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# Exploring the material mediation of dialogic space—A qualitative analysis of professional learning in initial teacher education based on reflective sketchbooks

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## ABSTRACT

This study addresses the crucial relationship between theory and practice as a key feature of professional learning in initial teacher education. The context for the study is an EU-funded intensive programme drawing on different dimensions of insideness and outsideness and arts-based pedagogies in response to the diversity of education today. The data for the study comes from self-selected pages from preservice teacher participants' reflective sketchbooks. As a methodological approach that unifies the sensuous and cognitive this study suggests that reflective sketchbooks document the dialogic encounters of students whilst also providing a material space that can itself become a form of dialogic space for critical reflection. The main findings of the study outline critical ways in which preservice teachers transform theoretical inputs into individual expressions as well as conceptualise theory in relation to lived experience.

## 1. Introduction

The crucial relationship between theory and practice is at the heart of education and a key area for development in initial teacher education (ITE) (Flores, 2017; Darling-Hammond, 2017). Effective professional learning involves the fusion of theory and practice, that is, the careful negotiation of abstracted theorisations of education and the lived experience of educators and educatees. Through critical reflection, pre-service teachers can make connections between the practical, experiential world of school and the abstract, cognisant world of educational theory. The ability to decontextualise and reconceptualise experiences is key to developing the capacity to look critically at education and to go beyond immediate experiences in order to effect a transformation in perception (Ponte, 2010) and action (McArdle & Ryan, 2017).

Reflection is a well-established feature in teacher development (e.g. Dewey, 1997; Schön, 1987; Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 2005). Retrospective, anticipatory and contemporaneous reflection (van Manen, 2008; Edwards, 2017) can uncover the paradigmatic, prescriptive and causal assumptions (Brookfield, 1995) that inform decision-making. Reflection, however, is a highly personal activity that takes time to develop and to become part of an educator's practice. Educational policies that insist on reflection as a skill to be standardised, demonstrated and assessed can limit the messiness (Myers, Bridges-Rhoads, & Cannon, 2017) and epistemological diversity (Kim & Kim, 2017) needed to foster critical reflection.

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Whereas standardising reflection limits the creative potential of reflection within ITE, collaborative dialogues between preservice teachers, school mentors and university tutors have the potential to disrupt hierarchies and enrich forms of knowledge (Youens, Smethem, & Sullivan, 2014). Rethinking participant roles, increasing discussion (Lipponen & Kumpulainen, 2011), using online forums (Matusov & von Duyke, 2009), as well as employing alternative theoretical lenses (Kim & Kim, 2017) can avoid pre-determined outcomes and realign relationships to foster critical reflections and professional learning. If and when different perspectives collide within these activities, a form of ‘dialogic space’ can open up; a space that fosters an “expanding awareness ... developing in students a capacity to question and to be able to think for themselves” (Wegerif, 2010: 340).

In recent years, the notion of dialogic space has provided a powerful metaphor to explore and develop the quality of thinking together in education and the quality of educational experience. Dialogic space provides a more dynamic conceptualisation for development and learning than metaphors such as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and scaffolding, which suggest that development and learning are ideally anticipated and predetermined. Wegerif (2007: 4) argues ZPD and scaffolding are both conceptualised drawing on the properties of physical space inherently limiting opportunities for creative thinking and reflection. Dialogic space that unfolds within and between the “space of perspectives in a dialogue” provides an “intermingled and unbounded space” more akin to the ubiquitous space of the Internet (Wegerif, 2007: 9).

Emphasizing dialogic space as a space that opens up between people in social interaction, whether online or face-to-face (e.g. Wegerif, 2007; Pifarré & Staarman, 2011), however, potentially limits conceptualizations of dialogic space. Rather than begin by assuming that forms of dialogic space are based on social interaction as verbal or text-based encounters, the study reported here examines whether the multimedia and material space of reflective sketchbooks can foster the development of a dialogic space for critical reflection during a ten day intensive programme (IP) for preservice teachers. This paper begins by briefly reviewing the theoretical basis for conceptualisations of dialogic space and reflective sketchbooks as a tool for thinking. The empirical section explains the way in which preservice teachers’ reflective sketchbooks were analysed as visual documentations of participants’ reflections.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1. A Bakhtinian perspective on dialogic space

For Bakhtin, authentic dialogue involved the creation of meaning between self and other, and to be involved in dialogue with “eyes, lips, hands, soul and spirit” (Bakhtin, 1984: 293). Furthermore, Bakhtinian dialogue seeks to concretely recognise what it means to engage with different perspectives (e.g. Bakhtin & Bakhtin, 1986), to respond to others (e.g. Bakhtin, 1990), to be involved in struggle as new understandings and questions arise (e.g. Bakhtin, 1981, 1986). As with the theory-practice dichotomy of education, Bakhtin recognised that dialogue can become an abstracted way of looking at relationships and encounters between different voices; but to be meaningful, dialogue has to be concretized.

From a Bakhtinian perspective, dialogue is concretized in different ways. One way is by recognising that the individuals and texts participating in a dialogue are anchored within a specific space and are meaningful because they arise in response to a particular context (Bakhtin, 1981: 88). To be anchored also means to be temporally-framed with links to the past as well as the future. Boundaries between past and present, as well as present and future, become points of contact that are enriched through the presence and tension of different perspectives rather than merge (Bakhtin & Bakhtin, 1986: 7). As individuals respond to and influence one another, reflecting on and sharing their own unique perspective, dialogue is further concretised through the addition of personal intonation (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986, 1990, 1993; Morson & Emerson, 1990). This concretization of dialogue helps to feed and maintain the dynamic nature of dialogue, as highlighted in Wegerif’s depiction of dialogic space.

Bakhtin also demonstrated how the abstract-concrete or theory-practice dichotomy can be negotiated through his own use of metaphors. Bakhtin referred to a range of zones that are profoundly abstract, yet presented as concrete or physical metaphors in order to communicate meaning. In the zone of maximal struggle, for example, internally persuasive words wrestle with each other (Bakhtin, 1981), in the physical zone the symbolic becomes material and in novelistic zones of contact individuals are transformed through the vicarious experiences of others (Bakhtin, 1981). This perhaps explains why Bakhtin remarked that a text is never a dead thing as “in the final analysis we always arrive at the human voice, which is to say we come up against the human being” (Bakhtin, 1981: 88). Bakhtin’s theoretical conceptualisations are enriched by drawing on, yet not being reduced to, human experience.

Dialogic encounters and forms of dialogic space were not limited to social interaction for Bakhtin. Texts and art (Bakhtin, 1990) contributed and inspired different ways of seeing and understanding. Bakhtin’s analysis of Dostoevsky’s texts suggests dialogic relations are established between different voices and perspectives as they respond to and answer one another. It can even be suggested that a form of dialogic space is created with the unfolding of a story through the dialogue between the characters rather than being predetermined by the author himself (Bakhtin, 1984). In Bakhtin’s analysis of Goethe’s travels dialogic encounters involve landscapes and historical artefacts (Bakhtin & Bakhtin, 1986). Goethe also reports learning to draw in order to slow himself down and to look more intently at the world (Goethe, 1962) enabling him to maintain a creative dialogue with his surroundings (Bakhtin & Bakhtin, 1986). This suggests that a space is dialogic if it is able to challenge and change perspectives and understanding.

Conceptualising dialogic space as a place of encounter, perception and transformation has profound implications for reflection within ITE, although Bakhtin’s original texts were neither written to address questions of educational development nor was pedagogic discourse appreciated by Bakhtin (Bakhtin, 1984). As Matusov and Marjanovic-Shane (2017: 72) point out Bakhtin’s theorisations “cannot and should not be directly translated into life and education”. The central focus in Bakhtin’s dialogic theory on the way in which individuals develop in relation to others, as well as the way in which individual development “reflects the historical emergence

of the world itself” (Bakhtin & Bakhtin, 1986: 23) suggests that education can benefit from dialogic theorisations. Indeed, as a dialogic perspective suggests, education should not be limited to words alone and to acknowledge that “learners do not function in the social world in abstracto, but in a material and physical world they meet as embodied persons and in concrete events in which they participate” (Dufva, Aro, & Suni, 2014: 21). This theorisation highlights the need to better understand different ways in which reflection as a key process in ITE can be supported.

## 2.2. Reflective sketchbooks as individual expressions of dialogic space

There is a rich tradition of sketchbook use by artists, design-oriented professions including architects and engineers, scientists, poets and writers across the centuries stretching from Leonardo da Vinci in the Renaissance (Kemp, 2006) to Grayson Perry in the present day (Perry, 2016). A vibrant range of source material is available on artists’ and designers’ sketchbooks (Klee, 1953; Perrella, 2004; Woods & Dinino, 2006) as well as for scientists (Phipps, 2006). Drawing activities have been used in education across a variety of subjects and fields, for example in higher education including business and education (Holtham, Owens, & Bogdanova, 2008; Holtham & Owens, 2011; Watson, 2014); in design (de Beer, 2018), in doctoral research (Messenger, 2016) and in schools to teach science (Ainsworth, Prain, & Tytler, 2011).

The human capacity to create and appreciate Art challenges the view that we can understand ourselves and the world only through scientific rationality. Art lives from its particularity which is not reducible to conceptual generalisation (Bowie, 2003). It does not rely on Cartesian notions of ‘clear and distinct ideas’ but draws on the imagination to produce images of what the world could look like. As an arts-based approach to education, reflective sketchbooks (Holtham et al., 2008; Holtham & Owens, 2011; Passila, Malin & Owens, in press) provide an alternative way for students to respond to and express understanding than conventional forms of written language that dominate academia (Lillis & Scott, 2007). The sketchbooks are explicitly introduced as a personal space without a pre-determined form or outcome where responses can be both textual and visual. The creation of images through drawing, painting, doodling and collage encourages students to draw on a multiplicity of ‘sensuous intuitions’ which are unique to them. This is not a rejection of rationality but an argument for what Schelling (1800/1987) Schelling, /, 1987 Schelling (1800/1987) termed ‘intellectual intuition’ unifying the sensuous and the cognitive.

Whereas conventional written language is generally characterised by linearity, logic and rational argumentation, visual expressions give space to simultaneity, contradictions and creativity. The students’ sketchbooks we use for our analysis deliberately provide spaces for participants to respond to inputs and interpret them as individuals using visual media as well as text. Moreover, reflective sketchbooks are explicitly introduced as a personal document without a pre-determined form or outcome. As highly individual visual and verbal expressions they escape any kind of comparability, assessment, corrections and grading. Deviation from any kind of norm is considered a strength, not a weakness.

Teacher-researcher Gallas (1994: 111–112) observes that arts can enable students to think in increasingly complex and meaningful ways as understanding of difficult concepts is transformed into metaphoric language and acts. As a pedagogic tool in higher education, reflective sketchbooks can be used to foster Schön’s ‘conversation with the situation’ and develop understanding (de Beer, 2018). Ideally through this process preservice teachers begin to become actively and reflectively involved in the ongoing development of education as well as in the development of their own professional knowledge (Isik-Ercan & Perkins, 2017).

Our overall research task is to investigate how individual preservice educators engage with different inputs from the course using reflective sketchbooks. Through the qualitative analysis of selected sketchbook pages we want to gain a deeper understanding of how preservice educators negotiate the theory-practice dichotomy via reflection. Our empirical analysis is guided by two questions:

- 1) In what ways do preservice teachers transform course inputs into individual expressions?
- 2) In what ways do preservice teachers conceptualise different inputs in relation to lived experience?

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Data collection

The data for this study comes from a three year ERASMUS + project (2015–2018) with eight European university partners aiming to foster a better understanding of different dimensions of insiderness and outsidership in education. Within the IP insiderness and outsidership are conceptualised from different perspectives, including the way in which material artefacts mediate belonging, how experience can transform a space into a meaningful place (Relph, 1976) as well as the immediate experiences of the IP. The annual IPs involved four student participants from each partner university living and studying key themes together. The group in each IP was characterised by a high degree of difference, for example, in terms of cultural background, disciplinary background, age, study experience and gender. With the exception of the students from the host university, all other students were unfamiliar with the surroundings of the IP. The multidisciplinary staff members from the eight universities contributed different teaching inputs, activities and expertise to the IP. Whilst the setting and themes of the IPs, the multiplicity and multiculturalism of the student and staff participants, are potentially highly stimulating for the creation of a dialogic space, the reorientation needed to engage in this kind of IP could also undermine dialogic encounters if participants are overwhelmed by the experience.

After initial introductions to the programme and one another, participants were introduced to the reflective sketchbook as a key methodology included in the IP. A short ‘Off the cuff’ video introducing sketchbooks is available here: <https://www.facebook.com/Cre8ivePractice/videos/1229717053720136/>. Participants were then provided with paper and various materials and given time to

prepare the first few pages of the sketchbook which was to be maintained throughout the IP and submitted either as a scanned copy of the whole or selected parts at the end of the course. Although trialling the sketchbook was obligatory, the sketchbooks were not assessed, however the participants were expected in the final written assignment to critically comment on the sketchbook as an alternative methodology (Fig. 1).

For some participants the sketchbook was a welcome change from conventional note-taking; for other participants the open-ended format and creative potential was intimidating. Some participants obliged the instructors by maintaining the sketchbook, yet for others the sketchbook became a focal point for thinking and reflecting. The sketchbooks accompanied the participants as they visited different locations and in the evening in the hostel many participants continued to work together or alone on their sketchbooks. For the project staff it was sometimes disorienting to have students painting and sketching during a formal session rather than taking formal notes or photographing the slides on the screen.

### 3.2. Data analysis

To better understand how the student participants used the reflective sketchbooks to reflect the multidimensional experience of the course, the analysis for this study focuses on three contrasting inputs from the IP. The first input is the *Dérive*, an unplanned tour through an urban landscape in pairs or small groups in which participants allow themselves to be subconsciously directed by the contours of the architecture in the hope of encountering a new and authentic experience (Debord, 1958). The second input a formal lecture introducing humanistic geography including focusing on the different ways in which humans develop relationships with the places they experience (Relph, 1976). The third input being a dialogue-based session on pedagogical insideness and outsideness focusing on education as a place of personal formation through (non)belonging, power and responsibility. These sessions were complemented by the broader IP<sup>1</sup> and all shared the intention to facilitate links between theory and practice. These inputs were led by the authors of this study in order to ensure participant responses and transformations of input were more readily identifiable.

The data analysis focuses on these three contrasting inputs from the IP. Following an initial qualitative content analysis in which pages from the reflective sketchbooks which drew on these sessions were selected and collated into a single document creating a dataset of 42 extracts from 24 participants. The next analytical step was to identify the key features present in the reflective sketchbooks and the different forms of individual expression with the presence and use of, for example, motifs, illustrations, questions. Table 1 provides a selection of illustrative examples.

The next analytical step was to compare the initial inputs with the participants' interpretations and to trace similarities and differences. This analysis was conducted in turn in relation to each of the three themes specifically looking for: i. what aspects of theory were included in the sketchbooks (e.g. quotations, names of theorists, figures, etc.); and, ii. the ways in which participants modified and added to inputs. Through these different steps it was possible to discern the different ways in which participants conceptualised and responded to the inputs, that is, the ways in which participants negotiated the connection between theory and lived experience through critical reflection.

### 3.3. Ethical considerations

Consent to use the sketchbooks as data was obtained from all of the students who participated in the three IPs on the understanding that their anonymity would be protected. An application for ethical approval was submitted to the Ethics Committee of one of the participating universities and approval was granted. Following a brief presentation on the aims and scope of the research on the first day of the IP, participants were invited to complete a consent form which advised them of their right to withdraw consent at any time. The question of whether the reflective sketchbook is a private or public document remains a subject for debate. In her study of the use of reflective sketchbooks as a tool for supporting the process of mentoring a new teacher, Milne (2004) highlights three central issues: trust, vulnerability and self-censorship. She describes the sharing of sketches that express uncertainty and tentative thinking as provoking feelings of vulnerability. The power differential between tutors/researchers and students/researched (Campbell & Groundwater-Smith, 2007) was a key consideration which we sought to address by providing students with opportunities to engage in critical discussions concerning the process of making their sketchbooks and by ensuring they had complete ownership of them. Students themselves chose which pages to share.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1. Transformation through individual expression

In response to the first research question how do participants transform inputs into individual expressions the findings highlight the various ways participants draw on a broad range of styles and personal experiences across different timeframes and relationships to transform formal inputs. The sketchbook extracts document the way personally-meaningful understanding unfolds as an open-ended dialogue with self and other. Table 2 presents some basic features and styles participants used in relation to the different sessions.

Whilst some participants are more inclined or familiar with using aesthetic formats to express or construct understanding, all of

<sup>1</sup> For further information see <https://inouterasmus.wixsite.com/resources>.



Fig. 1. Snapshots of reflective sketchbook front pages.

Table 1  
Features and interpretations.

Feature	Interpreted as...
Eyes	Eyes seem to depict a keener sense of awareness and engagement with the physical and conceptual environment.
Questioning	Questions seem to echo questions raised in formal sessions that somehow resonate with or challenge participants to take this question seriously. On other occasions questions arise from the participant perspective and often seem to take the discussion further critically considering the practical implications from proposed theories or as devices to support the development of personal responses to the challenge of improving education.
Pathways	Pathways appear in different forms as paths, rivers, walkways and arrows. Directing lines seem to represent processes, transformations or developments and thus underline the temporal dimension in the visual representations. In the sketchbooks, they can refer to the simple sequence of different events, the walk of life as a teacher, or transformations such as the epistemological transformation from space to place.

Table 2  
Forms of individual expression from the available sketchbook extracts.

Features in sketchbooks	Instances
Explicit references to theory, e.g. quotations, references from sessions, key notions, theorists	32
Use of graphic organisers, e.g. mind maps, diagrams	21
Aesthetic design, e.g. illustrations, use of collage	28
Personal reflections, e.g. statements, questions, connections across sessions and with previous experiences	34
Personal notations, e.g. selection of keywords, e.g. wake-up call, calming	14

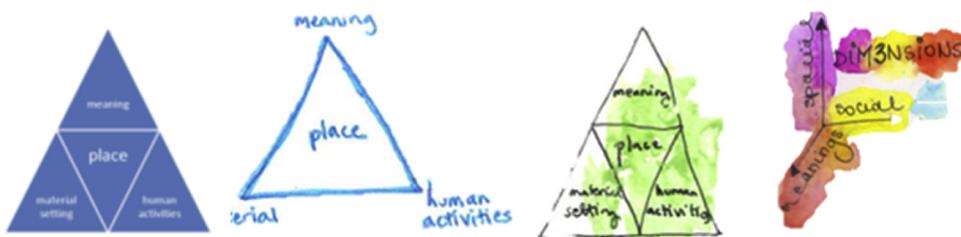


Fig. 2. Original slide and participant reproductions.



Fig. 3. Stick figures.

the submitted sketchbook extracts express an individual character and personal responses to the three inputs. Similarities between the sketchbooks are most clearly present in the references to theoretical inputs such as references to key theorists or conceptual illustrations (Fig. 2).

The examples in Fig. 2 represent close reproductions of the original slide (leftmost), which simply use the aesthetic potential of the sketchbook to outline the meanings and importance. The rightmost example, however, also suggests the way in which the aesthetic can intertwine with the conceptualisation. The tripartite arrows triangulate place more profoundly than the original slide as does the reversal of the capital “E” in dimensions.

Pathways appear to work as a motif in several sketchbook extracts as well as eyes and references to seeing, question marks along with implied and explicit questions as well as stick figures. These motifs seem to encapsulate key aspects of the IP experience for the participants, an experience which involved exploring different theoretical, spatial and experiential pathways, seeing from different perspectives whether through the eyes of another or from a different theoretical or temporal perspective. Participants, for example, revisited their own experience of school and in so doing, new questions arose such as why bars were on windows (P15) or why a school in a ‘bad’ area good still hold such positive memories (P18) or how young pupils can claim the space of school as a place of their own (P30). The critical placement of stick figures on sketchbook pages also suggests the development or acknowledgement of new relations. A tiny stick figure in the bottom corner of a page seems to express the individual experience of encountering new concepts, an experience expressed in words in another extract (Fig. 3). Simple stick figures around a globe or in the humanistic geography title re-emphasize the significance of human individuals, people or humanity as a collective seeming to convey more profound humanistic reflections and thus transforming the humanistic theory into practical understanding.

Both aesthetic designs as well as more conventional graphic designs included in the sketchbooks are devices for organizing responses to the different inputs. As art materials were available throughout the IP sometimes participants decorated or added designs to sketchbook pages before knowing the content of a session. Looking through the sketchbook extracts, it appears that these designs provided useful features for capturing particularly meaningful points that were prompted in response to formal presentations (Fig. 4)

Participants also used lists, venn diagrams, mind maps and collage to highlight connections and theoretical relations. These theoretical aspects, however, are complemented by references to personal experiences as well as personal statements. It is the inclusion of personal comments that particularly provide insight into the ways in which the participants conceptualise and respond to inputs, the focus of research question 2.

#### 4.2. Deriving and depicting meaning

The inputs from the IP analysed here offer three alternative approaches to consider the meaning of insideness and outsideness as well as different temporal frames for reflection. The initial Dérive focused on the here-and-now in a new space with unfamiliar others.



Fig. 4. Aesthetic design used to organise responses.

Humanistic Geography provided an opportunity to critically reflect on earlier experiences of school as a place for children and learning, whereas Pedagogical Insiderness and Outsiderness was an opportunity for anticipatory reflection, considering what education could or should be and the responsibilities of educators. The following section outlines the way in which the participants made sense of the three inputs.

4.2.1. From describing to deriving

Most of the participants had recently arrived in a new place, were living with people they had not known earlier with members of staff that represented a broad range of disciplinary backgrounds. As an activity the Dérive carved out a specific time for small groups of participants to meet each other through the space they were about to share. The introduction to the Dérive described the activity drawing on the theoretical perspectives of French structuralists and the psychogeographical features of urban architecture. Conducting a Dérive together, however, participants were able to derive a deeper understanding of the activity.

With no particular destination in mind, the small groups wandered through the university campus or town sharing reflections and observations aloud, asking questions and possible answers. In the reflective sketchbooks ‘the Dérive’ became ‘our Dérive’ (P6), the value of seeing through the eyes of others was acknowledged (P1) as well as the way in which relationships with people were part of identifying with a new place (P7 & P8). Even for participants familiar with the setting, through this activity they noticed new features in the area (P2) and began to see the place in new ways through the eyes of others (P4). The reflections in the sketchbooks based on this activity include poetry, collages, illustrated pathways and reflective statements.

One participant wrote that the Dérive was like ‘Stopping the clock for a moment, and just be’ and ‘freedom is to walk around expecting the unexpected.’ (P11), others mentioned going with the flow, following one’s heart (P2) or the weather (P3). Topics of conversation were reported to change in relation to the architecture (P3) and deeper feelings arose in relation to the place and new relationships went to a deeper level (P7). Participants also expressed greater awareness of personal differences due to age differences and the international composition of the group (P2) and using senses to discern the experience of place (P4). For several participants this seemed to be a countercultural experience “as normally we go somewhere now we were going nowhere” (P1), that they saw more than usually anticipated (P8) and they were able to map their own pathways in their sketchbooks afterwards with notations that raised questions and playfully presented different perspectives (Fig. 5).

In these reflections the Dérive was conceptualized as a personally meaningful activity that connected with different senses, feelings and relationships in addition to the intellectual input that oriented the activity. The participants demonstrated awareness of the way in which they were guided by the architecture of the urban environment and conscious of the way in which the relationship with the environment mediated their relationship with others. The Dérive also prompted some participants to raise questions, such as “Why not integrate the outdoor with indoor classes and d[é]rive with your students? Let your mind go or fly away” (accompanied by drawings of aeroplanes and clouds) (P10). This concise but rich expression of professional learning points to future pedagogical developments but is framed by the immediate experience of the Dérive.

Overall the participants derived the meaning of the activity through personal encounters with others in concrete space and time and the reflections in the sketchbooks were personally intoned. Participants also referred to other course activities as Dérives, although they were not formally framed as such, suggesting that the notion of Dérive was more than a mere label or an alternative activity, but a meaningful way for critically reflecting on and development understanding of one’s relationship with the world.

4.2.2. From descriptions to depictions

The Humanistic Geography session was one of the most theoretical sessions of the IP outlining Relphös (1976) reflections on human’s emotional attachment to specific places. The session was set up by a short introduction to humanistic geography, a current of the geographic discipline that developed in the 1970s and became more visible in the 1980s in English speaking academia. Humanistic geography was a counter movement against the predominant interpretation of geographic research in terms of positivistic

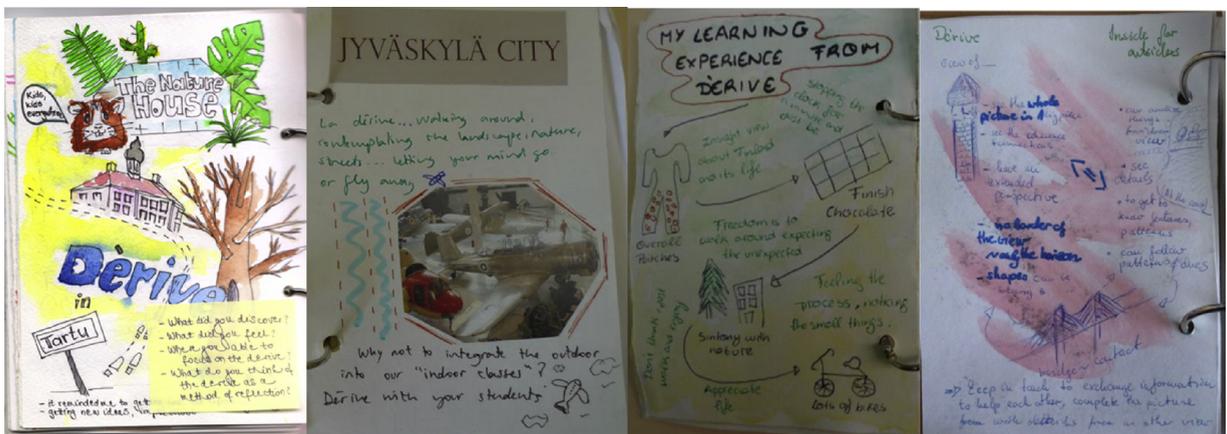


Fig. 5. Critical reflections in individual responses.

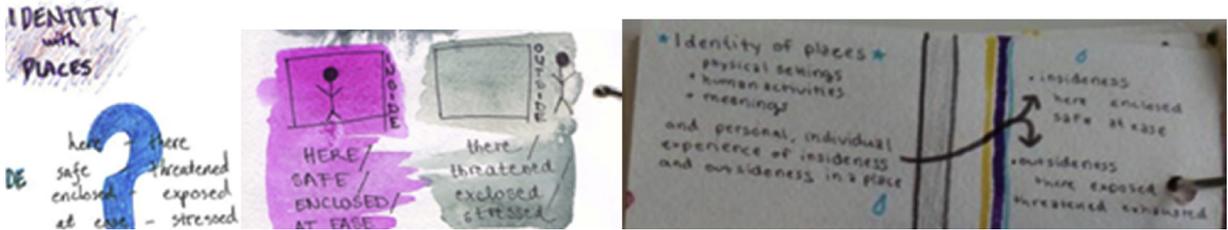


Fig. 6. Re-presentations of a given list (original slide on the left).

and quantitative spatial science (e.g. Buttner, 1976; Buttner & Seamon, 1980; Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1979). In opposition to the cognitive concept of space, humanistic geographers developed of place as an expression of individual or collective human experience. In *Place and Placelessness* Relph (1976) underlines the identity of places in their material, social and symbolic dimension as well as the identity with places that humans experience when living, visiting or studying different places. To analytically grasp this emotional relationship, he introduced a taxonomy of different types of insiderness and outsidersness.

The theoretical constructs were re-presented in the sketchbooks in multiple ways providing concrete connections with the original slides (see Fig. 2) as well as indicators of the way in which the participants were responding to and working with these notions. Many of the participants included the listed characteristics of insiderness and outsidersness with small modifications (Fig. 6). A question mark added to the list seems to problematize an overly simple understanding of the dichotomy being presented, boxes and stick figures depict more graphically the emotional connotations of insiderness and outsidersness and the use of a split arrow starting from the “personal, individual experience of insiderness and outsidersness in a place” highlights personal experience as the deciding factor which results in a sense of insiderness or outsidersness rather than a particular quality of the place.

The examples in Fig. 7 present more individual interpretations suggesting a more reflective engagement with the underlying ideas and the way in which the theory can be applied to practice. The example in Fig. 7 includes a reference to nursery education, the particular area of education important to that participant and the righthand example provides an alternative depiction of the way in which space becomes a place, using the image of a river to illustrate the transformation process of space becoming a place through human interaction as well as the way in which experiences of place contrast with the idea of placelessness.

This session also included an invitation for participants to reflect on their personal experiences of school and the way in which their relationship with the location of the IP was developing. The labelled illustrations included by participants are therefore based on personal experience and individual examples, but it is the reflections that are added to the illustrations that provide greater insight into the responses of the participants (Fig. 8).

In these extracts the labels suggest that the participants are able to re-view familiar settings to ask new questions of physical features such as bars on windows and a cross on the wall. Experiences were also viewed in a new light leading to questioning earlier assumptions, such as why it was normal for insults to remain on walls, why a ‘bad school’ could foster positive memories and the

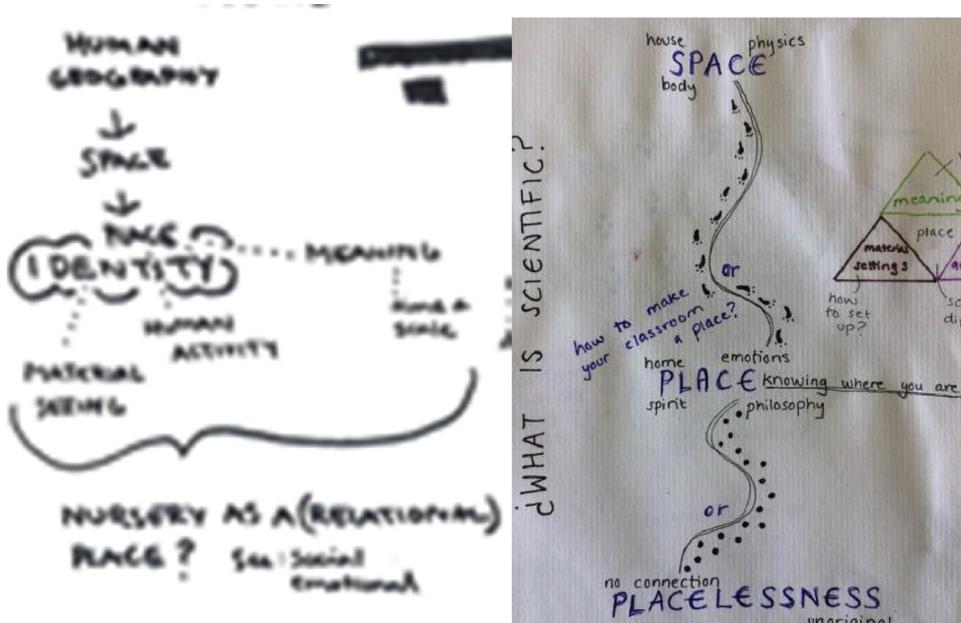


Fig. 7. Participants' interpretations.

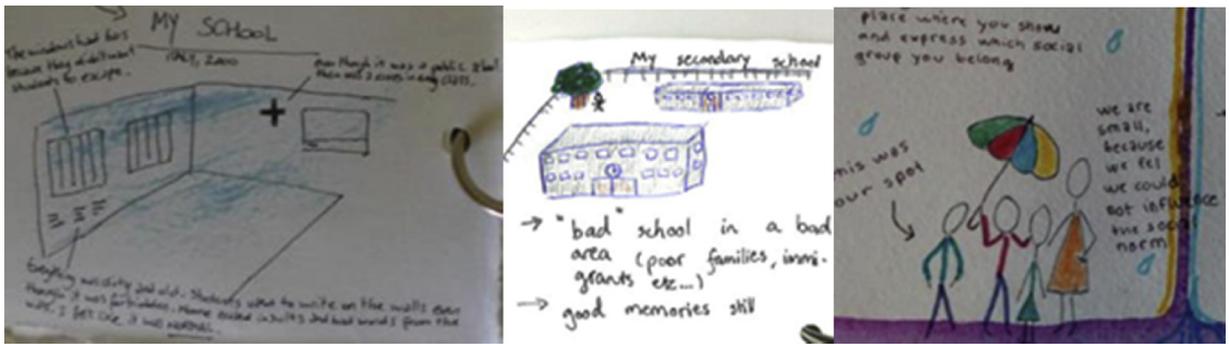


Fig. 8. Reviewing my school.

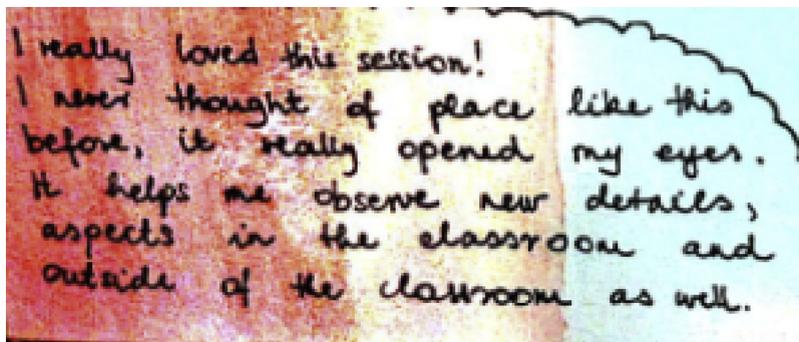


Fig. 9. Participant’s reflection on the humanistic geography session.

significance of ‘our spot’. As Fig. 9 exemplifies, some students reflected on how the session as a whole would impact their future practice. Some students explicitly reflected on how the idea of seeing school as a place in its three dimensions impacted their own thinking and perception not only of their past experience, but also their general relation to the classroom.

These critical reflections within the here-and-now drew on previous experiences as different perspectives contributing to the tension of the developing dialogic space. Moreover, these critical reflections of the past potentially provide important material for critical reflection on future practice and understanding as an educator.

#### 4.2.3. From pedagogy to potential

The participants had applied to the IP in part because they were interested in developing education, as well as working with international students and travelling abroad for a 10 day period. The pedagogical insiderness and outsidersness session used a narrative approach, sharing stories based on the perspectives of different educational stakeholders (teachers, parents, children). The session began, however, with a definition of pedagogy as walking alongside someone and the further explanation that the original definition is understood to refer to the slave of the household walking the master’s son to the place of learning (e.g. van Manen, 1991). This was followed with the thought-provoking observations that in education “... we seem to be more prone to acting our way into implicit thinking than we are able to think our way explicitly into acting,” and that “If we are not aware of what and why and how ..., we cultivate a mindlessness that, in the end, reduces our own humanity and fosters cultural division even when it is not intended” (Bruner, 1996, 79).

These quotations were included in the majority of sketchbook extracts whether as quotations or interpretations, such as “TAKE



Fig. 10. Personal statements.

PEOPLE TO PLACES' (P35) and 'Step back and think why you are doing this' (P34). The illustrations and statements appear to transform generalized calls into personal questions and material for critical reflection on one's own responsibilities as educators (Fig. 10).

It is the personal statements in particular that are indicative of the personally meaningful responses and the way in which the participants conceptualise themselves as educators. One wrote, "I want to make a difference and really help people to find themselves, understand and value themselves and others by creating a space and tools for that" (P29). Another participant commented that "This definition is inspiring to me in the way that I can bring opportunities to sb [somebody], for them to enhance their potential. Just as the way I was given opportunities/open the door to places with opportunities by someone else. Talent could be individual but passion can be something I, as a teacher, can pass on" (P32). Personal responses also included critical reflections, such as the note that "assumed pedagogical pathways make assumed career paths" (P37) and the pathway mapped out by another participant (Fig. 9). The sketchbooks also included questions to self around the role of educators and whether outsidership is necessarily negative (P34). These extracts are critical reflections for the educator-self with regard to their own responsibilities in relation to student-others at a future point in time and the earnest commitment of these young educators.

In several extracts the participants include short notes on the sessions and sketchbooks, such as "it's too bad this session was this short... it made me think about and question so many things..." (P34) and that "the great discussions, thoughts, ideas we formed together are probably [sic] to big to put them int [sic] this sketchbook" (P36). Indeed the questions, examples, illustrations and comments included by the participants created the personal intonation of each sketchbook. The following discussion now returns to the bigger question as to what kind of dialogic space is provided by reflective sketchbooks based on the critical reflections of the participants.

## 5. Discussion

The study reported here investigates how preservice educators engage with different inputs from an intensive course using reflective sketchbooks. In response to the question how participants transform inputs into individual expressions, our findings highlight the way in which participants transform inputs through the use of different media, expression and the open-endedness of the reflective sketchbook. The mix of different media, text, drawing, colour, collage and patterns are highly individualised and unique to the creator of the sketchbook in a way that cannot be replicated. Intellectual intuitions (Schelling, 1800/1987; Schelling, /, 1987; Schelling, 1800/1987) form responses to different inputs as aesthetic features are interwoven with intellectual theorisations and personal experiences on the initially blank pages of the sketchbook. The significance of these transformations as examples of participants' conceptualisations and responses was the focus of the second research question.

The significance of the transformations was discernible in three perceived tendencies in the documented responses and reflections of the participants. Firstly, participants derived meaning through their physical experience of wandering through the environment together. The heightened consciousness of participants appears to foster an appreciation for the perspectives of others and critical responsiveness to different ways of experiencing and the restrictions often imposed through strict timetables and predetermined goals. In these documented responses, the participants' prior assumptions come to the fore and are questioned (Brookfield, 1995). Secondly, depicting rather than copying theoretical inputs adds layers of meaning. The clean lines, dichotomies and authority that are characteristic of theoretical scholasticism become part of a dialogue that problematizes, critiques, seeks and questions (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986). These depictions illustrate the epistemological messiness of critical reflection (Kim & Kim, 2017; Myers et al., 2017). Thirdly, as abstract thought encounters the critical lens of personal experience so a mutual relationship can be established in which lived experience enriches theoretical understanding and theoretical understanding re-views (Ponte, 2010) and in turn enriches personal experience exemplifying the 'conversation with the situation' (Schön, 1987) at the heart of reflective practice.

Whether or not participants were artistically inclined, reflective sketchbooks provided a place for documenting critical reflection. Through the employment of simple visuals, representations, conventional graphic designs and aesthetic features, motifs begin to develop and individual stances begin to take shape (Isik-Ercan & Perkins, 2017). The inclusion of personal examples and references can help map relationships and create anchor points within a specific place and time that can prompt further reflections, as the references across sessions seem to suggest, concretizing and complexifying understanding (Gallas, 1994). As the student teachers engage in retrospective reflections on their own experiences of education, these reflections feed into contemporaneous and anticipatory forms of reflection (van Manen, 2008) as the participants critically consider the meaning of education and their hopes as future educators. In addition to these different forms of temporal reflection, another form of reflection appears to be a significant part of the conversation. As the participants look through the eyes of others, vicarious reflections are included in the sketchbooks as the preservice teachers consider what educational experiences have been and are for others, not only themselves. The tension and questions that begin to form as these different perspectives are acknowledged enrich the dialogic qualities of these reflective sketchbooks.

In the reflective sketchbooks, the ongoing dialogues between self and other include a multiplicity of others. An 'other' might be one's self from an earlier time, the perspectives of other people, theoretical frameworks as well as encounters with new landscapes. This finding expands the notion of dialogic space as it does not rely on verbal or text-based social interaction to create a tension-filled space of the in-between (e.g. Wegerif, 2007; Pifarré & Staarman, 2011). Moreover, our findings suggest that reflective sketchbooks do not only document representations or experiences of dialogic space/s, rather the materiality of the sketchbook mediates the reflections of the participants. As participants choose what to add to the pages of the sketchbook, their thoughts are concretised yet not finalised. Additions, whether references or aesthetic features, continue to modify reflections as they take shape, become visible and available for critique. In other words, a form of dialogic space materialises through the process of using a sketchbook as the aesthetic

and cognitive dimensions of self are involved in the reflective activity (Bowie, 2003). Although it cannot be suggested that the use of reflective sketchbooks are suitable for all, nevertheless, the use of reflective sketchbooks is one way of acknowledging that learners do indeed function “in a material and physical world ... as embodied persons and in concrete events in which they participate” (Dufva et al., 2014: 21).

Recognising the value of the materiality of the reflective sketchbook is an important addition to theorisations of dialogic space. As the sketchbook allows very personalised responses, participants are able to select for themselves aspects of the inputs which seem salient to them and simple images and modifications can convey profound individual reflection. Maybe there is something significant about the immediacy afforded by sketching what is observed which is not the same as a written description, to be ‘slowed down’ as Goethe notes in order to see better, to not be limited by the linearity of conventional academic texts. A surprising finding was the way in which decorative or aesthetic features of the sketchbook became part of the reflective process, in effect creating material space for critical thinking. This approach seems to be counter-cultural to innovations today that speed up rather than slow down, but it is worth asking what is missed or lost if standardised practices in ITE provide neither space nor time for personal encounters or reflection.

We acknowledge that the pages analysed in this study have been selected by the participants. Although the sketchbooks were not assessed, some participants will have withheld pages they felt were too personal, critical or somehow inadequate. The extracts included here cannot be considered the totality of their experience or critical reflections; nevertheless these extracts indicate the potential of providing alternative spaces for critical reflection. As an area for further research we hope to return to the sketchbooks with their authors after a period of time to better understand how the critical reflections included in the sketchbooks contribute to the wider ongoing dialogue of educational development and in which ways the individual annotations included in the reflective sketchbook will be transformed by later experiences.

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