, and to explore the role of their health record. I asked them to do this by writing or shouting out any words or thoughts that represent this for them. I then mapped the story of their journeys visually on a large board and facilitated a loose discussion with them. A map of their story prompted the patients to connect with the various stages of their journey to the doctor.

Although we had explained that the workshop was purely voluntary, participants said

they were happy to be part of the group. However, as we started the workshop those who attended seemed surprised at being asked to share their personal thoughts and experiences, and were initially quite slow to engage with the activity.

There were three participants in the room but only two contributed. The participant who did not participate did not want to leave but simply did not want to contribute or share her experiences.

I mapped out my own personal journey to the doctor to demonstrate. Then I asked participants to share what they had written on their Post-It notes and tell the story of what happens when they make the decision to see the doctor. I asked them to take time to consider what they are thinking and feeling at each step, and if they are able, to try remember any sense that comes up for them in their body alongside their thoughts and feelings. The patients were free to decide on what to call the steps and include whatever information they want to include in their story of 'a doctors visit'.

Table 4.1: Map of the journey to the doctor

Map of Journey to the Doctor				
Steps:	I recognize I feel sick.	I feel worse.	I recognize I need help.	I take action.
Anne-Marie: Actions taken	I self medicate.	Then the next day I still feel unwell and then I take something else to try something else.	I realise I need to see the doctor, but I don't make the appointment straight away. I wait another three days avoiding it.	Eventually after three days of waiting, I make an appointment to see a doctor.
Anne-Marie: Feelings, thoughts and any other sensations	I feel hopeful that I can control it. I am a bit anxious that I am getting sick and feel a general tightness in my body when I am nervous.	I feel anxious that I will have to spend time going to the doctor and money on medication. Sometimes when I stress about money I become aware of my anxiety in my stomach.	I don't want to spend money on medication and I don't want to spend time and energy at the doctor.	I feel relieved and comforted that I will see the doctor and get better. I usually feel a loosening in my muscles and body when I experience relief.
Sophie: Actions taken	So it also takes me about four days. Then I use all my tablets to make me better, but they don't make me better.	I wait until four days, and then when I don't get better then I just go to day hospital, because I don't have money.	When I come here then they want to know why you coming here? What happened to you? And then I tell them my neck is sore. I'll answer the questions and then they refer me to this one and that one, I never get an answer directly.	When I arrive here the day I am coming I become better and better with the tablets. When I see the doctor he checks me to see what's wrong with my body. The doctor says he is going to help me and he always helps me.
Sophie: Feelings, thoughts and any other sensations	I don't feel alright.		They must make me better.	I am always satisfied.

Ayesha: Actions taken	Sometimes even if I am sick I just don't feel like going anywhere, I just feel like staying at home.	They refer you all the time, go there and find out that, and go there and find out that. I would rather go to a private doctor so that's why I don't come to the day hospital. Only when I'm really, really sick.	They tell you what's wrong and they say we have to refer you so you must go to that doctor you must come back again in a month's time.	He never helps me.
Ayesha: Feelings, thoughts and any other sensations.	I think about all the questions they ask. There are always too many questions, all the questions. And then you get passed from person to person.	You just feel like you get passed on from person to person and you just get referred and referred.	I get very upset, that's why I leave the doctor.	I would rather go to a private doctor. So that's why I don't come to the day hospital. Only when I'm really, really sick.

It was interesting how Sophie, a much older African woman, mentioned that the doctor would 'refer her to this one and that one' and that she 'never gets an answer directly', which is descriptive of a frustrating experience. However, she described her overall experience as one where she is 'always satisfied'. She was seemingly reluctant to be too critical of the service she received at the hospital and was clearly accepting of a process with which she did not fully feel comfortable. Ayesha, on the other hand, a much younger woman described the same referral process but was considerably more hostile, and ultimately summarised it by saying the doctor 'never helps her'.

Ayesha seemed to take advantage of the workshop space to give critical feedback of the system she had access to and the process in place, whereas Sophie seemed reluctant to criticize what she had access to. Sophie seemed happy to endure any discomforts she had about the system but strongly stated that 'they must make her better' towards the end of the conversation. She implied that, by enduring the frustrating routine she is justified in handing the responsibility of her health entirely over to someone else.

As we discussed what their visit to the doctor involved, it was considerably more difficult for Sophie to identify what she 'felt' or 'thought' during her experience of

visiting the doctor, and when she is finally seen by the doctor – her thoughts to describe that stage is that ‘they must make her better’. Despite being a regular patient at the hospital, usually coming for the same problem, Sophie was not able to apply language to how she felt, emotionally, at the moment of seeing the doctor or give any explanation of what she was experiencing in her body other than to say that she ‘does not feel alright’. Initially, I considered that this may be due to a language barrier but it became clear that she was proficient in English. She seemed to simply go through the motions of a process she did not question.

“There are always too many questions, all the questions.”

“You just feel like you get passed on from person to person ...”

“I get very upset, that’s why I leave the doctor.” – Ayesha

Unlike Sophie, Ayesha gave a sense of her experience by describing her thought process in a bit more detail. She expressed the feeling of reluctance to go the doctor because of the number of questions, the sense of frustration at the lengthy process, and a feeling of unhappiness.

Ayesha’s narrative was rooted in an overly negative framework. She did not seem to consider that being able to come to the day hospital when she is ‘very very sick’ may mean she is able to use those services of value, and made sure to focus only on the negative aspect of her story – the public service that she receives is never satisfactory.

“When I arrive here the day I am coming I become better and better with the tablets.” – Sophie

Sophie’s focus on the tablets in feeling better is interesting. It became apparent in the general discussion that, although she is confident in her doctor to ‘make her feel better’, she seemed to focus more on his capacity to give her the right medication than on what is required to make the right diagnosis.

Neither Sophie nor Ayesha, made any real mention of physical sensations that they felt in their bodies and did not make any connection with how they felt emotionally to

how that affects them physically. With more time and more mindfulness exercises Sophie might have been able to connect with the language of her experienced truth in more detail.

2. The story of my health record

After a short break we asked the patients to talk about what a health record means to them. The discussion looked at: How the patients view their record; if they ever open up their own file; if they always understand what is inside; and, when they do not understand, whether they ask about it. I prompted the participants with some questions and, as themes came up, a discussion emerged around those themes.

The patients became increasingly engaged and more vocal in the group. However, they still appeared to be very surprised to be asked these questions. The participant who did not want to actively participate would whisper her opinions or talk to her neighbour.

Table 4.2: Patient interpretation of the meaning of the folder

Patient Interpretation of the Meaning of the Folder		
	Sophie	Ayesha
Purpose: What is a patient folder? What is its role?	I don't know. The health record is to help me make me feel alright.	It has all my information, how sick I am, what's my status, my allergies, my history. It's for the doctors so that they know what's going on. It's for them so they can know what medication to give.
Engagement: Do you ever open the folder? If you don't understand what it says do you ask about it? If you still don't understand	Yes I do ask what is in the folder because I have epilepsy and I have to ask what does epilepsy mean. Because I don't know. It's the first time I ever hear what is that thing I got from my knee. If your back is sore.	It's not just for them. Mostly they use it sometimes there is something confidential in and the next person reads it, not the doctor, I'm talking about the random person. You have to know what's in the file, but the doctor has to tell me

do you ask again?	Then the doctor can say why is the back sore. Yes I do also read the file, sometimes I got problem with the high blood pressure. Then I don't know the meaning of high blood pressure. Then they tell me.	what's going on with me [...] I always understand what is in my file.
Ownership	He is trying to let you understand because you must understand. You can't just take your tablet without understand. I think the doctor must make the people better. If the people are sick, the doctor will make them better. Must make me better because I'm sick.	I want to know what's written there, like for a example a blood test, sometimes I can make out the handwriting sometimes I can't make out.

Similar to the way in which she did not ever fully understand what was wrong with her and did not seem to question it, Sophie initially expressed that she did not understand the purpose of the folder. She referred to it as something that was simply part of the process that makes her feel better. It was apparent that she had never had to question the purpose of the folder before, or engage with it in any real way.

Ayesha described it as something that was exclusively for the doctors, so that they can 'prescribe medication'. This echoed the sentiment that Sophie had expressed earlier. In both their stories of a 'visit to the doctor' they seemed to pay more attention to the role of the doctor as 'prescribing medication' than of evaluating and understanding all of the information required to diagnose an illness, which then informed the medication.

Both Ayesha and Sophie acknowledged that they have read their file occasionally. However, although the folder contained personal information around their own health, they did not consider it to be particularly relevant to them. Their story of their folder was it was 'for the doctor', mostly to inform his prescription of medication and 'make them better'.

Interestingly the tone of both Sophie and Ayesha changed during this conversation. Both became quite defensive in their level of knowledge around their folder, and implied that this was not something they should be asked to consider, or have responsibility for. In the discussions, it appeared that the folder was something that Ayesha felt she was informed enough about but should not have to engage with it too much, as it was for the doctor to do his job.

Sophie, on the other hand seemed to, initially, dismiss the folder entirely until Ayesha spoke about her understanding of this. Afterwards Sophie claimed to ask about what is in the folder and also had a sense of the information inside it but then ultimately, quite fervently, implied that she should not have to engage with it much beyond that. She insisted that it is up to the doctor to ‘make sick people better’ and seemed to want to end any further inquiry.

Sophie, in particular, became more demanding of what she expects from the doctor in this activity compared to in the previous exercise where she had been reluctant to express any discontent. Her more positive narrative framework had started to include some negative sentiments.

3. The story of how I am involved with my folder

Based on the previous discussion, we wanted to continue to deconstruct the narrative around the ‘folder’. We asked them what would encourage them to look at their folders more often, or at least what they would change in the folder in any way. This activity led from the purpose and meaning of a health record into the next discussion around the patients’ participation around their own folder and health record. The participants, again, initially expressed surprise at being asked more questions about their health record folder.

Table 4.3: My relationship with my medical health record folder

My Relationship with My Medical Health Record Folder		
Themes	Sophie	Ayesha
Folder structure	No remarks.	I would like something that is after each other, like all the dates and visits must be set out. So I know exactly when last I was here and what was the problem. So when I come now they take a page out of the bottom and write. So I want it to be more organised. And for the front, there must be an index. Like keywords. If the patient comes for this thing they have to say that was the actual problem they don't have to write the whole description. Like I came for bladder. Bladder infection just write there 'bladder infection' so they don't need to read the whole thing – they can see what I'm here for. Like the stuff is scrambled in the folder. The doctor has to go look back to what is what – Why were you here the first time. Weren't you here already for this? So they know what tablets they give you and if it helped or not. That is actually it.
Handwriting in the folder	No remarks	If you forget and then a family member asks you what's wrong and you can't remember and then you go through the file and you can't read the doctor's handwriting.
Archive	When you go they don't find your file, and then you come again and they find your file. Then you come again then they don't now which file it is, then they find it again. Then you are a sick person. Then they supposed to help you. Then the doctor gets confused but it's not his fault.	The problem is when they can't find your folder, and then the problem comes when all your notes from the previous records are lost and then you back to square one. I have four folders here. I think they must have more people assisting in the record keeping. And it must be in numerical order, they have to be more organised and more people working in that department.

When we asked Ayesha for her opinion on what would encourage her to look at her folder more often, her previous sense of hostility seemed to dissipate and was replaced by an air of enthusiasm. She easily made suggestions. It was interesting to notice that, unlike her previous reference to the doctor as someone who ‘never helps her’, she expressed some insight into the challenges he faces and some degree of empathy.

“Like the stuff is scrambled in the folder. The doctor has to go look back to what is what – Why were you here the first time.” – Ayesha

As Ayesha had a sense of agency over her own story, her mostly negative narrative around her doctor who ‘never helps her’ appeared to make space for other parts of that story, whereby he has to overcome difficulties.

Sophie, on the other hand, showed no interest in making suggestions of what might work better. She disengaged from the conversation when we were imagining an alternative system. However, when Ayesha described the current system, she re-entered. The example below shows how Sophie berates a system she is not willing to imagine changing, and at the same time defends it.

When you go they don’t find your file, and then you come again and they find your file. Then you come again then they don’t now which file it is, then they find it again. Then you are a sick person. Then they supposed to help you. Then the doctor gets confused but it’s not his fault.” – Sophie

It was interesting to notice that the differences between the energy levels of the participants at various stages of the conversation. Ayesha was clearly more engaged and would experience an increased sense of energy when she was asked to propose suggestions for an alternative system, while Sophie’s energy would dip when she was asked to question the system, or imagine an alternative. When she was asked to explain the existing system, Sophie appeared more energetic and engaged.

Although my focus continued to be on whether an emergent shared narrative might emerge without forcing an agenda, there was a focus on understanding the patient

folder better due to the nature of Dr. Parak's research.

4. Emergent discussion

We had not pre-decided the final activity focus and maintained an informal discussion format based on the previous comments that participants had made. Taking the previous exercise further, we asked participants to imagine how the visit to the doctor could be better and how they imagine their medical health record folder might be able to serve 'them' better. This intended to create an opening for the possibility of a shared experience that might contribute to informing something new between the two participants.

Table 4.4: Improving the visit to the doctor

Question One: What do you imagine you would or might be able to if you were given the chance to make the process better for yourselves, and for the folders to serve you better?	
Sophie	Ayesha
Nobody can keep records. You just say doctor my tablets are going Do you know the names of the tablets you take? I can't remember.	We as patients can do nothing cause they have a system, if you come in you must go sit in the line. Take your folder and go sit there. If they go on tea we must wait longer. We can do nothing. We can't change their process. What will also help is if they say, first patients, doctor's patients, appointment patients, tablet patients, maternity patients. But not this scramble. I would just divide everything, and the process of coming to the doctor they must say first patients, doctor's patients, tablets patients, maternity patients. Each department have their own thing. So, if you come for the first time then you go to a different department.
Question Two: Do you ever keep a record of your own health? How do you remember when you feel sick and two weeks have passed. How do you remember what has happened in your bodies so that you can tell the doctor?	

The doctor is the one who went to university. He must tell my what is wrong. He is the one who must make me better.	I just tell them what I can remember, I don't write it down. I don't keep records. I won't do it because I don't ever keep diaries. A fire can break out, file can go missing, and it's also not confidential anymore. Because if it's at home and you come in. and I'm not there maybe. You can see what is going on here and read my whole folder.
Question Three: Does it make a difference that anybody can read your folder here if it's kept at the hospital?	
	They have a policy of confidentiality, they not supposed to talk out.
Question Four: If you had a copy, do you think it would be helpful?	
No it wouldn't because my family know what is wrong with me in an emergency. I don't want it.	Yes like say if you get sick on the road, then they know what's wrong with you.

Ayesha's sense of agency in the previous activity seemed to disappear as soon as she was going to be held accountable for the suggestions she had made. Both Ayesha and Sophie reverted back to a fixed narrative of the existing system. It was interesting how, throughout the duration of the workshop, both Sophie and Ayesha made no connection between the doctor's ability to diagnose them with their own experience of their own health, or with any need for them to participate in informing him of their medical 'story'.

Sophie maintained a complete 'hands-off' approach to her own health, and reiterated that she simply needed to collect tablets. When we asked her about the names of her tablets she could not remember, which suggested, once again, how almost completely absent she is from the conversation around her own health. Sophie seemed to feel as if she needed to defend her failure to remember what medication she is on by reiterating the doctor's duty to 'tell her what is wrong', without any participation from her.

When the participants were asked if they would want their own copy of the file, Ayesha appeared not to want to deny any ownership but only if absolutely necessary, whereas Sophie continued to insist that she would not want any ownership over the folder.

“Yes like say if you get sick on the road, then they know what’s wrong with you.” – Ayesha

“No it wouldn’t because my family know what is wrong with me in an emergency. I don’t want it.” – Sophie

Throughout the workshop both participants would refer to the people within that system as ‘they’ or ‘the doctor’, in a manner that depicted a faceless experience. They showed no real sense of who the drivers were, and therefore expressed a strong sense that it was not something that could be changed.

Their story of their ‘visit to the doctor’, or their ‘relationship with their medical health record’ was one in which they had no role. They were interacting with a system with which they were not satisfied, and yet had no real desire to change if it meant that they would need to carry any sense of accountability. In this case study the overriding narrative of an ‘inadequate service for people, who had no other choice but to accept it’ remained fixed.

4.5.5 Reflections

In other case studies there was a clear sense that the participants had entered the workshop space with an assumed narrative of the context they were in. Gradually, a new, shared narrative emerged. This happened as the participants engaged in the storytelling activities that allowed them to connect with, and articulate, their own personal narratives verbally, visually and physically. In both the first and second case study this appeared to move towards a sense of agency over the narrative they had previously adopted, and facilitated a sense of ‘unlocking’ these fixed narratives.

The third case study at Vanguard Community Health Centre was different to the previous case studies. Similar to the others, the participants in case study #3 also entered the space with an adopted ‘fixed narrative’ of the context they were in, and seemed to perpetuate the story of the public healthcare service I had come across, prior to the workshop. Despite one of the participants intermittently demonstrating a sense of agency over her story identification and creation experience, a sense of

‘unlocking’ that had taken place in the previous case studies did not happen, and a ‘new, shared narrative’ did not emerge.

This clearly demonstrated how important it is to be able to create the necessary conditions for new narrative to emerge. This includes mindfulness and body-based activities, as well as the use of visual and other storytelling devices with participants, so that ‘fixed narrative’ can potentially be dismantled. The patients appeared to be disconnected from their experience of their own physical bodies, and in not being able to connect with physical sensation, were seemingly not able to connect with language as easily as other participants in previous case studies.

Dr. Yusuf Parak expressed that there was value in hearing the patient’s stories to inform his own research:

“Value was certainly created in that I learned by observation skills of eliciting patient experiences in a manner that set patients at ease. We had a group session rather than individual interviews. The group format allowed participants to become comfortable in the space and bounce ideas off one another more than I had experienced with one on one interviews. Hearing the patients’ stories of the experiences allowed for deeper understanding of the participants opinions.” – Dr. Yusuf Parak

The limitations around being able to create the same ‘contained’ conditions possible in the previous case studies appeared to affect the narratives quite significantly. The influence of certain factors, summarised below, is particularly evident by the nature of their absence.

Mindfulness and body-based activities were not included in the workshop, which contributed to an inability to create the capacity for participants to authentically connect with their ‘experienced truth’ and personal story. The absence of body-based activities, which had in previous case studies connected the participants’ embodied experiences with the language to describe them, appeared to make it more difficult for the participants to connect to their own personal narrative. The absence of mindfulness in the workshop space limited the sense of the participants being fully present and, therefore, their level of listening. This was made even more challenging

by constant disruptions of people knocking on the door or entering the room, disallowing the participants from being able to stay present, or connect with their authentic narratives. Although the sense of being ‘listened to’ by facilitators did encourage the participants to engage, their level of listening to one another remained fairly intermittent. This, in turn, maintained a fairly limited capacity to share deeply authentic experiences and prevented a sense of agency over their own stories from being realised.

We did not implement the use of varied **media** (like images, role-play, voice recordings) in the workshop. This, in addition to the absence of mindfulness practices, limited participants from connecting with their own stories, as well as with how to articulate their own stories.

The common narrative amongst participants was that the day hospital processes are ‘fixed’ and that even if they are dissatisfied with the service they receive, it is beyond their control. Additionally, their common narratives around their health was that: The doctor is solely responsible for recording the patient’s health; the responsibility over their health record lies with the medical practitioners alone; they as patients are passive recipients of care; and their role in their own health involves simply getting to the day hospital and ‘enduring’ the processes, leaving the medical practitioners to take care of the rest.

What was most significant about this case study was that a sense of shifting or ‘unlocking a fixed narrative’ in order for a ‘new narrative to emerge’ is strongly linked to creating the conditions for participants to experience a strong sense of agency over their own narrative. This does not seem to take place as easily if the participants have not physically, visually and verbally been able to embody and connect with their own story identification and creation process.

Regardless of the limitations, I tried to maintain a focus on facilitating a story creation process and narrative framework that included multiple internal voices, both positive and negative aspects of an experienced truth, and the importance of intrinsic values. Similar to the previous case study, I entered the workshop with the intention of exploring how emergent narrative can be a prototypic tool to inform innovation, which in this case would be to inform Dr. Parak’s research around a medical record alternative.

Interestingly, by the very nature of the participants maintaining a ‘fixed narrative’ they gave Dr. Parak insight into the patients’ current narrative, and strong indicators of what patients in that particular context might, or might not, be willing to adopt. Consequently, this eliminated several options Dr. Parak had considered exploring and streamlined the focus of his research. For me, the case study demonstrated the potential value of an alternative storytelling and story creation process as a prototypic tool to inform innovation. By the very nature of it being a context where narratives are deeply engrained and challenging to dismantle, it became clear to Dr. Parak that an entirely new innovation would be premature, and unsuccessful. This ‘story’ influenced the next phase of his research.

At this point in the research, the study had explored the context of the non-profit, the private and public sector. In each context, the workshop participants clearly reiterated the overriding narrative of their context that I had experienced before the workshops. In two out of the three case studies, through a series of activities a new, shared narrative emerged, which appeared to ‘unlock’ what I refer to as the ‘fixed narrative.’ In all of the above workshops, story creation and storytelling were tools to inform innovation, through what I have come to refer to as ‘the materialization of story’.

For the final case study, I wanted to explore what might emerge outside of the context of any organisation or institution environment, and look at what narrative exists within an independent group of people who have something in common. By looking at a group of participants, who were all young women within the same age group from the same geographical place, I was interested to understand whether they too would adopt an already existing narrative, which reflects and possibly perpetuates their existing realities. For the final case study I invited a group of young women from Nyanga to attend two workshops.

4.6 Case Study 4 – Independent Group of Young Women in Nyanga

The fourth case study was held with a group of young women, between 15 and 20 years old, whom had all grown up and lived in Nyanga, Cape Town. Not all of the participants knew one another. I was interested in what the young women would connect with, and whether there might be any fixed narratives around what it means

to be ‘women in Africa’, or perhaps ‘black women in South Africa’, or even ‘black South African women from Nyanga’, for example, that they would be inclined to adopt. I co-facilitated this workshop once again with movement practitioner, Hannah Loewenthal, who co-facilitated the earlier Raymond Ackerman Academy workshop.

4.6.1 Introduction

The dominant story of Nyanga is that of one of the poorest and most dangerous black township areas in Cape Town. Issues like unemployment and HIV/AIDS are rife, and the images presented of the area are predominantly those of hardship, danger and poverty. Nyanga has repeatedly been reported as one of the ‘murder capitals of South Africa’, and has appeared in the media for stories of gang violence and crime (ENCA, 2013; News 24, 2012).

Due to time constraints and the difficulty in contacting all the participants to coordinate availabilities, it was only possibly to have one, half-day workshop session with the group.

4.6.2 Workshop outline

As in the previous case studies, the foundation of the workshops continued to draw on the influences of three core ways of thinking: Theory U, mindfulness practices, and human-centred design principles. It also maintained the same overriding intention to: Deconstruct existing narratives, reconstruct and choose new narratives, and once again aimed to challenge a story creation process that encourages frameworks consisting only of partial truths, constructed by a single external storyteller voice, and appealing to extrinsic values.

Below, I will outline the workshop inquiry, describing the activities and the experiences of the participants. My focus, as the researcher, continued to explore how to create the conditions necessary for an authentic and inclusive narrative to emerge.

Workshop 1– Deconstruct existing narrative, reconstruct new narrative

The workshop was developed loosely around simply introducing yourself – the ‘story of self’ and looking at:

- What we say when we are asked to tell our ‘own’ personal stories or present ourselves to another or a group.
- How we frame ourselves within those stories.
- How we shape these stories according to who the ‘listener’ is: a potential client, a friend or a mentor.

The workshop intended to explore the designing of ways to research, deconstruct, and understand fixed personal narratives that individuals from a similar social, economic background might have of themselves, and what role that might play in shaping their current realities.

To ensure that I was not imposing a narrative agenda onto the group or influencing what stories might emerge, the participants were given very little direction. They were told to keep the stories they share:

- Personal
- In the present tense
- Authentic and honest
- Simple (not to over-think)

The workshop activities below will be explained in more detail during the workshop findings section.

- Introduction circle
- Mindfulness – Walking meditation
- Listen – Share your partner’s story and hear your story told
- Embody the feeling of the future you and choose words to describe the future you
- Writing circle – Words that might stop the future you from emerging.
- Sharing and emergent group discussion.

4.6.3 Material and findings

The below section runs through each of the workshop activities outlined above, demonstrates how the participants engaged with these activities, and explains observations and findings.

1. Introduction circle

We sat in a circle and introduced ourselves, and stated where we just arrived from and how we are feeling about our day in one word or phrase. This was a gentle way of giving everyone a sense of one another and what they were bringing to the space. It appeared to ignite empathy and compassion amongst the participants, who did not all know each other but seemed recognize something familiar in one another by sharing a symbol of their day. Words that arose during introductions included: ‘running late’, ‘busy’, ‘frustrated with waiting for the taxi’, ‘just fine’ and ‘happy’.

2. Mindfulness – Walking meditation

A walking meditation created a bit of quiet and brought focus into the room, as well as focus and presence on where we were in our day. It did not however, bring quiet or stillness because of the nature of our space.

It is important to mention that the session took place at the back of a small town hall

in Nyanga, behind a men's gym. To access the contained space the girls had to walk through an area where a group of men were working out. The loudness of the music on the other side of the wall was out of our control. This was significant, as I realised that often quiet and stillness is not possible. The challenge is in creating a safe space where authentic story creation and sharing can emerge, in spite of the reality of the physical space and the context. The participants were able to find some sense of comfort in the space quite quickly and none appeared to be perturbed by what was happening around them. The participants seemed to be familiar enough with the environment to not get distracted by music, stares from gym members, or the banging sounds of heavy weights in the background. This suggested to me that what is important is for the 'workshop container' to be representative of what is familiar for the participants, and that a feeling of ownership of the space, directly, contributes to their sense of ease and participation.

3. Tell your story – Introductions

I asked each girl to partner with someone, preferably who she did not know, and to introduce the story of whom she is in one minute. After a few minutes the participants were asked to turn in towards the circle and introduce their partners, sharing what they had heard with the group. This was to experience what we say, what we hear, what we miss, and what we read through physical language. After telling the stories some participants volunteered to give feedback on how they felt hearing their story presented to the group. The group talked about how it feels for their story to be repeated as they told it, or alternatively how it made them feel when it was told differently to how they had originally told it.

The girls seemed to engage with one another and with us, as facilitators, quite quickly and easily. There seemed to be a sense of community between them, even though they had not all met before. The anonymous volunteers spoke honestly about their experiences without needing encouragement.

"I felt incomplete. When I spoke to her and I expressed myself and who I was, I was very explicit. I felt like I was undressing myself. I was trying to make her understand, so when she said it, it was like she didn't understand where I was

coming from it was like she was just saying it because she had to say something.”

The first participant talked about how her partner had shared an incomplete truth. She felt as if she had trusted her by making herself vulnerable and had experienced a sense of ‘undressing’. She seemed to have ‘handed something over’ to her partner, and by repeating only part of her story, her partner made her feel ‘incomplete’. By dismissing parts of her story, she felt as if parts of who she was had also been dismissed.

“I am disappointed because I asked her if she remembered what I said about myself, and I asked her if I should repeat myself and she said no it’s cool, and me and her and I are nothing different from each other so I that’s why I could not understand why she couldn’t remember what I told her.”

The second person to express dissatisfaction pointed to how upsetting it was for her that her listener did not retain information that was familiar to her own story. Similar to case study #1, where participants seemed to remember what they identified with, this participant appeared to recognize that it is easier to remember something that you can easily identify with. She had discovered that her listener shared similar stories to her and yet did not remember what she had shared. She found this to be particularly upsetting – in not listening deeply enough to retain what she had shared, her partner had not repeated her story accurately and left her feeling disrespected and dismissed.

Both of the participants who fed back a positive experience appeared to feel valued and happy simply by having been truly listened to. During the discussion, their partners had repeated simply what they had heard and had not added or embellished any details. By simply listening and retaining what they had said the participants felt as if their story, and in turn they themselves, had been represented and treated well.

“I felt happy because she told everything I told her and listened to what I told her. She can introduce me wherever I may be, or may not be.”

“Most of the time I like people to know me as I am and she spoke about me like she really knew me.”

4. Embody the feeling of the future you and choose words to describe.

I asked participants to create a shape that describes how they would feel as their future selves, as they imagine their best selves to be, facing outside of the circle. Taking a few moments to fully embody these, they were then asked to turn inwards towards the centre of the circle and take their shape towards the group and describe their experienced shapes using any words that come to mind.

The girls had a lot of energy during this exercise. They became very excited and present in their physical bodies as they formed their shapes. Most of the shapes were big and had grand gestures. As they turned to present themselves to the group, some girls jumped as they took their shape by landing, one participant bowed after taking her shape, another threw her arms up into the air and grounded her feet into the floor standing with her legs far apart. The gestures were firm and exaggerated showing their willingness to become the shape, stay the shape, ground themselves in whatever the shapes meant for them. The way they ‘performed’ their shapes to one another demonstrated a sense of pride, of confidence in how these shapes would be received and a sense of certainty about what they represented. The heightened energy in the room during this exercise seem to suggest a sense of excitement around what they might ‘become’, about the potential that lies in the ‘future’.

Words to describe their shapes included:

‘Successful matured’, ‘overcoming’, ‘teacher’, ‘successful’, ‘stage performer’, ‘able to face challenges as an adult’, ‘doctor helping people and having my own surgery’, and ‘travelling’.

5. Writing circle – Words that might stop you from being your future you

The girls were invited to sit down in a circle and, using Post-Its, write down words that would prevent them from being their imagined future selves. We had suggested that the group break off into pairs for the exercise but gradually they came back together as one as they heard one another’s conversations. The girls shared their individual words with one another, and then talked about the stories behind the words.

The participants volunteered their words ad-hoc and, after sharing their own personal thoughts, they started to agree on themes.

“Our school, money, parents, spouses, thoughts, rules and disappointments.”

It was interesting to notice that, although the group of young women did not share a close history, a strong sense of group cohesion seemed to form very quickly. Themes that emerged included ‘a lack of support’ and ‘a lack of freedom’ around what they wanted to do, and what their parents wanted to them to do.

One experience that all of the participants shared, was that they appeared to see their parents as an element that would stop them from becoming their future selves rather than help them to become these.

“Parents often choose our careers. My parents are not supportive of me doing art. They want me to be a doctor or social worker and they do not support me. They say I should go to college rather than studying art.” – Noluthando

“The main point is we need support from our family from any direction and confidence. To achieve anything you have to have the confidence. I wish my family would believe what I want to be. If I got their support then what else would I want? Support means to believe in what you want to be. My parents want me to do public relations and do HR and be in an office and I don't want that.” – Anita

Both of the above participants gave examples of how their parents have encouraged them to pursue careers that do not interest them. In our informal discussions we learnt that Noluthando’s parents are insisting that she apply for social work. Similarly, Anita’s parents would like her to have an office job in HR. When we asked her what she knows about HR, she did not know and said that her parents had ‘she will be in an office.’ – their idea of her success.

Another noticeable theme is that unemployed relatives were also seemingly unsupportive. The girls agreed that family members who work are more helpful and positive about their success than those who don't. When we asked them to explain this

in more detail Siziphiwe gave the example of her cousin.

“My cousin. She always tells me that I am not going to succeed and she is not supportive to me. Even if I fail she does not encourage me. She talks bad things about that makes me to give up and not have hope. She doesn't work.” – Siziphiwe

Another participant anonymously shared a personal story of how she believes family can ‘stand in the way of their futures’.

“My father died in 2010 and I got money but my aunt take that money so now I don't know where to start. My mother does not have enough money to take me to the college. I applied to the university but they did not accept me. I was thinking to find job and drop school.”

The energy had clearly shifted from when they were excitedly embodying the shapes of their future selves, to the story of how they experienced their current reality. After the previous activity where they imagined their future selves, they sat up straight in their chairs, some towards the edge. In contrast, most were now slouched against the backs of their chairs; others were holding their faces in their hands as they listened to others speak. As they repeated the sentiments that their families had shared with them, their bodies seemed to depict a sense of ‘resignation’.

We asked why they had included ‘spouses’ in their list of themes, and if a boyfriend might be positive and supportive to have around. Interestingly all the girls seemed to agree that relationships are an obstacle.

“Spouses are depressing. Sometimes you feel suicidal because of them. They make you feel depressed. Because of jealousy.” – Wendy

It was interesting that Wendy used the word ‘spouse’ in her response. I asked her why she said ‘spouse’ and not ‘boyfriend’ if they are not married, and if they thought ‘marriage’ was an obstacle. She replied that she sees them as the same thing and that often girls get pregnant and have to stay home and then ‘you are like a wife anyway’.

The girls all seemed to imply that their perception of a partner would be to stand in the way of their goals. Wendy, who had a boyfriend, focused on ‘jealousy’ as the dominant experience of a relationship. The girls did not seem to demonstrate any experience of relationships where they are supported, or encouraged. Their parents, families and partners would ‘restrict their choices’ and ‘compromise’ their future selves from becoming a reality.

It became increasingly clear that the overall narrative between the young women was that even the positive things they had access to were more likely to impede rather than help them to become the people they dreamt of becoming.

“School is supposed to help us but it is not really helpful. You can pass until Grade 12 but when you write the national paper and then you fail anyway”. – Anita

As they shared the story of the challenges they faced, the participants started to embody the story they told, becoming visibly less present in their bodies, and less engaged with the ‘story of their future self’. The girls had gone from sharing a very positive, inspired and ‘performance-like’ story of who they imagine themselves to be, to a very negative story of what would stop them from being what they had imagined.

6. Sharing and emergent group discussion.

Towards the end of the discussion one common theme emerged and they started to engage in a prototypic discussion. Due to time restraints, we were not able to take this conversation further.

“Our thoughts discourage us. We think a lot and then our thoughts just bring us down.” – Noluthando

Noluthando directed the conversation away from the external obstacles that stand in their way, and inwards towards themselves. This led to the opening of an emergent discussion around how they perpetuate the stories they are told by others by allowing themselves to get discouraged and how they could prevent this. Silindokuhle talked

about how she needed to start keeping her interview appointments, which she often did not attend.

“What would stop me is sticking to one thing. Say I want to do something but then I let obstacles overcome me. I allow peoples views to take over my decisions.” – Silindokuhle

A discussion emerged and the girls started to make suggestions to one another about how they could focus on what they wanted to and not allow themselves to get discouraged, which was cut short due to our time restriction. Their shared narrative was that ‘they could not rely on family, parents or spouses to support and encourage them’. As the group appeared to recognize their own potential agency over their own story, they made space for a positive narrative to emerge once again. They began sharing ideas of how to tackle their issue with feeling unsupported.

“As soon as they began to recognize very obvious blocks between present situations and future dreams they were able to recognize their own power in the process and start identifying solutions to those blocks.” – Hannah Loewenthal

The participants shifted from becoming discouraged and powerless, within a social and family dynamic that they could not influence, to becoming more active participants in their own choices. As soon as they engaged in discussing something from a position of control, they started to take more responsibility for becoming discouraged.

4.6.4 Reflections

Case study #4 was unique in that it was outside of an organisation or institution. However, it was interesting to learn that, even outside of structure, there are ‘fixed stories’ that influence and perpetuate behaviour and, potentially, reality. The group of young women shared examples of ‘fixed narratives’ that they experienced from their families, parents and community. These ‘fixed stories’ told them that their work

prospects are ‘limited’, that the most important thing in deciding what work to do was to look at what is ‘possible’, and that anything beyond the commonly known career choices like social work and human resources (HR) was not ‘realistic’.

“We all have perceived personal and group stories. Working with a process of this nature allows for much more fluidity to support individuals and groups towards bridging ‘abstract’ concepts or ‘big dreams’ with solutions that can be drawn from existing resources. It could create a shift from ‘imagined change’ to ‘tangible change’.” – Hannah Loewenthal

Although, the participants did not initially appear to adopt these narratives in the same way as participants other case studies, we did discover that in their lives they seemed to perpetuate these stories through their own actions. By repeating the stories they were constantly being told by others to themselves, they were perpetuating these and shaping their own realities. Hannah talks about her observation of the potential for ‘imagined change’ to become ‘tangible change’, by being able to draw on ‘existing resources’. The sense of ‘agency’ that tends to appear amongst the participants, which then leads to the emergence of new narrative, is a key component that, combined with understanding what is ‘real’ in the present moment, provides participants with a new way of perceiving and shaping their own personal narrative.

Some of the below factors were identified in earlier case studies and appeared to be significant in the way the young women identified with their own experiences, the content of their stories, and the common narratives that existed within the group.

Similar to all three of the previous case studies, the inclusion of **mindfulness and body-based activities** considerably influenced the level of engagement that participants had with their own story identification and creation processes. In contrast to the previous case study, where there had been no mindfulness activities, the process of connecting to their own stories appeared to be strongly linked to the capacity to stay ‘present’. Additionally, their capacity to connect to their own authentic experiences, and then apply language to that truth, was considerably more than in the previous case study. I believe that this was as a result of them being able to ‘embody’ their story.

Incorporating more than one **medium** – in this case, the body, writing and verbally sharing – appears to allow participants to connect with language in different ways. Again, it was noticeable that the more they felt in control of their own ability to express the story they recognized in themselves, the more honest and engaged participants became in shaping their own personal narrative.

The sense of feeling ‘listened to’ encouraged the participants to share their stories and influenced the level of engagement. **Listening**, not only to one another but also to ‘one’s self’, appeared to directly influence the participants connecting with a sense of agency over their own narrative, and then the emergence of a new, shared narrative.

Although the young women attended different schools or worked in different places, there were very clear common narratives amongst them: they felt unsupported by their families, partners and the system (like school), and found it difficult to make the choices that they really wanted. What the young women shared was the story they had been told by their community – that possibilities were limited. It emerged, in this case study, that even beyond the context of institutions and organisations, our realities appear to be shaped by the perpetuation of repeated or ‘fixed stories’.

Even though we were not able to explore it in great detail, this case study also suggested that, by creating the conditions for new, shared narratives to emerge, a form of co-creation appears to be the natural next step. The alternative narrative framework, once again, potentially serves as a ‘prototypic tool’.

4.7 Conclusion to Findings

The intention of the case study research approach was to better understand the connection between our existing narrative patterns and how these shape our existing reality by challenging three elements that appear to be present in existing narratives or story creation frameworks. Below is a reminder of these three:

Table 4.5: The three elements

Existing narrative patterns:	The research approach would encourage:
Appear within either a negative or a positive framework, therefore reflecting only a ‘partial story’ and perpetuating a partial reality.	The exploration of both the positive and negative aspects of an experienced truth, giving way to more authentic and balanced stories.
Told by an external singular storyteller with an agenda.	Multiple storytellers from within the organisation/context to shape the narrative.
Appeal to the extrinsic values.	To appeal to intrinsic values by connecting with and communicating honest and authentic experiences that can be related to on an intrinsic level.

Establishing the research workshop environment included ensuring that I, as the researcher, did not enter the space with a set of assumptions or narrative agenda and that the story content emerged from within the group of participants in the various workshops. The starting point within each case study context was accessing the ‘personal story’, which led us to identify what needed to be transformed. The ‘workshop container’ became a vehicle for transformation.

Below is a summary of the existing narratives that were identified in each case study at the beginning, and any new narratives that emerged during the workshop process.

Table 4.6: Existing and new narratives

Case study	Common narratives that appeared to exist within the context.	New narrative that emerged during the workshop process.
#1 RAA	The participants were ‘bettering’ themselves by being at RAA, and aspiring to help others through their work.	A sense of fear of making the transition from being a student to an entrepreneur, and the need for practical tools, when making this transition.
#2 AAG	Feeling disconnected from the outside world when working in the contact	An assertion of the need to be recognized as experts in their field, to

	centre, a sense of disconnectedness from the company's bigger picture and a sense of feeling stuck or drowned out.	be part of a bigger plan and to actively connect to both the outside world and the rest of the company.
#3 Vanguard Community Health Centre	The healthcare services and systems are fixed and beyond their control. The doctor is solely responsible for recording the patient's health, the responsibility over their health record lies with the medical practitioners alone and patients' own role in their health involves simply getting to the day hospital and going through the process.	A new narrative did not fully emerge.
#4 Nyanga	Participants cannot rely on family, parents or spouses to support and encourage them. It was difficult for them to make their own choices and even systems that were meant to help them, like schools, were unsupportive.	Starting to realise their own capacity to overcome certain challenges through sharing ideas of how to tackle the issue of feeling unsupported.

Every case study took place in a different physical environment and context. However, during each workshop, each of which used the same overall approach, a series of common factors appeared to play a consistently significant role in creating conditions that influenced participants to identify and deconstruct 'fixed narratives', and move towards reconstructing a 'new, shared narrative'. This appeared when the participants were able to gain a sense of 'agency' over their own narrative, or '*narrative agency*'.

4.7.1 Common factors that contributed towards deconstructing 'fixed narratives'

It is important to highlight consistent factors that were observed for creating conditions for a new, shared narrative to emerge, are simply those that have appeared within the limits of this study. Therefore the necessary conditions are limited to these factors alone.

The factors that have been identified in the earlier sections as being significant in

order to give rise to a sense of narrative agency include:

- Mindfulness and body-based practices, so that connecting to experienced truths can take place.
- The use of different media to identify and create their stories increased participants' capacity to connect with their sense of control over shaping their own narrative.
- The level of listening affected the quality of the story and the storyteller's own level of engagement.

The above factors also appeared to contribute to a common 'process' or set of experiences, creating a 'narrative agency process framework'.

4.7.2 Narrative agency process framework

Across three out of the four case study contexts there was a sense of the below process taking place for the workshop participants, which navigated them towards the 'unlocking of fixed narratives' and towards the emergence of 'new, shared', narratives.

1. Ground: Fully enter the narrative workshop space.

As the participants became more aware of both the physical and narrative context they were in, the more present and focused they would become. This is what I have referred to as 'grounding'.

Clear examples of this: At #1 RAA this was visible after the meditation in the second workshop; at #2 AAG when the participants embodied the experience of being a contact centre agent; and in #4 Nyanga after a walking meditation. However, this did not appear to take place in #3 Vanguard Community Health Centre.

2. Activate: Witness their authentic personal story.

Participants began to witness themselves and their own personal narrative within the context of the present moment. In doing so they appeared to recognize that their story, as well as the act of sharing it, is relevant. Participants often referred initially to existing or ‘fixed stories’ when they identified with their ‘personal story’. However, real activation happened once they deconstructed existing stories, and moved beyond these, towards identifying their own experienced ‘truth’.

In case study #1 this happened as students embodied how they felt. At RAA it appeared when participants visually mapped out their experience using a piece of string. In the third case study, patients did appear to activate as they engaged with the story of their visit to the doctor. Finally, in the fourth case study the participants activated when they heard their stories told by someone else.

3. Connect: Articulating and sharing with a group, in an honest way.

Through deep listening and being fully present participants are able to hear, sense and relate to the stories and experiences around them. This contributes to them being able to connect with their own personal narrative, which emerges in the context of what is being discussed. Using a variety of ways to apply language to their story supports this process (visual, physical, word activities).

A clear example of this happening was in AAG #2 when the participants created portraits of the ‘perceived story of you versus the experienced story of you’. At RAA #1 and #4 in Nyanga, it was more of a gradual process. In the third case study, there was a sense of this starting to happen as they shared the story of their doctor’s visit.

4. Consolidate: They begin to embody the emergent personal narrative.

Participants move beyond witnessing their story and actually step into their emergent personal narrative, becoming fully aware of their own role in their own story creation process.

In #1 RAA this took place over the course of the three movement activities; in #2

AAG this took place during the emotive role-play activity; and in #4 Nyanga, as the participants connected language to the physical sensation of their story of the future. However, participants in #3 did not appear to fully recognize their role in their own story creation process and therefore did not appear to ‘consolidate’.

The word ‘consolidate’ describes the way in which the participants’ combined physical, emotional and cognitive experience of themselves, and the story they were sitting with, appeared to strengthen. Their own lived experience of the story they were sitting with was clear and, as their own self-awareness became evident, their capacity as the storyteller was reinforced, leading to a sense of ‘agency’.

5. Agency: A sense of agency emerges within participants.

As participants fully sensed how it feels to embody the narrative they were sitting with, they would take ownership of their story within the context of where they were and the people they were with. Participants start to authentically relate to one another, and any attachment to previously ‘fixed stories’ are released.

The participants move from witnessing their own story or narrative towards emotionally and physically experiencing it. Consequently, they moved from fully embodying this lived experience to gaining a sense of being able to choose, shape and share their own narratives or to have *narrative agency*.

In #1 a sense of narrative agency appeared after the embodiment activities in the second workshop, in #2 the emotive role-play appeared to bring on the sense of narrative agency, and in #4 during the sharing and emergent discussion towards the end of the workshops the participants appeared to recognize their own potential narrative agency. This did not happen in #3.

6. Integrate: New *shared* narrative emerges among the group surfacing deep truths.

The individuals appear to let go of their own personal narratives and started to align parts of their own stories with those of the others, recognizing commonalities and shared patterns. There was a clear sense of ‘connectedness’ between participants

emerge at the stage. The space is created for deep truths to surface, identifying ‘needs’ that are relevant to, and inclusive of everyone.

This occurred in #1 and #4 as participants connected with others and applied language to their embodied experience. In #2 it appeared to happen after emotive role-play with call centre script during their emergent discussion. In #3, towards the end of Activity 3: ‘The story of how I am involved with my folder’, participants started to engage with one another’s stories but did not integrate.

7. Co-Create: The group demonstrates a desire to create new narrative to inform new things.

Free of ‘fixed stories’ and the restrictions of existing systems the participants begin to develop a new, shared narrative. As the new narrative emerges there was a strong sense from the groups of wanting to do something with it.

Co-creation began to happen towards the end of the workshops in three out of the four case study contexts, with the exception of the day hospital #3. This is when participants began to bring their authentic experiences together to reconstruct a new narrative that they could all relate to, articulating a shared need or interest.

The level or quality of the experience at each stage would determine the experience of the other stages. What this means is that without fully experiencing one stage, it was difficult to fully experience the other, if at all, in some cases. Even if there are moments that participants appear to experience aspects of the above ‘process’, it is unlikely that they would be able to truly deconstruct fixed narratives without being grounded and present in their process. It is important to note that the list above did not always happen in the same order, in the same places for all participants, or at a single moment, within the workshop.

Participants gaining a sense of ‘narrative agency’ appeared to be pivotal in setting the conditions for potential social innovation. The research suggested that as participants ‘co-created’ new narrative with agency, they moved towards potentially informing the creation of something new, which is referred to as the ‘materialization of story’.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The core finding in this research is that a ‘fixed narrative’ is one without ‘agency’. As the existing literature has shown, our understanding of reality is deeply entrenched within a ‘narrative context’ that is linked to our interpretation of historical, cultural and associated experiences (Clair, et al., 2014). These narratives become so entrenched in our way of being that they are neither noticed nor interrogated (Clair, et al., 2014; Fisher, 1985). This indicates that we have no real sense of ‘agency’ over the way we shape and share stories, reinforcing the same narratives over and over again. Scholars have identified that not enough attention is paid to the interaction between our continuously changing reality and our choice making (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998), and this study has identified that not enough attention is paid to the interaction between connecting with our own continuously changing ‘lived experience’ and our capacity to articulate it – to identify, shape and share our own stories. The research begins to explore the idea of *narrative agency*.

5.1 The Significance of ‘Narrative Agency’ and its Role in Informing Social Innovation

The research has drawn from literature that provides some insight on what we understand about ‘agency’ and what we understand about ‘narrative’. Although the literature I have come across has related the way we understand our world to the way we interpret and make sense of the stories and narratives we are exposed to (Deans, et al., 2015; Hasselberger, 2012; Saleebey, 1994), it does not refer to our sense of agency in relation to our narrative, or to ‘narrative agency’ as such.

This study also reiterates Max-Neef's (2009) belief that, while we are cognisant of our global and desperate need for real innovation to take place, our failure to create ‘a new language’ compromises our capacity for true innovation. If we are to consider the prototyping phase that takes place in emerging practices like Theory U, or the ‘human-centred’ solutions that are informed in HCD, there is space for further exploration into understanding how to create the necessary conditions to ‘surface deep truths’, and to reconstruct new narrative that is ‘emergent’, ‘inclusive’, and ‘intrinsic’. Neglecting to acknowledge the power that our engrained ‘fixed narratives’ have over

our capacity to imagine, articulate and inform new ways of being, creates fundamental constraints for real transformation to take place.

Research gathering that takes place during the beginning stages of a project in Theory U, or even human-centred design practices, often happens through interviews and observation of others. Practitioners of both these disciplines understand this process of understanding to be rooted in ‘deep listening’, in being ‘empathetic’ towards the people who share their stories with them, and to be ‘mindful’, as they immerse themselves into the various contexts – making sure to see and experience things without judgement or bias (Bash, 2015; Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013; Yamazaki, 2014). However, this study suggests that there is a need for a deeper understanding of how to gather insights in these practices, whereby more attention is paid to the ‘unlocking of fixed stories’, in order to truly be able to create the space for honest needs and desires to be communicated.

The failures of such practices have often been rooted in the absence of diverse and authentic voices being represented, due to the loudest voices in the room inevitably being heard the most, perpetuating the stories that are most often heard and not always considered or questioned deeply enough (Vines, Clarke, Wright, McCarthy & Olivier, 2013). Additionally, these interventions or processes have been criticised for being rooted in Western cultural and language frameworks, fundamentally different to the developing world contexts in which they are often applied (Braa, 1995; Winschiers, 2006) and although there is a focus on insights gathered from those who might be directly affected by the design, there is seemingly not enough attention given to the difficulty that people have in sharing honestly with an interviewer. Even more significant than that is the fact that people do not always know what they want or need (Van Kleef, van Trijp & Luning, 2005). Understanding how to connect with our own needs is critical for the success of innovation.

The literature criticizes practitioners for failing to truly let go of their own bias, to level the hierarchy between ‘designer’ and ‘user’, to empathise with the needs of those they are working with, or understand and relate to the context they are in, authentically (Braa, 1995; Dalsgaard, 2010; Oyugi, Nocera, Oyugi, & Dunkley, 2008; Van Kleef, van Trijp, & Luning, 2005; Vines, et al., 2013). However, I have not come across any reference to the exploration or need for ‘narrative agency’ among

participants, and for the time it takes to dismantle or release adopted or ‘fixed narratives’ that may simply be what participants have come to assume as their own, without ‘agency’.

Scharmer recognizes that the danger of having the same types of conversations limits our capacity for change (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013), and I believe there is value in paying more attention to what it is that holds our current language and to what scholars have referred to as ‘narrative paradigms’ so firmly intact (Fisher, 1985). In order to be truly ‘inclusive’, it appears to be insufficient for ‘innovators’ to include the voices and thoughts of the people an innovation tends to serve through a series of questions and observations. Instead, there is a need for us to better understand how to connect with a sense of ‘agency’ over our own narrative, in order to construct new ‘narrative paradigms’. This might allow us to identify our own experienced truth, and then to connect with the language that articulates that truth clearly, influencing and shaping new realities.

5.2 The Conditions for Providing a Pathway to ‘Narrative Agency’

The most significant factors in creating the conditions for storytellers to be able to reconnect with a sense of ‘agency’ have appeared to be the facilitation of a space where participants can ‘listen’ to one another, and ‘embody’ their experiences, ‘mindfully’ shaping and sharing their stories. By physically embodying their experienced truth, connecting with verbal or visual language is seemingly easier. Feeling ‘heard’ appeared to give participants the sense that their story mattered and the more they felt this, the more agency they claimed in engaging with, and shaping, their own authentic story, giving way to a sense of ‘narrative agency’.

The workshop case studies suggested that there were two forms of ‘story creation’ amongst the participants:

- 1. Creating a story based on what we have already experienced**, informed by referring to an existing system of fixed narratives. It is necessary to disrupt existing narratives that are engrained in our ways of understanding certain contexts in order for different ways of being to be realised (Dempsey & Sanders, 2010).

2. Creating a story from a place of ‘sensing’ but that we may not have yet observed or expressed in a systematic, conscious way. This emerged after the participants were able to access a place of stillness, to connect with a process of allowing narrative to emerge from an interior condition.

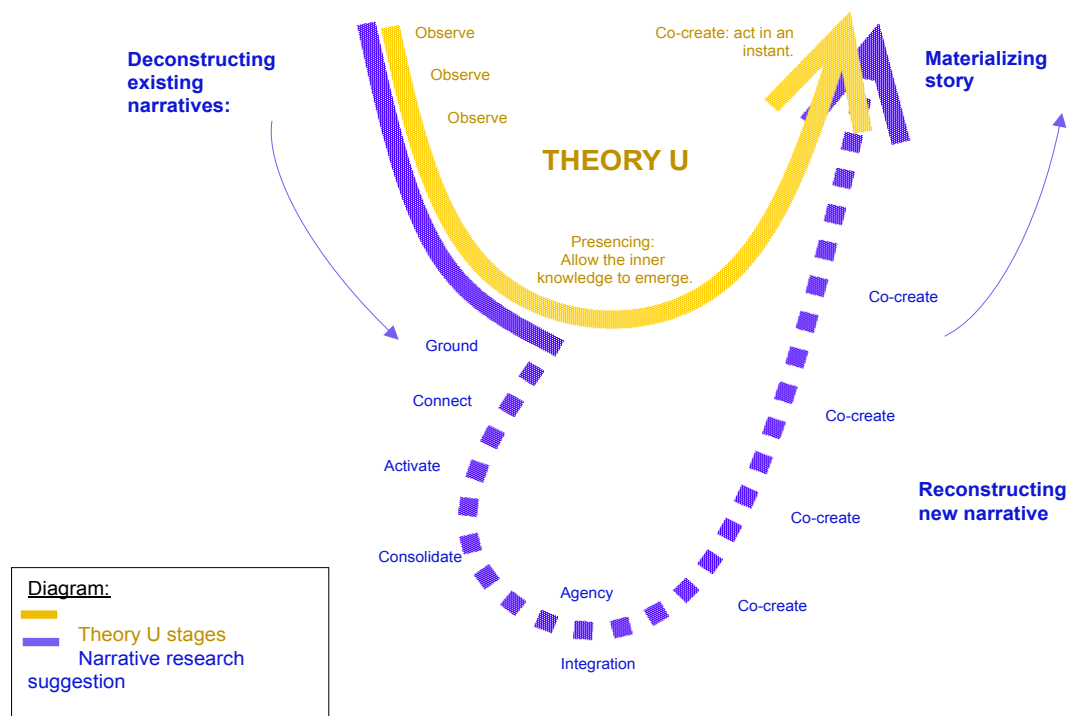
Whilst it is possible for these stories to overlap, the stories that participants shared during the ‘deconstruction of fixed narratives’ phase were based on what they knew from existing systems. Usually, if they were able to connect to a deeper place of ‘sensing’, their narratives would change. This study suggests that in order for a change to happen, the stages outlined in the earlier section need to be experienced by the participants.

Identifying content that is truly relevant for the context we are in, without an agenda or a fixed set of meanings and associations, is an emergent process and requires us to be deeply reflexive (Clair, et al., 2014). It is sometimes rooted in making something that is invisible visible, and sometimes it is in making something that does not yet exist not only visible but also feel tangible enough for the ‘storyteller’ to be able to articulate it.

Understanding where existing stories come from, and that the fixed narratives are based on what we know already, allows us to identify habit patterns in the narrative behaviour of the participants. The ‘body’ as the primary environment to unlock these fixed stories was an integral part of the workshop activities, as it appeared to enable participants to consciously connect with what was real for them, rather than to fall into habit patterns and adopted ‘fixed narratives’. When participants were embodied, it was visibly much easier for them to connect with their own sense of agency and therefore recognize their role in their own story creation process – a sense of ‘narrative agency’. It also made connecting to language easier, be it visual or verbal expression.

Below is a diagram that tries to depict the suggested pattern the workshops revealed, articulating the space I believe would benefit from further research. The diagram depicts the deconstructing of fixed, and reconstructing of new, narrative was experienced within the limitations of this study.

Figure 5.1: Suggested ‘narrative’ sensing journey towards ‘materialising’ story



The diagram intends to draw our attention to the parallel between observing existing realities in Theory U, with the identification and deconstruction of fixed stories in this research. In order to ‘co-create’ in both Theory U and according to the findings of this study, it was necessary to move through an experience of ‘sensing’ what is ‘emerging’. This diagram suggests that there is value in exploring this more deeply, and that more research into an additional sensing journey could deepen our insights into how to innovate or ‘materialise story’.

5.3 The ‘Materialisation’ of Story

During the first case study at Raymond Ackerman Academy, “What could help to make the transition from RAA student to successful entrepreneur less scary?” emerged as the group’s new shared narrative. This theme encouraged the research to interrogate the function of ‘new emergent narrative’ as a prototypic tool to ‘inform

innovation'. I believe that further exploration of the first case study at RAA could potentially see the 'materialisation of this story' by continuing to co-create in a participatory way. Participants might explore ideas for additional curriculum that take into account the need for practical support in areas where students feel there are gaps, or an alternative form of alumni networking that responds to individual needs or scattered check-ins with students outside of the academy to maintain the sense of connection, for example. If co-creation continued at Achievement Awards Group in case study #2, the participants might move towards co-creating a menu at the office canteen that included healthy and Halaal food options, or they might have initiated comfortable Wi-Fi zones, where they had free internet-access during their breaks. The 'materialisation of story' for the young women in case study #4 might simply be a regular group meet up, or an on-going communication forum that allows them to offer one other the support they feel they cannot get elsewhere.

These would need to be co-created in the same way that the shared story or narrative emerged, and be informed by a story creation process that was inclusive and therefore told by multiple internal storytellers that encourages a framework with both negative and positive aspects of an experienced truth, and that appeals to intrinsic values.

In case study #3 at the Vanguard Community Health Center, we did not fully deconstruct the existing narrative, as a 'new, shared' narrative did not emerge. In this case, it meant that the entirely new approach that Dr. Parak had been researching may not have been adopted by the people it intended to serve. As the participants in this group moved into a 'co-creative' space, their attachment to the same narrative suggested that their 'fixed story' might inform a similar product/system. In one way this demonstrated that without deconstructing existing stories we risk re-creating the same 'materialised stories' (products, process and systems). On the other hand, it also clearly informed the researcher (Dr. Parak) that the current narrative that existed within this system would not be ready to adopt a process that demanded an entirely new paradigm of responsibility. In this way, the stories that emerged within this workshop did inform the development of his particular approach.

With the exception of case study #3 (Vanguard Community Health Centre), each case study indicated that a new, shared narrative started to emerge, and signs of authentic or 'deep truths' from within the group of participants began to surface. The research

has suggested that, should the participants continue co-creating together, the shared, and continuously emergent narrative can serve as a prototypic tool to inform innovation.

5.4 Power Paradigms within Existing Narratives

Even though social innovation is understood to be that which disrupts power and is described as “... an initiative, product or process or program that profoundly changes the basic routines, resource and authority flows or beliefs of any social system” (Westley, 2008, p. 1), there is seemingly a limited amount of literature that talks specifically about ‘power’ within the space of ‘social innovation’ (Moore & Tjornbo, 2012). In order to disrupt existing systems and imagine alternatives, it is important to deepen our understanding of ‘power’, and how it currently exists (Moore & Tjornbo, 2012). Within the context of this research, a sense of ‘power’ or ‘powerlessness’ was a significant part of the existing narratives explored in the study. The study provides insight into how ‘power’ appears to be embedded not only in our systems but also in the ‘narratives’ that keep them in place.

The common narratives that initially emerged in each context appeared to emulate the pre-existing ‘fixed narrative’ of the contexts themselves. The common narrative that existed amongst the RAA participants in the first case study was initially rooted in the idea of ‘bettering’ themselves. There was a sense that, in order to have the capacity to ‘better themselves’ or secure a ‘better future’, it was important to have the guidance and support of an external source like RAA and that ‘improvement’ lay in a reality that was an alternative to the one they had known, familiar to someone else, from somewhere else. Embedded in this story is the underlying narrative that defines the story of Africa and mirrors what Adichie referred to in the literature as the ‘single story’. RAA participants were initially inclined to perpetuate this one story as their dominant story. As Adichie has pointed out, the issue with a ‘single story’ is not that it is untrue, but rather than it is an incomplete truth, and consequently perpetuates stereotypes (Adichie, 2009). She also highlights that we cannot talk about the presence of a single story without talking about ‘power’ (Adichie, 2009). The relationship between the representation of a ‘single’ or ‘incomplete’ story and ‘power’ did appear to be inextricably linked across all four case studies.

While elements of the most dominant story of Africa – needing to be rescued from a future of poverty, by someone else, from somewhere else – was felt to be the underlying narrative at RAA, a similar sense of ‘powerlessness’ was evident in both case studies #3 (Vanguard Community Health Centre) and #4 (Nyanga). The common narrative amongst patients at the Vanguard Community Health Centre (case study #3) was that they were seemingly ‘powerless’ in their own healthcare, dissatisfied but forced to accept an inadequate service. This was in line with the overriding story of public health services – for people who have no choice but to accept what is available within an ‘under resourced’ system. The women in Nyanga (case study #4) ultimately appeared to perpetuate stories of being subject to the environment they came from. The story of Nyanga and the environment they grew up in was one of ‘no choice’, of ‘limited options’, and of being ‘unsupported’, in line with the pre-existing story of Nyanga itself – an area of crime, unemployed youth, limited opportunity and scarcity. Finally, the participants at Achievement Awards Group were initially prone to a narrative of resignation – ‘powerless’ within a corporate culture, whereby big business cares only about profits and not about people. Again, this mirrored the literature that talked to our engrained beliefs that commercial interest and social sensitivity or social good cannot authentically co-exist within a profit sector context (Crompton & Kasser, 2010; Pallotta, 2013; Rothmyer, 2011; Vestergaard, 2008).

The workshop participants initially maintained these ‘fixed stories’ – stories that were bound by a framework of unequally distributed power. It suggested that the initial narratives participants would perpetuate, without ‘agency’, were ones in which they were the subject of a dominant, or what has been described as a ‘grand narrative’ (Clair, et al., 2014) told by someone else. As the participants gained a sense of ‘narrative agency’ and the narrative framework became one that was inclusive of internal, multiple storytellers, encompassing all parts of the lived experience, rooted in what was honest and real and the story itself appeared to transform. This dismantled the power paradigm that had previously held the fixed narrative so firmly in place. Like the patients at the Vanguard Community Health Centre, it appeared that without a sense of ‘narrative agency’ participants would remain subjects of a story, told by someone else, part of a narrative that kept an unequal power paradigm in place. If, as the literature claims, our access to stories is how we shape our understanding of the world, and the way we repeat those stories determine how we perpetuate the

realities that are influenced by them (Abani, 2007; Adichie, 2009; Clair, et al., 2014; Mwenda, 2007; Rideout, 2011), this study implies that it is necessary for us to redistribute power within our own narratives if we are to successfully influence a more socially inclusive world. It suggests that social innovation, which is inclusive by nature and intends to empower all, cannot successfully take place if our realities are influenced by stories that are shaped without ‘agency’. A lack of *narrative agency* ultimately shapes the same stories, leading to the same realities, inevitably perpetuating a system that it is unequal and unjust. *Narrative agency* appears, in this research, to play a key role in informing social innovation.

5.5 Intrinsic Stories Rooted in an Extrinsic Value System as a Barrier to Social Innovation

Globally, marketers and advertisers have consistently sustained the growth of industries, lucratively engaging our extrinsic value system, and compelling us to buy into ‘things’ and ‘trends’ that most often we do not even need. Large populations of people have been engaged and mobilised by our narratives in stories of commercial interest, creating a culture of capitalist and consumerist behaviour, worldwide.

As businesses have recognized the importance of social responsibility, sustainable practices and the need to communicate it (Cozmiuc, 2013; Elving, 2013; Porter & Kramer, n.d.; Türkel, et al., 2015) they have seemingly applied the same marketing and advertising approach, using the same narrative frameworks to ‘sell’ charity and socially related issues as they would motivate consumers to buy products or services (Crompton & Kasser, 2010; Kotler & Zaltman, 1971). However, we have engaged with the need for social change or the space of social innovation quite apathetically and on a considerably much smaller scale. In comparison to our behaviour around commerce and consumerism, we have failed to make any significant changes in our behaviour towards social innovation. The story content might be intrinsic – concerned with our sense of community, caring and social justice. However, offering consumers a way to save money by making more socially conscious choices, linking a charity with a shopping scheme, or attaching a celebrity to make social issues ‘cool and sexy’ are all ways of appealing to our ‘self-interest’ or extrinsic values (Crompton & Kasser,

2010; Dempsey & Sanders, 2010; Halkett, Halkett, Sanders & Sanders, 2007). The problem with this approach is that it works with apathy rather than against it and ultimately perpetuates our ego-driven society (Crompton & Kasser, 2010; Dempsey & Sanders, 2010; Halkett, et al., 2007).

Despite an increased awareness of ‘social innovation’ our narratives continue to appeal to goals that remain rooted in an extrinsic value system, satisfying our need for reward and status. This fits inside of our existing narrative paradigm, rather than disrupting or transforming it, and continues to develop a culture of behaviour that is motivated by extrinsic goals (Crompton & Kasser, 2010; Dempsey, & Sanders, 2010; Halkett, et al., 2007). We have also understood from the literature that the value systems that narratives engage influence our level of agency. Intrinsic goals are those that satisfy our innate desires and beliefs and are rooted in a deeply personal sense of achievement that is completely independent of any external affirmation (Darnton & Kirk, 2011). Extrinsic goals on the other hand are related to receiving praise or reward from an external source. Consistently engaging an extrinsic value system, therefore, triggers behaviour that is rooted in our extrinsic value system and is essentially without agency (Darnton & Kirk, 2011). As these two value systems cannot exist in equal measure, we have evolved our extrinsic values at the cost of our intrinsic ones (Crompton & Kasser, 2010). Our behaviour is embedded in a value system whereby unless our extrinsic needs are satisfied, we fail to be able to prioritise social innovation (Crompton & Kasser, 2010; Darnton & Kirk, 2011) and continue to deplete our capacity to act with ‘agency’.

The goals of social innovation are intrinsic and inclusive by nature. In order for us to engender a long-term shift in our behaviour and our thinking, it is necessary for us to develop our intrinsic value system – a value system that is embedded in the concern for equality and justice for all of society (Caulier-Grice & Mulgan, 2010; Crompton & Kasser, 2010). What this study has suggested is that our focus should not be on finding an alternative ‘storytelling approach’. Instead, it suggests that there is value in focusing on how to disrupt existing narratives and create the necessary conditions to foster a sense of ‘agency’ in order to allow for new narratives to emerge. In imagining a story creation process that is constructed with ‘narrative agency’, where we have the capacity to connect with what is our own intrinsic experience, there appears to be the possibility of shaping stories that come from intrinsic needs and desires. The research

suggests that this might allow us to move closer towards evolving our intrinsic value system, and informing a reality that is rooted in our intrinsic needs.

5.6 Further Research into the Role of Narrative Agency in Emerging Practices and Social Innovation

In this study, limits of time and capacity only allowed for an initial glimpse into this work. I would like to further understand how, by creating the conditions that are necessary for the deconstruction of fixed narratives and the emergence of new, intrinsic, inclusive and generative narratives, we might avoid the perpetuation of ideas that are rooted in existing narrative frameworks and existing systems. From a place of completely re-imagined narrative, true innovation might contribute to transformation – true social innovation.

The emerging and evolving practices in social innovation that have been referenced in this paper depend on human centeredness. They focus on the design of systems that are reflexive, inclusive and generative. However, the field of social innovation does not generally frame the need to re-imagine our world in relation to our ‘narrative’, or appear to pay significant attention to how our narrative paradigms or ‘fixed narratives’ might fundamentally inhibit our capacity to truly innovate. The limitations of practices such as Theory U or human-centred design is that they draw on articulating human experiences within the restrictions of a language that is embedded in fixed narrative paradigms, rooted in existing systems. This study suggests that there is a need for a deeper understanding of how to create the conditions that are required within emerging practices in social innovation for the ‘unlocking of fixed stories’ in order to truly be able to create the space for honest needs and desires to be communicated.

Further research could also look to understand ‘narrative agency’ by spending more time exploring when we refer to adopted or perpetually repeated stories and narratives, as opposed to connecting with our own lived experiences, and to gain a deeper insight into what it takes to foster inclusive, generative and intrinsic narrative behaviour patterns. A sensing journey that allows the exploration of a deconstruction of existing narrative frameworks that are so embedded in us might provide an understanding of

how to create the conditions necessary to completely disentangle ourselves from the constraints of our existing ‘narrative paradigms’, currently and inextricably linked to existing systems. In doing so, we might understand how to innovate with ‘narrative agency’.

During this study, I noticed emerging patterns around how we might build narrative agency, and an indication that, through the materialisation of story, this may lead to innovation. I believe there to be a significant need for research in this area with questions yet to be interrogated. I would encourage future researchers to explore: whether fixed stories might be prevalent equally across different contexts; whether it is easier to deconstruct in some contexts as opposed to others, and why; whether similar patterns emerge across different contexts in similar ways; and whether there are different ways of engendering a sense of ‘narrative agency’ in different people. I would be interested in the exploration of whether it is necessary to implicitly look at our behaviour around ‘story’ in order to understand ‘narrative agency’, and whether it is important for participants to be familiar with practices like Theory U. My personal experience of this research was that deconstructing fixed stories appeared to be more difficult in more senior positions within a corporate context like the management at AAG. I would like to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between narrative agency and power – whether fixed stories are more embedded in those with more power, or those who are responsible for keeping certain systems in place. I believe that deeper insight into the role that ‘deconstructing fixed narratives’ can play in re-imagining systems and shaping alternative realities could be profound.

5.7 Recommendations

This study has demonstrated that an alternative story creation process that is inclusive of multiple storytellers, focused on authentic and embodied experiences, based within a framework that appeals to intrinsic values, and is effective in encouraging and developing an alternative narrative framework. Additionally, it demonstrated the potential that alternative story creation and storytelling holds as a prototypic tool in informing innovation. Most importantly, if we are to explore this approach further – taking an inclusive and intrinsic approach to inform new products, processes and systems – an alternative narrative framework might inform ‘social innovation’.

The below table lists the key factors that need to be considered in order to create the conditions that are conducive for deep truths to emerge in a story gathering process and to build our capacity for narrative agency. These factors are those that have been identified within the restrictions of this limited research.

Figure 5.2: the key factors to build the capacity for narrative agency.



Please see Appendix Two for the business canvas outline of this practice, as a consulting model.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

By taking a brief look at some emerging practices in the field of social innovation, this paper highlights the movement towards a focus on reflexivity and human centeredness by drawing on examples, Theory U, mindfulness and human-centred design. Theory U, which integrates the practice of mindfulness, and human-centred design, currently remain, largely, based more in practice than in academic theory and are driven by the importance of awareness, empathy and identifying authentic human needs. They have emerged in response to the critical need for those whose voices are typically ‘represented’ to be able to speak on their own behalf.

The research gathering that takes place during a human-centred design project or Theory U process is deeply rooted in listening to people’s stories, being empathetic, and immersing themselves in the various social contexts without attaching any bias, judgements or assumptions. A process that is ‘human centred’ deconstructs the power paradigm between expert and the amateur, the designer and the consumer, and creates the necessary conditions for the people who need it most to shape and inform the innovations that serve them. Theory U in particular, within this paper, places importance on the space of emergence and sensing that arises from a place of stillness. Insights that are gathered in such practices are what shape the stories used to inform prototyping and iteration phases, ultimately leading to new thinking, new ideas, new products and new processes.

The study demonstrates that these emergent practices provide valuable insight into exploring our need to create new systems and ways of being in order to tackle the social challenges that threaten the sustainability of the largest part of our population and environment. However, it suggested that, although they look to deconstruct and re-imagine existing ‘systems’, ‘ways of doing’, and ‘ways of being’, they do not significantly address the ‘fixed narratives’ in which the stories that inform them are embedded. There appears to be very little attention given to the challenge that people have in sharing honestly with another, and even more importantly with the difficulty they have in identifying what they truly want or need.

Globally, we have become a culture of consumers that buy into mass-marketed messaging where we are told what the stories are, and simply perpetuate them, giving

rise to a reality that is often rooted in fabricated needs and desires. Additionally, the strains and stresses of everyday life leave very little space for us to really connect with what it is that we truly feel, fear, think, want or need. This becomes even more relevant in environments of scarcity, where the focus is to ‘survive’, and connecting with real needs is not an indulgence that is often experienced. What this suggests is that the stories that inform the human-centred practices and ultimately the innovations are essentially without real ‘agency’. Insights are based on needs that are articulated by those whose stories are rooted in ‘fixed narratives’, simply taken from the overriding narrative paradigms in which they make sense of their everyday lives. This, therefore, poses the risk of creating innovation that perpetuates the same realities all over again.

Neglecting to acknowledge the power that our engrained ‘fixed narratives’ have over our capacity to imagine, articulate and inform new ways of being, fundamentally limits our capacity to innovate. Understanding how to deconstruct fixed narratives and to create the conditions that facilitate the surfacing of deep truths and the emergence of new, intrinsic and inclusive narratives is critical for the success of innovation. Without emancipating ourselves from the stories in which our interpretation and understanding of reality remains so entrenched, we risk repeating the same stories and ultimately shaping the same realities.

Further research on developing skills and practices to connect to the ‘source’ of our experiences, and a deeper understanding of how this process of co-creating ‘new narratives’ can create new language, is a critical part of social innovation. The deconstruction of fixed stories and the co-creation of new narrative from a place of ‘deep sensing’ could lead to the fundamental transformation in our current way of being that is required to truly expand our capacity for successful ‘social innovations’.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abani, C. (2007). *Telling stories from Africa*. [Video File]. Retrieved from http://www.ted.com/talks/chris_abani_on_the_stories_of_africa?language=en.
- The Achievement Awards Group. (2016). Retrieved from <http://www.awards.co.za>.
- Adichie, C. (2009). *The danger of a single story*. [Video file]. Retrieved from http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en.
- Bash, E. (2015). *The field guide to human centered design*. PhD Proposal (Vol. 1). Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004>.
- Berger, P. & Luckmann, T. (1966). *Social Construction of Reality: Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: Doubleday.
- Bontea, A. (2011). Narrative. *The Year's Work in Critical and Cultural Theory*, 19. Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.1093/ywcct/mbr016>.
- Braa, J. (1996) 'Community-based participatory design in the Third World', in J. Blomberg, F. Kensing and E. Dykstra-Erickson. (Eds.). *PDC '96: Proceedings of the Participatory Design Conference*. New York: Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility, 15–24.
- Bruner, J. (1986). Ethnography as narrative. In V.W. Turner and E.M. Bruner. (Eds.), *The Anthropology of Experience*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Caulier-Grice, J. & Mulgan, G. (2010). The open book of social innovation. *Young*, 30(8), 224. Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pcbi.0030166>.
- Chang, C.T. & Lee, Y.K. (2010). Effects of message framing, vividness congruency and statistical framing on responses to charity advertising. *International Journal of Advertising*, 29(2), 195–220.
- Clair, R.P. Carlo, S. Lam, C., Nussman, J., Phillips, C., Sanchez, V., Schnabel, E., & Yakovich, L. (2014). Narrative Theory and Criticism: An Overview toward Clusters

and Empathy. *Review of Communication*, 14, 1-18.

Cooperrider, D.L. (1987). Positive image, positive action: The affirmative basis of organizing, 1–14.

Cooperrider, D. L., & Whitney, D. (2005). Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Revolution in Change - Books24x7. *Appreciative Inquiry*, ch 1. Retrieved from <http://library.books24x7.com.ezproxy.royalroads.ca/assetviewer.aspx?bookid=11869&chunkid=181674740&rowid=26¬eMenuToggle=0&leftMenuState=1%5Cn>

Cozmiuc, C. (2013). A new way of seeing CSR: Country social responsibility. *Argumentum: Journal the Seminar of Discursive Logic, Argumentation Theory & Rhetoric*, 10(2), 165–179.

Crompton, T. & Kasser, T. (2010). Human identity: A missing link in environmental campaigning. *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development*, 52(4), 23–33. Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.1080/00139157.2010.493114>.

Dailey, S.L. (2014). Retelling Stories in Organizations : Understanding the Functions of Narrative Repetition. *Academy of Management Journal*, 39(1), 22–43.

Dalsgaard, P. (2010). Challenges of Participation in Large-Scale Public Projects. Department of Information and Media Studies & Center for Digital Urban Living Aarhus, 1–10.

Dambisa, B., London, M., & Lane, A. (2009). Dead aid: Why aid is not working and how there is another way for Africa. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 33(4), 397–398.

Darnton, A. & Kirk, M. (2011). Finding Frames: New ways to engage the UK public in global poverty, (January), 124. Retrieved from www.bond.org.uk.

Deans, C.E., Mcilwain, D. & Geeves, A. (2015). The Interpersonal Development of an Embodied Sense of Agency. *Psychology of Consciousness: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 2(3), 315–325. Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.1037/cns0000071>.

Dempsey, S.E. & Sanders, M.L. (2010). Meaningful work? Nonprofit marketization and work/life imbalance in popular autobiographies of social entrepreneurship. *Sage: Organization*, 17(4), 437–459.

- Dirubbo, N.E. (1992). Full Catastrophe Living. *The Nurse Practitioner*. Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.1097/00006205-199202000-00020>.
- Does aid work? No, says Dambisa Moyo. (2012, June 25). *New Statesman*, pp. 24–27.
- Elving, W.J.L. (2013). Scepticism and corporate social responsibility communications: The influence of fit and reputation. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 19(4), 277–292.
- Emirbayer, M. & Mische, A. (1998). What Is Agency? *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 103(4), 962–1023. Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.1086/231294>.
- ENCA: Nyanga retains murder capital. (2013). Retrieved from <https://www.enca.com/south-africa/nyanga-retains-murder-capital-title>
- Fisher, W.R. (1985). The narrative paradigm: In the beginning. *Journal of Communication*, 35(4), 74–89.
- Gergen, K. J. (1999). *An invitation to social construction*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Germak, A.J. (2014). Dan Pallotta: Charity case: How the nonprofit community can stand up for itself and really change the world (Book Review). *Voluntas: International Society for Third-Sector Research*, 25(2), 558–560.
- Golafshani, N. (2003). Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, 8(4), 597–607. Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.3367/UFNr.0180.201012c.1305>.
- Griffiths, M. (2005). Building and rebuilding charity brands: The role of creative agencies. *International Journal of Nonprofit & Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 10(2), 121–132.
- Halkett, R., Halkett, R., Sanders, B. & Sanders, B. (2007). In and out of sync. *Communications*, (September).
- Hart, J.L., & Walker, K.L. (2014). Storied lives: Rejecting the single story. *Kentucky Journal of Communication*, 33(1), 4–11.

- Hasselberger, W. (2012). Agency, autonomy, and social intelligibility. *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 93(2), 255–278. Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0114.2012.01419.x>.
- Healthcare in Cape Town. (2016). *Local info for global expats*. Retrieved from <http://www.expatarrivals.com/south-africa/cape-town/healthcare-in-cape-town>
- Hennessey, B., Moran, S., Altringer, B. & Amabile, T.M. (2015). Extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. *Wiley Encyclopaedia of Management*, 11:1–4.
- Hyland, T. (2016). The limits of mindfulness: Emerging Issues for education. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 64(1), 97–117.
- Jewkes-, R., Wcjh, L., Promotion, H., Unit, S., & Medicine, T. (1995). WHAT IS PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH ?, (12).
- Kamler, E. (2011). NGO narratives in the global public sphere. *International Journal of Diversity in Organisations, Communities and Nations*, 11(2), 75–86.
- Kohlbacher, F. (2006). The Use of Qualitative Content Analysis in Case Study Research. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 7(1), Art. 21. Retrieved from <http://doi.org/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0601211>.
- Kotler, P. & Zaltman, G. (1971). Social marketing: An approach to planned social change. *Journal of Marketing*, 35(3), 3–12.
- Lewin, K. (1997). *Resolving social conflicts & Field Theory in Social Science*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Liem, A. & Sanders, E.B. (2013). Human-Centred Design Workshops in Collaborative Strategic Design Projects: An educational and professional comparison. *Design and Technology Education*, 18(1), 72–89.
- Loy, D.R. (2016). The Challenge of Mindful Engagement. In *Handbook of Mindfulness*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.
- Max-Neef, M.A. (2009). What Next ? Draft thematic paper. From knowledge to understanding navigations and returns.
- Moore, M.L. & Tjornbo, O. (2012). From coastal timber supply area to great bear

rainforest: Exploring power in a social-ecological governance innovation. *Ecology and Society*, 17(4). Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.5751/ES-05194-170426>.

Mulgan, G., Tucker, S., Ali, R. & Sanders, B. (2008). Social Innovation. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocontrol.2007.10.015>.

Mwenda, A. (2007). *Aid for Africa? No thanks*. [Video file]. Retrieved from http://www.ted.com/talks/andrew_mwenda_takes_a_new_look_at_africa.

Neilson, G.L., Martin, K.L., Powers, E., Merrifield, R., Calhoun, J., Stevens, D., ... Jones, G. (2008). and Better, (June).

News 24. *Stay out of Nyanga*. (2012). Retrieved from <http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Stay-out-of-Nyanga-at-night-report-20120926>.

O'Donnell, A. (2015). Contemplative pedagogy and mindfulness: Developing creative attention in an age of distraction. *Journal of Philosophy and Education*, 49(2), 187–202.

Oyugi, C., Nocera, J.A., Oyugi, C. & Dunckley, L. (2008). The Challenges for Participatory Design in the Developing World. *Proceedings of the Tenth Anniversary Conference on Participatory Design 2008*, 298–299. Indiana University.

Palys, T. (2008). Purposive Sampling. In *The sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods* (p. 698). Sage publications. <http://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412963909>

Pagnini, F. & Philips, D. (2015). Being Mindful About Mindfulness. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 2(4), 288–289. Retrieved from [http://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366\(15\)00041-3](http://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(15)00041-3).

Pallotta, D. (2013). *The way we think about charity is dead wrong*. [Video file]. Retrieved from http://www.ted.com/talks/dan_pallotta_the_way_we_think_about_charity_is_dead_wrong?language=en.

Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. (3rd ed.). Sage.

- Podnar, K. (2008). Guest editorial: Communicating corporate social responsibility. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 14(2), 75–81.
- Pol, E. & Ville, S. (2009). Social innovation: Buzz word or enduring term? *Journal of Socio-Economics*, 38(6), 878–885. Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.socec.2009.02.011>.
- Polkinghorne, D.E. (1991). Narrative and self-concept. *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, 1(3), 135–153.
- Polkinghorne, D. (1995). Narrative configuration in qualitative Analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 8, 5–23.
- Porter, M.E., & Kramer, M.R. (n.d.). *Strategy & society strategy & society*. Harvard: Harvard Business Review.
- Porter, M.E., & Kramer, M.R. (2002). The competitive advantage of corporate philanthropy. *Harvard Business Review*, 80(12), 56–68.
- Porter, M.E., & Kramer, M.R. (2011). Creating Shared Value. *Harvard Business Review*, 89(1/2), 63–77.
- Rasmussen, L.B. (2007). From human-centred to human-context centred approach: Looking back over “the hills”, what has been gained and lost? *AI and Society*, 21(4), 471–495. Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.1007/s00146-007-0088-3>.
- Raymond Ackerman Academy of Entrepreneurial Development. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.ackermanacademy.co.za>.
- Ricoeur, P. (2004). *Memory, history, forgetting*. (Translated by K. Blamey & D. Pellauer.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Rideout, L. (2011). Representations of the “Third World” in NGO advertising: Practicalities, colonial discourse and western understandings of development. *Journal of African Media Studies*, 3(1), 25–41.
- Riemann, G. (2005). Ethnographies of Practice—Practising Ethnography. *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 19(1), 87–101. Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.1080/02650530500072009>.

- Rothmyer, K. (2011). Hiding the real Africa. *Columbia Journalism Review*, 49(6), 18-20.
- Rowe, A. (2015). *Talloires network connects*. Retrieved from <http://tnconnects.net/forum/elli-yiannakaris-director-of-the-raymond-ackerman-academy-graduat>.
- Runeson, P. & Höst, M. (2009). Guidelines for conducting and reporting case study research in software engineering. *Empirical Software Engineering*, 14(2), 131–164. Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.1007/s10664-008-9102-8>.
- Saleebey, D. (1994). Culture, Theory and Narrative: The intersection of meanings in practice. *Social Work*, 39, Number, 351–359.
- Salkind, N. J. (2010). Convenience Sampling. In *Encyclopedia of research design* (pp. 254–255). Sage publications. <http://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412961288>
- Sanders, E.B.N. & Stappers, P.J. (2008). Co-creation and the new landscapes of design. *Co-Design*, 4(1), 5–18.
- Sangasubana, N. (2011). How to Conduct Ethnographic Research. *The Qualitative Report*, 16(2), 567–573. Retrieved from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/WQR/sangasubana.pdf>.
- Scharmer, O. (2009). *Theory U: Learning from the future as it emerges*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Scharmer, O. & Kaufer, K. (2013). *Leading from the emerging future: From ego-system to eco-systems economies*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.
- Sirolli, E. (2012). *Want to help someone? Shut up and listen!* [Video file]. Retrieved from http://www.ted.com/talks/ernesto_sirolli_want_to_help_someone_shut_up_and_listen.
- South African Government Healthcare. (2016). Home-About SA: Health. Retrieved from <http://www.gov.za/about-sa/health>.
- Steen, M. (2011). Tensions in human-centred design. *CoDesign*, 7(1), 45–60. Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.1080/15710882.2011.563314>

Suryani, A. (2008). Comparing Case Study and Ethnography as Qualitative Research Approaches. *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, 5, 117–127. Retrieved from <http://ojs.uajy.ac.id/index.php/jik/article/view/221>.

Taylor, J.R. & Van Every, E.J. (2000). *The emergent organization: Communication as its site and surface*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Tidd, J. & Bessant, J.P. (1998). *Managing innovation: integrating technological, market and organizational change*. (5th ed.). Chichester: Wiley.

Trobe, L. & Melbourne, S. (1995). From: Proceedings of the First International Conference on Multiagent Systems. Copyright © 1995, AAAI (www.aaai.org). All rights reserved. *Practice*.

Türkel, S., Uzunoğlu, E., Kaplan, M.D. & Vural, B.A. (2015). A strategic approach to CSR communication: Examining the impact of brand familiarity on consumer Responses. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 156.

Van Kleef, E., van Trijp, H.C. & Luning, P. (2005). Consumer research in the early stages of new product development: a critical review of methods and techniques. *Food quality and preference*, 16(3), 181.

Vestergaard, A. (2008). Humanitarian branding and the media: The Case of Amnesty International. *Journal of Language and Politics*, 7(3), 471–493. Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.7.3.07ves>.

Vines, J., Clarke, R., Wright, P., McCarthy, J. & Olivier, P. (2013). Configuring Participation□: On How We Involve People In Design Republic of Ireland. *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (pp. 429-438). ACM.

Vogt, P., Title, B., Title, M. C., Sample, P., Date, A., Company, P., ... Pdf, T. (2016). Purposive Sample.

Westley, F. (2008). The Social Innovation Dynamic. *Evaluation*, 2005–2009. Retrieved from <http://doi.org/6>.

Westley, F. (2010). Making a Difference Strategies for Scaling Social Innovation for Greater Impact. *PhD Candidate in Planning*, 15(2), 1–19.

- Winograd, T. (2006). Ontological designing — Laying the ground. *Design Philosophy Papers*, 3, 80–98.
- Winschiers, H. (2006). The challenges of participatory design in an intercultural context. *Designing for usability in Namibia*, 73–76.
- Winter, G. (2000). A comparative discussions of the Notion of “validity” in Qualitative and Quantitative Research. *The Qualitative Report*, 4(3), 1–14. Retrieved from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR4-3/winter.html>.
- Yamazaki, K. (2014). Design thinking and human-centered design – Solution-based approaches to innovation and problem-solving in social environment. *NEC Technical Journal*, 8(3), 15–18.
- Yin, R. (2013). *Case Study Research: Design and methods*. (5th ed.). Sage Publications.

APPENDICES

Appendix One: Samples of Pictures Alongside their Voice Recordings from Workshop 1 (Raymond Ackerman Academy)

Standing in front of wings:



“There are always going to be obstacles in life. This I was taught by my grandfather. He used to tell us that every day we are given a lemon it depends on how you are going to use that lemon during the day. Some will take a bit and feel that sour and they can throw it away and give it up. He

taught us to take that lemon, turn it into lemon juice and we will see how nice it is. Every morning there are some people who didn’t wake up so I have to be thankful for the reason I wake every morning. At RAA I feel blessed, privileged because there are some people who didn't make it through, so I owe it to them to make the best of it.” – Yonela

Climbing a staircase:



“I am Bukho Mahlati and I am inspired by me. I don't believe in this ideology of living to please others because I feel like with every person you try and please you lose a bit of yourself, and there comes a time when you are not content with yourself so I have decided to be self driven to be inspired by my and

with that I always seek to improve myself and reach what I perceive as an ideal me. I always feel there is something to do to better myself and that is where my drive comes from.” – Bukho

Casio watch:



“Growing up with parents and then all of a sudden not having any at 13 years I had to grow up at a rapid pace. After matric at the time I was into drugs and got side tracked but then got back on to the right track and wanted to study but couldn't study because there wasn't money. Well that was what I was told and there was a plan for me to just go to work. So I didn't really have a choice so had to go to work for the council. That's where my father worked, my mother works, all my sisters have worked so it was all planned for me. All of a sudden I thought I had to do something with my life and time is limited so I left work and started at the RAA because it seemed the best thing and I don't regret it until now.” – Robin

Lion:



“My name is Fernando Antonio, originally from Angola. I grew up in South Africa. I have moved around a lot. I live with my parents and I am a student at RAA. I have learnt to improve myself personally through personal development and I am now being equipped with business skills.” – Fernando

Looking up at the South African flag:



“As a young child I always wanted to go into the navy but I never got the chance to motivate myself to go. I am kind of living my life in the shadow kind of. I always wanted to be better than my other brothers. My eldest brother's setting the bar and I want to accomplish that and be better than him. The 6 months that I worked I worked for him. And I didn't want to work for him anymore so I decided to come to the RAA to improve myself and become a better person.” – Joshua

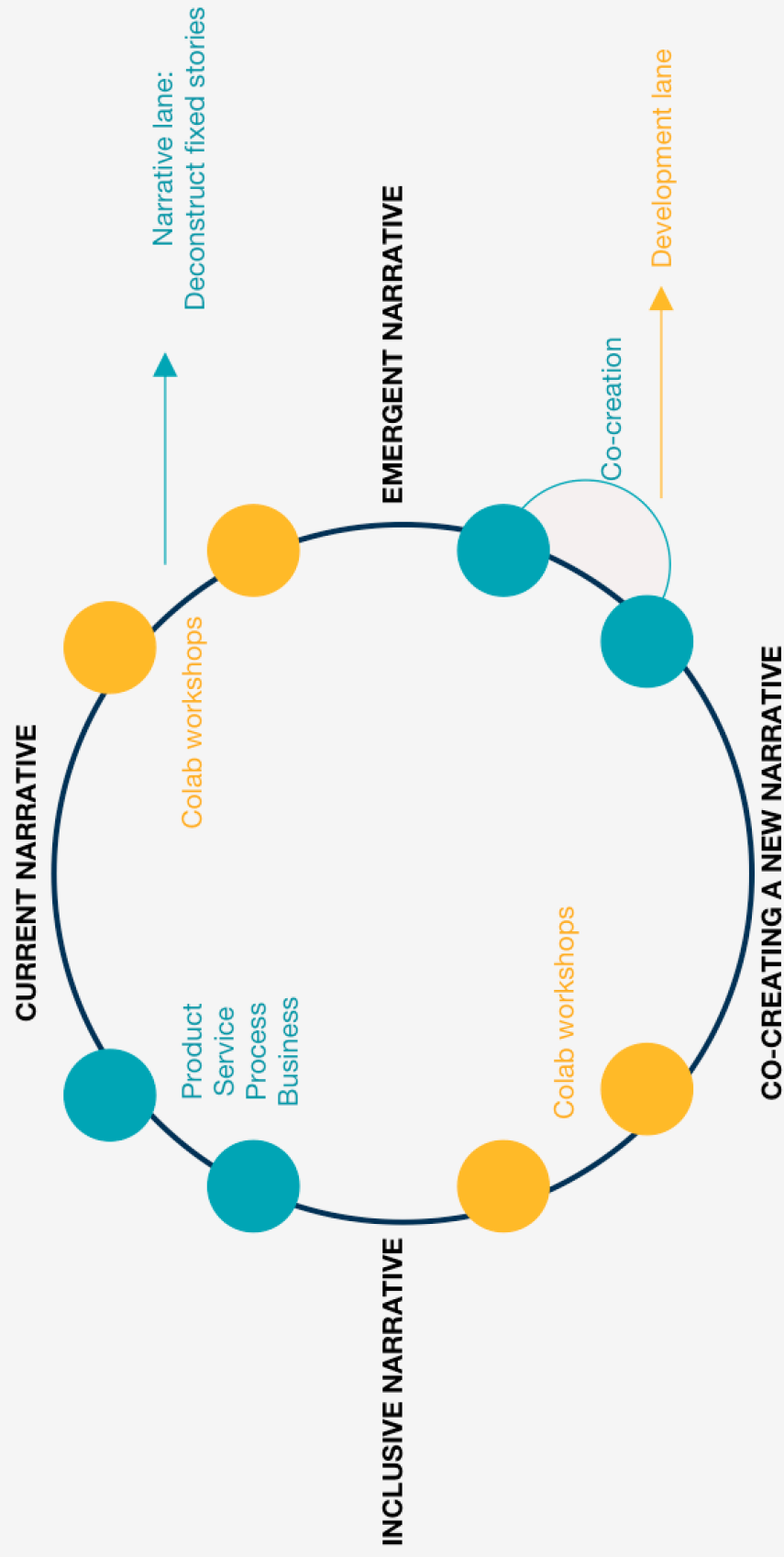


New words. New Worlds

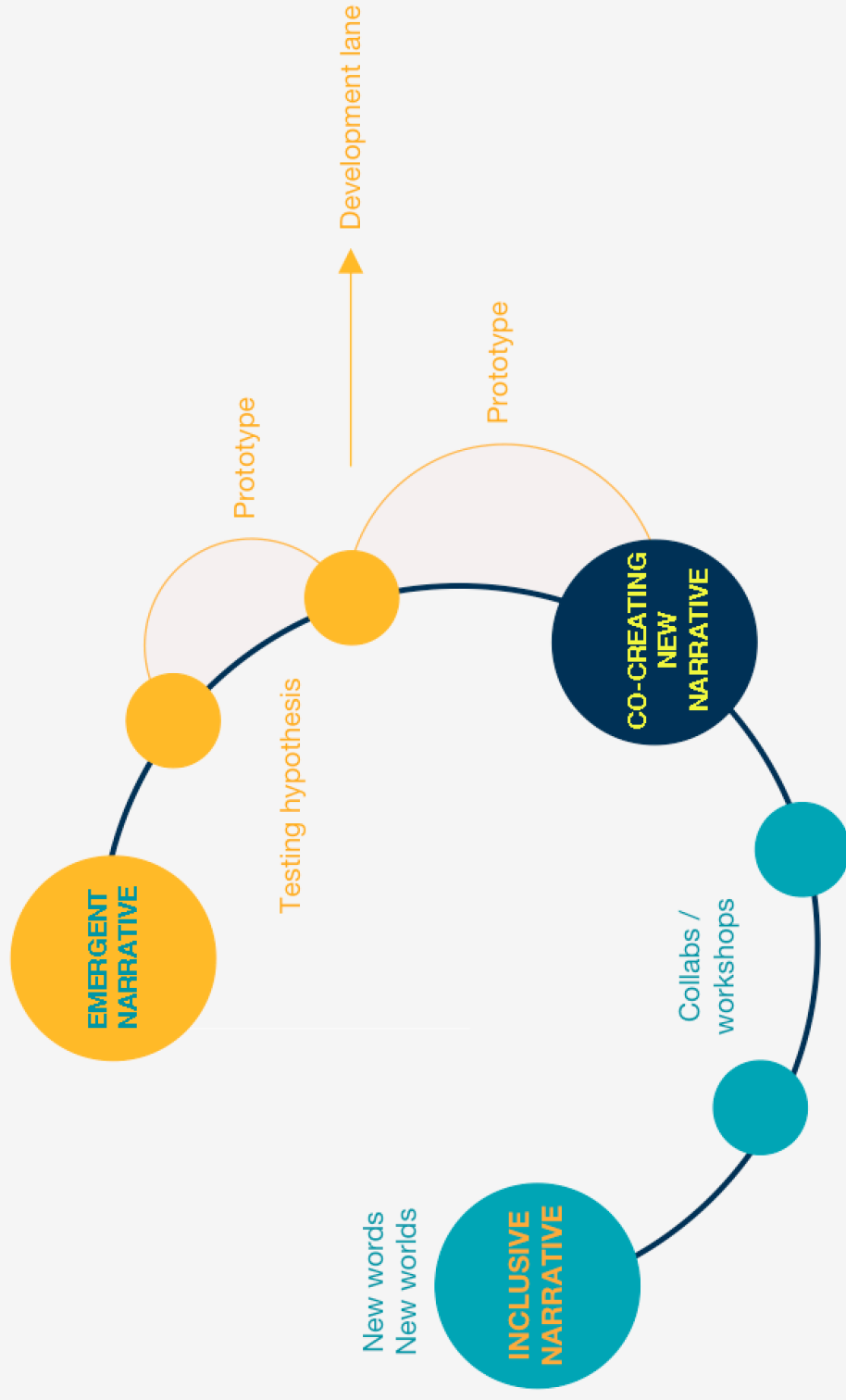
Anne-Marie Hanna

Narrative research consultation & facilitation

Suggested programme or process: The materialization of story



Suggested programme or process: The materialization of story extended



*Creating the conditions for participants to gain a sense of **agency** over their own story*

- *Mindfulness and body based practices*

Is there enough time and space for a mindfulness practice to be incorporated into the inquiry?

- *Media*

Do the participants have access to more than one medium in order to articulate their experiences?

Factors to consider for the workshop container

Storytellers & Frameworks

Are storytellers central to the process or product included?

Have multiple voices or stakeholders been included?

Have both negative and positive aspects of an experience been identified and communicated?

Has the interaction between participants and facilitator or researcher, allowed for the storyteller to articulate what is truly important, and honest for them?

- *Listening & Space*

Does the space allow for real listening to take place both amongst one another, and to themselves?

How can we create the space and time for a story creation process that is emergent, intrinsic and inclusive?

1. Current narrative exploration

The exploration is about fully understanding the experience of the current narrative.

- Narrative & embodiment framework workshops
- Ethnographic Research
- Appreciative Inquiry
- Market Research to identify common contextual narrative patterns

3. Co-creating new narrative

Co-creating involves applying a possible solution within the area of concern based on a new, shared, intrinsic narrative.

2. Emergent narrative

The emergence is the process of shared sensemaking within the context of an intervention.

- Persona Development and gaining a deep understanding of the people who are at the heart of the story.
- Integrative Thinking
- Co-Presencing Workshops

*Why this
story
creation
approach is
important*

4. Inclusive narrative

An inclusive narrative is one that brings new stories into the reality of the system or process it informs.

- Inclusive application
- Inclusive Developmental Strategies
- Product Management
- Communication & content approach

Business Model

Key Partners	Key Activities	Value Propositions	Customer Relationships	Customer Segments
NGO's, research bodies, private companies, Designers, HCD and design thinking practitioners.	Narrative workshops, collaborative design, User Journeys & Service Maps, Integrative Thinking, Co-Presencing w/s, Co-creating prototypes Key Resources Core team, extended freelancer network, academics and researchers.	We work towards integrating business and societies We build cooperative networks We uncover narrative behaviour and co-create new narratives in businesses and societies. We engage all stakeholders: government, community, business.	Channels	Governments, institutions, businesses, organisations.
Cost Structure	Revenue Streams			
The narrative research workshop approach would be based on consultancy structure and could form part of a research phase in practices like Human-Centered-Design.	Clients will pay consultancy fees and those that require the specific innovation to be incubated will pay additional incubation fees.			