

**Physical landscape as a narrative
of identity construction:**

the development of an animation design
project entitled “My time, my place”

by

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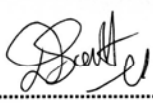
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SUMMARY & KEY TERMS

This study and the accompanying design project explore postmodern identity construction as a nomadic state of being in relation to the shared experience of space. The potential of the relationship between postmodern identity and physical space is explored both theoretically and through practical application. The main theory explored is 'third space', with specific reference to the concept of 'thirdness' as articulated by American psychoanalyst Jessica Benjamin (in Frosh & Baraitser 2009). This study examines how shared spaces can, through narrative reframed by ontology (Somers 1994), be seen as physical manifestations of the 'third space' as envisaged by the likes of Homi K Bhabha (1994) and Edward Soja (1996). The notion of 'thirdness' is used to explore the relationship between individuals and shared space. 'Thirdness' is also paralleled to Ubuntu. 'Thirdness' is investigated as a means to access shared relational spaces that provide an abundance of symbolic narratives that can be gathered and integrated into the self. This study explores how being connected through shared space has the potential to be constructive in identity formation in the wake of unstable postmodern identity.

This study uses a design process adapted from Karl Aspelund (2006) as an approach to the research. In the context of this study, design is seen as more than the resulting artefact. It encompasses the thought process, the methods used and steps taken to reach a particular research outcome. This study attempts to form a synthesis between the theoretical research conducted and design praxis in the form of the design outcome. As inspiration for the design action, the design process followed in this research facilitates the exploration of theory that is perhaps unfamiliar to design discourse. The steps in the process allow the refinement of concepts, application of the theory in a practical environment (a paper making workshop) and finally, the visualisation of the theory via the design artefact (an animated short). The medium of animation is selected purposively in order to convey the interpretive narrative derived from the process. The paper produced in the workshop reflects the theory, inspires the narrative of the animation and is used to create the environment and characters of the animation, which, in turn, embody the overarching concepts of the study.

Key terms: animated short, animation, design discourse, design praxis, design process, Edward Soja, Homi K Bhabha, identity construction, Jamie Purinton, Jessica Benjamin, Margaret Somers, Matthew Potteiger, narrative, narrative landscape, narrative ontology, nomad, postmodern identity, relational space, shared space, third space, thirdspace, thirdness, Ubuntu, visual narrative, workshop.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

DECLARATION	ii
SUMMARY AND KEY TERMS.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vi
LIST OF FIGURES.....	ix
APPENDIX A LIST OF FIGURES	x
APPENDIX A LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF APPENDICES	xii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background of study.....	1
1.2 Research question	3
1.3 Aims and objectives.....	4
1.4 Research paradigm.....	4
1.5 Research method	5
1.6 Overview of chapters	7
CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL EXPLORATION	9
2.1 Step 1: Inspiration.....	9
2.1.1 Identity: displacement, recognition and gathering.....	9
2.1.2 Narrative and identity: accessing the ‘third space’	13
2.2 Step 2: Identification	16
2.2.1 Narrative identity and relational spaces (landscape)	16
2.2.2 Summary of points of inspiration identified	19

	Page
CHAPTER 3: DESIGN PRAXIS	21
3.1 Step 3-4: Conceptualisation and exploration/refinement	21
3.1.1 Conceptualisation: paper making as a workshop activity to explore relational narratives	22
3.1.2 Exploration: gathering and producing meaning.....	24
3.1.3 Refinement: reflection on the workshop	28
3.2 Step 5-7: Definition/modelling, communication and production	28
3.2.1 Definition/modelling: defining the approach	29
3.2.2 Communication: synthesis of theory and praxis, preparation for visual articulation	32
3.2.3 Production: visual articulation, review and reflection	44
CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION	52
4.1 Summary of chapters.....	52
4.2 Contribution of study.....	54
4.3 Limitations of study and suggestions for further research	55
4.4 Concluding thoughts.....	57
SOURCES CONSULTED.....	59
APPENDICES	64

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1: The children of Hatfield Montessori Preschool tear up scraps of paper together, to form part of their own new sheets of paper, 2010	24
Figure 2: The author and a small group of children setting off to gather items for the paper, 2010	25
Figure 3: Children working together to fill the buckets, 2010	25
Figure 4: A child makes a selection from the landscape away from the group, 2010	26
Figure 5: Children adding their items to the paper pulp to form a base, 2010	26
Figure 6: The author helps a child to remove her frame from the base pulp mixture revealing pieces from the ‘nature treasure-hunt’ embedded in the pulp, 2010	27
Figure 7: Pomono, 2010	33
Figure 8: The first sheet of paper selected for the animation and detail, 2010	34
Figure 9: Storyboard visualisation for and character sketch Scene 1, 2010	35
Figure 10: The Hydrangea petals found in a second piece of paper that inspired the concept of watering in the animated short, 2010	36
Figure 11: The third sheet of paper selected for the animation and detail, 2010	37
Figure 12: The fourth sheet of paper selected for the animation and detail, 2010.....	38
Figure 13: Storyboard visualisation and character sketch for Scene 2, 2010	39
Figure 14: The fifth sheet of paper selected for the animation and detail, 2010	40
Figure 15: Storyboard visualisation and character sketch for Scene 3, 2010	41
Figure 16: Storyboard visualisation and character sketch for Scene 4, 2010	42
Figure 17: Initial sketches and clay figure of the main character Pomono, 2010	44
Figure 18: Creating the characters and working with the paper from the workshop to give unique characteristics to each, 2010.....	44
Figure 19: Uneven edges of the workshop paper as the environment of the animation, 2010....	45
Figure 20: Still from the initial animation test, 2010.....	46
Figure 21: Beginning stills from the final animation, 2011	47
Figure 22: Scene 1 stills from the final animation, 2011.....	48
Figure 23: Scene 2 stills from the final animation, 2011.....	48
Figure 24: Scene 3 stills from the final animation, 2011.....	49
Figure 25: Scene 4 stills from the final animation, 2011.....	49

APPENDIX A LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Workshop Figure 1: Child in the process of making paper, 2010	64
Workshop Figure 2: Anna Conradie and paper making equipment, 2010.....	65
Workshop Figure 3: The author and a small group of children set off to gather items for the paper, 2010.....	66
Workshop Figure 4: The large, enclosed outside area used for the workshop, 2010.....	66
Workshop Figure 5: Homework and permission slip for the workshop, 2010.....	67
Workshop Figure 6: The sign outside the Hatfield Montessori Preschool, 2010.....	69
Workshop Figure 7: Unloading the equipment for the workshop, 2010	69
Workshop Figure 8: The 'homework' envelopes set aside for the workshop, 2010.....	70
Workshop Figure 9: A child signs her name, indicating she wishes to participate, 2010	71
Workshop Figure 10: The children of Hatfield Montessori Preschool tear up scraps of paper together to form part of their own new sheets of paper, 2010	71
Workshop Figure 11: Gathering items from the landscape from under the trees, 2010	72
Workshop Figure 12: A child makes a selection from the landscape away from the group, 2010	72
Workshop Figure 13: Children working together to fill the buckets, 2010.....	73
Workshop Figure 14: Children adding their items to the paper pulp to form a base, 2010.....	73
Workshop Figure 15: Anna Conradie helps a child to remove his mesh frame from the base pulp mixture, 2010	74
Workshop Figure 16: The author helps a child to remove her frame from the base pulp mixture revealing pieces from the 'nature treasure-hunt' embedded in the pulp, 2010.....	74
Workshop Figure 17: Children individualising their sheets of paper. Image 1, 2010	75
Workshop Figure 18: Children individualising their sheets of paper. Image 2, 2010	75
Workshop Figure 19: Children individualising their sheets of paper. Image 3, 2010	76
Workshop Figure 20: Children individualising their sheets of paper. Image 4, 2010	76
Workshop Figure 21: A few of the children putting the final touches to their paper, 2010	77
Workshop Figure 22: The children's paper set out to dry. Image 1, 2010.....	77
Workshop Figure 23: The children's paper set out to dry. Image 2, 2010.....	78
Workshop Figure 24: The author painting a starch mixture onto the wet paper, 2010.....	78

APPENDIX A LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1: Final draft of the schedule used to conduct the paper making workshop at the Hatfield Montessori Preschool, 2010	67
Table 2: The actual sequence followed during the paper making workshop at the Hatfield Montessori Preschool, 2010	68

LIST OF APPENDICES

	Page
Appendix A: Workshop field journal	64
Appendix B: Workshop paper	79
Appendix C: Forms	91

Please note that the following appendices are in digital format and need to be viewed on a computer. These files are located on a CD attached to the back cover of this document.

These appendices are in .flv format and require VLC player or similar to be viewed. VLC player for MAC and PC is provided on the disc, this is a free media player that can also be downloaded from <http://www.videolan.org/vlc/>:

Appendix D: Animatic	CD
Appendix E: First attempt animation	CD
Appendix F: Animated short (design project)	CD

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of study

If the postmodern self could be essentialised, it may arguably be understood through the tension between the pursuit of individualism and the need to belong. This tension contributes, in part, to the displacement that the postmodern self experiences. This displacement of the self implies that the formation of identity is constantly in a state of deconstruction and reconstruction: a fluid, fragmented, culturally eclectic and hybrid activity (Elliott & Du Gay 2009:xii). A physical landscape displays characteristics in its formation that can be paralleled to the displaced postmodern self. A city, for example, has fluctuating spaces. Plots of land are upgraded, changed, built, destroyed and replaced on a continuous basis. Urban identity results from the layering of material as well as social, cultural and economic elements (Julier 2008:125). These changes tell a story of the space that is layered with the choices of those who share in and affect it. Sharing in the story of a space can contribute to the understanding of notions of identity construction that attempt to relocate the displaced self through mutual recognition, exchange and interaction.

This design project and report for BKS 856 (research by design, project and appropriate documentation), which is the research module of MA Information Design, explores an understanding of the following premise: through relational narrative(s), shared space can function as a constructive metaphor for the shaping of identity by the displaced postmodern self. It explores the potential of physical landscape as a site of commonality to facilitate connections between individuals and open up a dialogue. The facilitation of dialogue may be understood as being central to design discourse, since a fundamental role of the designer in the twenty-first century is a facilitator of communication and dialogue, in accordance with specific goals, even despite non-specific outcomes. This facilitative approach to design can locate and build on potential, open up possibilities, challenge the collective and help to fashion new dispositions. In so doing designers reconnect people, practices and place (Julier 2008:208).

By recognising the potential in shared spaces to enable dialogue, designers can support the postmodern individual in the search for coherence and connections. In other words designers can through their work provide personal pathways in an otherwise confusing ecology of culture (Press & Cooper 2003:1,9). This advocates a view that design should help the variety of individuals of which society is comprised to find meaning and purpose, or, in other words, to find their way. This is especially important in postcolonial contexts like South

Africa, where a diverse collection of cultures negotiate their interactions on a daily basis. Design facilitates the building of new links in seemingly disparate systems. These links can create pathways that bring individuals together around a common interest or shared experience (Lupton 2006:25).

This study and the design project explore postmodern identity construction in relation to the shared experience of space. The potential of a relationship between postmodern identity and physical space is navigated both theoretically and through practical application. Although some of the terminology and concepts dealt with are not necessarily familiar to design discourse, the design discipline is able to articulate complex social relations and human actions that lends itself to the exploration of concepts outside of itself (Julier 2008:66). Part of the nature of design is the impetus to order and make sense of the world, to create a progression toward meaning by forming connections and ultimately to communicate the meaning uncovered. One way in which designers can achieve this goal is by following a predefined but malleable process. Regardless of the discipline, the design process is a series of basic stages through which ideas are identified, formulated, refined and brought to fruition (Aspelund 2006:1). This process, though usually reserved for practice, may also lend itself well to design research. This study uses a specifically defined design process as an anchor for the research. The design process is employed as a method of approaching theory from other disciplines through a design lens. In the context of this study, design is thus more than the resulting artefact. It encompasses the thought process, the methods used and steps taken to reach a particular research outcome. Duncan Reyburn (2008:11) succinctly sums up this view of design:

[D]esign is best understood as that which is beyond any isolated definition, or at the very least as a practice/theory that cannot be delineated in purely stable or linear terms. Design, far from being a fixed thing is concerned with framing things. Design is not a *what*, but a *how*. It is concerned with finding ways and means of communication that are suitable in specific instances.

This study attempts to conceptualise a way in which to connect theory and praxis in order to frame compound concepts within an understandable system. The design process used facilitates the approach that leads to communication of the ideas presented. Many attempts have been made to discuss the design process, define it as a set of reusable terms or, towards the opposite end, avoid definition (for example, Lawson 1990, Lauer & Pentak 2000, Resnick 2003, Frascara 2004, Lawson 2005, Aspelund 2006, Julier 2008). The most identifiable characteristic among such authors is a general agreement of the process as a means toward communication. David Lauer and Stephen Pentak (2000:7) attempt an unfixed

definition of the design process as *thinking, looking* and *doing* in no specific order. These broader notions encompass more detailed accounts of the process by other authors. Bryan Lawson's shortest definition (1990:24, 2005:35), which is similar to that of Elizabeth Resnick (2003:17-18), includes *definition of objectives and assimilation* (thinking), *research/general study, development and analysis* (looking) and *communication* (doing). Jorge Frascara (2004:2) defines design as the process of *conceiving* (thinking), *planning/projecting/ coordinating* (looking) and *selecting/organising* and finally, *communicating* (doing). This definition is comparable to Karl Aspelund (2006), whose seven-step design process has been adapted for this study.

From the many others defined by various discourses in design, Aspelund's design process has been identified as appropriate for this research. The descriptors used to define this specific design process reflect the thought patterns, methods used and steps taken in the realisation of this design project and report. The seven steps of the design process followed are: *inspiration, identification, conceptualisation, exploration/refinement, definition/modelling, communication* and *production*. These steps are explained further in the research method (Chapter 1.5) and overview of chapters (Chapter 1.6).

The design process¹ identified allows the theory that is explored to be approached as part of a process toward practical application and visual articulation. This is done in an attempt to form a synthesis between the theoretical research conducted and the practice of design in this study. The design process followed thus makes it possible to explore the theory, refine concepts, demonstrate the theory in a practical environment and finally, communicate the experience of the theory via the design artefact that concludes the study.

1.2 Research question

This study explores narrative and identity construction in a postmodern context in relation to physical landscapes as shared spaces. The study uses Aspelund's design process to aid an understanding of the connection between a particular discourse and a particular application of that discourse based on the assumption that designing is an interpretive process and can function as a bridge between theory and praxis in design research.

¹ From this point in the study onwards, all instances of the design process mentioned refers specifically to the steps adapted from Aspelund (2006).

1.3 Aims and objectives

The broad aim of this research project and report is to explore the potential of physical landscape to function as a mutual and symbolic space utilising the design process. This space will be a place where stories can be recognised, shared and adapted amongst inhabitants in the narrative construction of postmodern identities. This research thus aims to examine the relationship between postmodern identity and shared space. The design process helps to understand and visualise the theory and research conducted. Ultimately, this research functions as a synthesis between design theory and praxis with the end product, an animated short, functioning as a descriptor of the concepts of the study.

In order to accomplish these aims, the following objectives can be outlined:

- Explore the concepts of narrative and identity theoretically in relation to physical space in a postmodern context.
- Investigate these concepts practically through a workshop in a chosen physical setting and report observations.
- Seek to explore and articulate these theoretical findings and observations through synthesis and visual narrative by using the design process as a guide throughout and visual design (specifically animation) as the medium.

1.4 Research paradigm

From Thomas Groenewald (2004) and Annemie de Vos, Herman Strydom, Christa Fouché and Rina Delpont (2005) it has been determined that a qualitative phenomenological methodology is the most applicable research paradigm for this study. All phenomena have a story to tell. This is a familiar concept among creatives such as writers, poets, artists and designers who may be considered natural phenomenologists. Although everyone is essentially born a phenomenologist, it is those in the creative disciplines who best understand the task of sharing these insights with others through word and image (Groenewald 2004:[Sp]). Phenomenology also stipulates that the researcher cannot be detached from his or her experiences and interpretations of phenomena. A phenomenological approach thus allows the researcher to engage with and interpret the meaning derived from phenomena, topics or concepts as they are experienced.

This research explores the phenomenon of shared space and its narrative qualities that affect identity construction. Through the strategy of interpretive enquiry, which is sanctioned

by phenomenology, a group of individuals is identified to participate in the research. Interpretive observations of their experience of the phenomenon of shared space are analysed and described as part of the method of data collection. The final product of the research functions as a descriptor of the experience being studied for the purpose of telling its story. A phenomenological research paradigm allows the researcher to experience life-worlds or settings in a certain context as a naturalistic and interpretive method of data collection (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport 2005:270). The hermeneutic² approach enables this study to explore the experience of shared space through subjective enquiry, which allows for the creative interpretation necessary to understand and interpret the study visually in the form of the practical research output.

1.5 Research method

This research is project-led, using the design process to explore relational narrative(s) in a physical landscape through both theory and practice. Alex Seago and Anthony Dunne (1999) argue for new methods in art and design research that are original and cognisant of the unique nature of these areas and their outputs. This is especially true in those research projects where the end product is an artefact that embodies the research (Seago & Dunne 1999:11). This being the case in this study, Aspelund's (2006) design process as outlined in Chapter 1.1 is used to guide data collection and analysis. This is done in an attempt to synthesise theoretical concepts and design praxis using the design process as a way of engaging with theory.

The first action taken in this research is a theoretical exploration of narrative and identity in relation to physical space. This method is in the form of a review of selected literature from various disciplines that may fall outside design discourse. This action functions as the first step in the design process, namely inspiration. Inspiration, which stems from the Latin word *inspirare*, meaning 'to breathe life into', is crucial to the design process as it provides a means of creativity, a new approach to concepts and an energy that drives the process further (Aspelund 2006:16). By approaching unfamiliar theory in this way, it is possible to view concepts from other disciplines not as separated from design discourse but rather as motivation for engagement and further enquiry.

The second step followed in the design process is identification. The identification stage focuses on examining and defining concepts and identifying the constraints that keep the

² The hermenutic approach here refers to an interpretive method or process.

work focussed within a specific area (Aspelund 2006:7). This is where the theory that inspired this study is examined in terms of, and correlated to, the specific focus on physical space. The conclusions drawn in the first and second steps of the design process help to provide a framework with which to approach the subsequent stages that form the practical component of this study. The theory investigated thus functions as the beginning of a design project, the inspiration and identification of a concept that feeds the creative progression toward a design outcome.

The next two steps in the design process are conceptualisation and exploration/refinement. For the purposes of this research these stages are viewed together as they are closely intertwined. At this stage, designers explore the concepts identified more fully to understand their significance before translating them into practical designs. At this stage, designers create impressions of these concepts using metaphors that become the basis for illustrative models (Aspelund 2006:7). This is also when designers need to explore solutions in more detail and refine concepts. In this study, conceptualisation involves the selection of suitable means of articulating the theory in a practical environment. The first action taken toward conceptualising the theory in practice thus takes the form of a workshop, where user participation is used to explore the theory in a selected physical setting. Connections are explored between the theory and interpretive observations of the workshop activity. These observations are then reflected upon and refined in preparation of the remaining stages of the design process. The workshop also results in a physical outcome, which is used in the final design.

Subsequent to the workshop, the process moves on toward definition/modelling. Here designers need to make decisions as to which approach will be taken toward the final design outcome (Aspelund 2006:113). At this stage of this study, the approach toward modelling the theoretical concepts into a designed artefact are considered and a design medium is selected. After defining the medium, the designers need to be able to communicate what has been uncovered thus far in the process and relate it to the final design. Aspelund (2006:9) points out that making samples and technical choices is paramount at this stage. In this study the communication stage involves reflecting on the theory and the workshop activity's interpretive observations to define a narrative with which to articulate the theory through the chosen design medium. The workshop's physical outputs are documented and a selection is made purposively from the collection. The selection is then analysed and interpreted hermeneutically in the development of a visual narrative for the research end product. The interpretive analysis of the workshop outputs is related back to the theory and

then explored visually by storyboarding the narrative that develops from the analysis. Storyboarding provides a means of illustrating or sampling so that technical decisions can be taken before production.

The final step in the design process is production. At this stage, designers in larger contexts may hand over their designs resulting from the previous steps in the process to a production team. Despite the handover, designers still remain involved in the process for clarity and any changes (Aspelund 2006:9,167). In smaller contexts, the designer may be responsible for seeing the design through to fruition, using their visual skills and experience to produce the final design outcome. With advances in knowledge, technology and software, designers can define their own role in creating a design outcome. They can decide how to use their distinctive skills, knowledge and thinking in any project (Press & Cooper 2003:6-7). This is certainly applicable within a South African context, in which designers may be more fully involved in the final articulation of a design. This not only applies for smaller projects and budgets, but also because South African designers have developed the skills necessary to design in an emerging economy rich with variety and complexity. The rich, multi-cultural South African context is arguably one of the contexts that require its designers to be more creatively nomadic and adaptable than any other (Reyburn 2008:15). The production step for this research is conducted for the most part as a singular design activity (aside from commissioned music). It is done in isolation and completed using prior knowledge and skill in the chosen medium. To round off the design process and the research, a reflection, identification of limitations as well as areas for further enquiry are included.

1.6 Overview of chapters

This study outlined above begins in Chapter 2 with a theoretical exploration that highlights the first two phases in the design process, namely inspiration and identification. The inspiration taken from the theory explored is explained and identified in relation to this study's main area of interest, namely the relationship between physical landscape and narrative identity construction.

Chapter 3 documents how the theory in Chapter 2 is put into practice. The remaining steps in the design process also form part of this chapter. The conceptualisation stage defines the user-participation portion of this research and explains the use of a workshop in relation to the study. The concepts related to the theory are also explored and refined (the next step in the process) through reflection and interpretive observation of the workshop activity. The

next steps in the design process, namely definition/modelling and communication, are used to define and refine the narrative approach taken before the production phase in which the final design project is articulated. This chapter is used to formulate and model ideas and to describe how links are formed between theory and practice. The medium for the final design artefact (an animated short) is also identified and discussed. The synthesis of theory and praxis through visualisation and narrative devices form the concluding part of Chapter 3.

Chapter 4, which concludes the study, provides an arena for reflection on and evaluation of the work performed, the processes followed and the outcomes observed.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL EXPLORATION

The following section investigates theory pertaining to relational identity construction and identifies links between this theory and concepts surrounding narrative and landscape.

The literature listed below comprises three main areas of investigation: identity, narrative and landscape.

Many of the sources used originate from the social sciences. According to Cal Swann (2002:50), social science approaches can have great affinity with design processes, especially due to the interdisciplinary nature of design studies (Cross 1999:7; Reyburn 2008:9). This chapter serves to identify, explore and draw comparisons between terminologies that stem from the main areas identified as significant to this research. The intersections and other similarities observed are combined and function as a premise for the workshop and animated design project,¹ which forms part of the larger study. The design process is used as a method of approaching the theory as inspiration, focus and motivation for further design enquiry.

2.1 Step 1: Inspiration

The theory dealt with in this chapter stems from several disciplines. Although these sources have recognised the potential of relational identity formation, in particular ‘third place’ theory, design-related material dealing with or mentioning the subject was found to be rare at the time of this study. The theory explored in this chapter may seem slightly foreign to design discourse. By approaching the relevant concepts and theories at the start of a design process, these become a source of not only inspiration but also of a deeper understanding of the nature of the design process.

2.1.1 *Identity: displacement, recognition and gathering*

From social science disciplines such as psychoanalysis, one can observe the now all too familiar notion that identity is transient and equivocal. This unstable, fragile, momentary self of postmodernity is widely understood and debated. According to Stephen Frosh and Lisa Baraitser (2009:159), the rise of technology and the interconnectedness of a global society have resulted in the postmodern self becoming an ever more complex condition: “a technologically mediated, fluid, ethical, nomadic, simultaneously global and locally produced

¹ See Chapter 3 for details pertaining to the animated design project.

subject". Frosh and Baraitser (2009:159-160) argue that this self remains in a state of loss and displacement, favouring disruption over meaning-making. As a potential solution, they suggest a return to narrative relationality as a constructive approach to re-locating the displaced self.

In Frosh and Baraitser's terms (2009:159-160), this displaced self is most potently described through their use of the metaphor of the nomad. By definition, the nomad is an unfixed individual, moving from place to place. Their existence is only sustainable through hunting and gathering as the nomads locate themselves in different places. A contemporary nomad, then, would negotiate social environments both local and global, both real and symbolic, in a process of hunting for meaning and gathering of the meaningful. The landscapes traversed are larger and more complex owing to developments in entertainment, communication and travel, making the act of hunting and gathering a more involved task. Karin Ikas and Gerhard Wagner (2009:1-3) also note a transformation of the notion of being toward the nomadic at the turn of the twenty-first century. They attribute this trend not only to globalisation but to the past and continued flux of migration in a postcolonial world. Within nations the mix of ethnic, religious and social spheres has highlighted the challenge of communicating between differing cultures as a necessary part of daily life. South Africa's multifarious citizenry and colonial history locates the country within this challenge. The inter-cultural negotiation on a local level contributes to the nomadic sense of being and is further complicated by the trans-cultural interdependencies of global economies.

The comforting binaries of 'here' and 'there' are out of focus in a hybrid and borderless society. The familial notion of the 'other' of ages past now has the potential to become intricately connected to the contemporary self. The move away from dualisms and organisational categories has highlighted the need to think beyond these isolating narratives into those moments produced in the articulation of cultural difference, those 'in-between' spaces that provide the terrain for a new collaboration of selfhood (Bhabha 1994:1-2). Frosh and Baraitser (2009) touch on this notion in their comparison of the theories of two authors who discuss the re-location of identity. The discussion on Jessica Benjamin's² theory on recognising the 'other' in Frosh and Baraitser (2009:164-167)³ is of particular interest for this

² Jessica Benjamin's specialist area is psychoanalysis. Her interest in the idea of 'thirdness' and 'third spaces' stems from a move away from the limiting bipolarity of Oedipal structures that influence analytic theory. Benjamin attempts to adopt a more reciprocal understanding of the analyst-patient relationship (self and other) in developing a 'third' position or space in which connections can be made while maintaining autonomy (Benjamin 1998:25, Frosh & Baraitser 2009: 164-167).

³ For this study, Jessica Benjamin's approach to concepts of 'thirdness', -positions and -spaces is adapted from a discussion in Frosh and Baraitser (2009:164-167). This discussion succinctly combines

study. Benjamin speaks of a concept that she refers to as ‘thirdness’.⁴ ‘Thirdness’ is experienced by recognising that an area of exchange exists between the autonomous self and what is perceived as the other. Benjamin postulates that recognition is the key to stave off the absorption of the self into the other. It also prevents the other from being colonised by the self. Recognition thus allows the possibility of difference by appreciating similarity (Frosh & Baraitser 2009:164). Reciprocity is the driving force behind this theory. The self and the other recognise and are at once recognised by one another. This reciprocity neither conflates nor reduces the identities of the self and the other, but rather accepts both as equal states of wholeness that are in a dialogue. This positions identities as part of an inter-subjective space that is both connected and separate simultaneously. This is the space of the ‘third’, a relational smorgasbord for identity formation.

The 1990s saw the first notable appearances of this liminal space of the ‘third’ in academia. Postcolonial theorist Homi K Bhabha most notably used the capitalised term ‘Third Space’ (Bhabha 1994:36) in his postcolonial studies. Urban sociologist Ray Oldenburg published a book in 1989 in which he experimented with the idea of ‘third place’. Edward Soja also wrote about this phenomenon, publishing in 1996 and using the term ‘Thirdspace’. Since these early articulations, many discourses have adopted and adapted the term and concept through varied linguistic constructions. These discourses range from education (Hadi-Tabassum 2006, Kuhlthau, Caspari, & Maniotes 2007) to literature (Ikas & Wagner 2009) and computer studies (Muller & Druin 2003). The broad concepts can even be found in conflict negotiation (Ury 2010). Although the related terms of ‘first’ and ‘second space’ tend to vary between texts,⁵ it is the overarching premise of ‘third space’⁶ that remains relatively consistent.

the aspects of Benjamin’s theory that are of particular interest to this study. The broad concepts and their development in Benjamin’s own work are also found in other publications by Benjamin herself, such as *Shadow of the other: intersubjectivity and gender in psychoanalysis* (1998).

⁴ Edward Soja (1996:60-65) uses a similar term, namely ‘thirding’, to denote the moment that one is willing to partake in a dialectically open exchange between dualisms (like self and other).

⁵ Bhabha, though not explicitly stated in his book, is noted by Ikas and Wagner (2009:96) as positioning these spaces as indigenous (first space) versus colonial (second space). Soja (1996:6) refers to first space as the real and second space as the imagined in representations of spatiality. Carol Collier Kuhlthau, Ann Caspari and Leslie Maniotes (2007:32) see first space as personal/cultural knowledge and second space as curriculum or learned knowledge. Oldenburg (2001:2) views the first as home and the second as work. Although referring to these as places rather than spaces, the concepts remain analogous. Ury (2010) also deals with a different but comparable approach, seeing the first and second dualities as ‘sides’ within a conflict, mediated by a third.

⁶ This is the linguistic articulation of the term chosen for this study i.e. ‘third space’ (lower case in single quotation marks). This articulation refers to, but is not all-encompassing of notions related to other variants mentioned in the study including *Third Space* (Bhabha 1994), *Thirdspace* (Soja 1996) and “third place” (Oldenburg 2001).

Though Bhabha (1994:37) and Soja (1996:2) deliberately refuse to define ‘third space’ as anything concrete, it is the concept’s inherent flexibility that appeals to so many fields of enquiry. In the broadest sense, ‘third space’ is a space of potentiality. It is a radically open perspective on physical and imagined spaces that extends beyond confining dualisms (Soja 1996:5,11). It is discursive and labile, existing in the in-between. Its ontology thus ensures that no fixity or absolutes exist in negotiating the meaning and symbols of these spaces. Even recurring signs can be recognised, appropriated, translated, adapted and rediscovered anew. The ‘third space’ provides the platform for new approaches to both singular and communal identity that initiates new sites for collaboration, contestation and innovation (Bhabha 1994:1,2,37). This is the overarching definition subscribed to in this study.

Many concepts related to ‘third space’ that, though meriting further enquiry within design discourse, are not covered in this study. Although the full complexity of their writing falls outside of the scope of this study, aspects that correlate with this research are incorporated from the writings of Bhabha (1994), Soja (1996) and selected authors. This research continues from the encompassing definition of ‘third space’ above to the more specific articulations of ‘thirdness’, as derived from the discussion on Jessica Benjamin in Frosh and Baraitser (2009).

Benjamin puts forth that there are two elements of ‘thirdness’ when developing the idea of a ‘third’ position or space away from bipolarity. These are ‘the third in the one’ and ‘the one in the third’ (in Frosh & Baraitser 2009:166). The first is the capacity within the subject to recognise the possibility of a connection. The second refers to the relational links that form by being present in the shared space of the ‘third’, which is produced by both but owned by neither. It is this idea of sharing, of having a space to find meaningful connections and cherish what is meaningful, that has potential as a constructive view of identity formation. This does not exclude destructive forces that are part of identity, but rather encourages the view that these shared spaces are dynamic and may collapse, but in so doing they also allow the potential for mutual repair.

In Michael Battle’s book *Ubuntu: I in you and you in me* (2009), the concept of ‘thirdness’ can be glimpsed. From a humanist and theological perspective, he postulates that a person (the self) is a person through other persons (the other): “Ubuntu is an African concept of personhood in which the identity of the self is understood to be formed interdependently through community” (Battle 2009:1-2). Battle describes Ubuntu as a symbiotic condition that

is constructive and cooperative. He quotes South African Anglican Archbishop Emeritus of Cape Town, Desmond Tutu to elucidate:

A person with Ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed (in Battle 2009:3).

In this quotation one can observe Benjamin's theory of the 'the third in the one' and 'the one in the third' (in Frosh & Baraitser 2009:164-167). The person who operates according to Ubuntu recognises the potential in others for making a connection and sees the ability and the good in others ('the third in the one'). Ubuntu here also means being available to others, being open to the affirmation of and from them, thus allowing links to form ('the one in the third'). The concept of the 'third space' as a mutual area with the potential for recognition and appreciation can thus be paralleled with the notion of Ubuntu. Both require that the self and the other remain intact in a positive and unselfish manner. The two concepts embrace individuality as a part of an identity that is formed not only because of, but through others. 'Thirdness' then, is within a person who displays these characteristics, who essentially 'has' and lives Ubuntu. The local and inherent cultural symbolism behind Ubuntu thus provides a scaffold for South African contemporary nomads in the challenge of inter-cultural negotiation and poly-vocal identity formation. Ubuntu is an existing structure that already penetrates 'third space', unlocking the potentiality of shared spaces.

The ambiguity of 'third space' keeps it from being over-determined and thus from diminishing its potential. It can be fashioned by anyone who embraces their own 'thirdness'. It represents the unstable momentary connections that form when people reject structures and hegemonies in favour of negotiating difference, and in so doing, affirming the potential for meaningful exchange in one another.

It is the 'third space' that can be a fertile hunting ground for the contemporary nomad. It is a place where the *dis*-placed subject can gather meaningful connections from the space and those who share in its formation.

2.1.2 Narrative and identity: accessing the 'third space'

Margaret Somers (1994) is an early advocate for narrative as a more flexible and constructive theory for identity formation. Somers (1994:613) observes a reframing of narrative in the

social sciences as a shift from *representational* to *ontological narrativity*.⁷ In the past it was argued that narrative modes of representing knowledge were imposed to make sense of the chaos of life. Ontology allows narrative to be viewed as shared and relational, not as singular, but as part of a collective, consensual domain. This framing observes narrative as a guiding, rather than an imposing force. Somers (1994:614) explains how stories (the content of narrative) guide the action of identity formation:

[P]eople construct identities (however multiple and changing) by locating themselves or being located within a repertoire of emplotted stories; that 'experience' is constituted through narratives; that people make sense of what has happened and what is happening to them by attempting to assemble or in some way to integrate these happenings within one or more narratives; and that people are guided to act in certain ways, and not in others, on the basis of the projections, expectations, and memories derived from a multiplicity but ultimately limited repertoire of available social, public, and cultural narratives.

If one unpacks this paragraph, it becomes clear how an ontological approach to narrative can be a constructive mechanism for the postmodern nomad to access the 'third space'.

The 'repertoire of emplotted⁸ stories' is shared amongst people in social, public and cultural forms. These shared stories are similar to the space of the 'third'. They provide an abundant space for meaningful exchanges to take place. The nomad locates him or herself in this space by gathering and assembling narratives. These narratives are recognised to have the potential to make a connection with ('the third in the one') and are thus integrated as meaningful (gathered). At the same time it can be postulated that by 'being located' and 'locating themselves' in this space – by participating in these narratives – the nomad is made available to others, which allows connections to form ('the one in the third'). The articulation of the self through emplotted stories can thus be paralleled to the notion of 'thirdness', the nomadic characteristic that enables connections to form in overlapping life-spaces and narratives.

Somers (1994:616) explains that reframing narrative through ontology can be useful to identity studies. She identifies four relevant features of reframed narativity: *relationality of parts, causal emplotment, selective appropriation and temporality, sequence and place*

⁷ Narrativity refers to both the mode of telling a story and its interpretation by the participant(s). Narrative refers to the story itself (content) as well as the telling (expression) of the story (Potteiger & Purinton 1998:3).

⁸ Somers (1994:616) uses the term "emplotment" to avoid chronology or categorical ordering of narratives. The term gives significance to independent instances that emerge from the context, important not because of their specific order, but rather their connection to the configurations of relationships within a life-story.

(Somers 1994:616). These features suggest that narrative is more than an enforced, categorical representation of life but rather that “narratives are constellations of *relationships* (connected parts) embedded in *time and space*” (Somers 1994:616). According to Somers, narrative viewed through an ontological lens demands that the meaning of any singular event can only be obtained through its relationship to other events. She argues that narrative “renders understanding only by *connecting parts*, however unstably, to a constructed *configuration* or *social network* of *relationships*, however incoherent or unrealizable, composed of symbolic, institutional, and material practices” (Somers 1994:616).

Reframing thus functions in a similar way to the concept of the ‘third space’ in relation to the metaphor of the postmodern nomad. Shared space is only possible through a relationship or connection between the singular self (a part) and the configurations of the other (both plural and singular). Somers’s four features of reframed narrativity strengthen this comparison. Firstly, the *relationality of parts* can be paralleled to the concept of the ‘thirdness’. *Relationality* implies being part of a dialogue. It indicates the recognition of similarities amid the parts and the potential to compare or make connections between them. This relating of parts within an almost infinite array of interactions allows for *causal emplotment*, the second of Somers’s four features. In this case, emplotment is the syntax of narrative. It allows for the configuration of significant, causal relationships, making it possible to understand a singular narrative in relation to others (Somers 1994:617). In the context of the postmodern nomad, emplotment functions as the action of gathering meaningful connections after hunting for meaning within the narratives of the ‘third space’. The meaning derived through the act of gathering can be viewed as *selective appropriation*, Somers’s third feature of reframed narrative. Appropriation can then be viewed as the integration of that which is meaningful (selected) from the connections into the self, becoming part of the nomad’s protean identity.

The final feature in Somers’s reframed narrativity, namely *temporality, sequence and place*, governs this process. Connections are temporal and can be momentary or stretched over extended periods of time. Their strength lies in the participants’ ability to recognise and appropriate these connections by using emplotment to integrate them into identities or life narratives. The *place*, potentially physical or symbolic, can be put forward as being the shared area where interactions occur, not dissimilar to the concept of a ‘third space’. Somers’s features of ontologically reframed narrativity combine to make narrative more accessible to relational identity formation.

The “narrative identity approach embeds the actor within relationships and stories that shift over time and space” (Somers 1994:621). The actor (or self) becomes part of a shared experience (a relationship), while narrative offers a means of accessing and gathering meaning from this ‘third space’ (the overlap of stories). These connections are not fixed. They shift over time and space. Accessing the ‘third space’ is thus a process where connections can be both made and lost through narratives. A narrative ontology defines identity as a process of ‘becoming’ embedded within spatial, temporal, social and interpersonal relationships (Somers 1994:618). These narratives can only exist as part of “intersubjective webs of relationality [that] sustain and transform narratives over time” (Somers 1994:618). It is these overlapping webs that are akin to the ‘third space’. Access to this ‘third space’ is possible through narrative, which is released from its restrictive, representational and categorical bonds by ontological reframing.

The discussion above attempts to demonstrate that a parallel can be drawn between the ideas of the ‘thirdness’ (Frosh & Baraitser 2009) and narrative ontology (Somers 1994). This parallel is ascribed to both functioning as restorative identity theories that are applicable to the plight of the postmodern nomad. It is also determined that narrative, reframed by an ontological approach, is freed from limiting categorical associations to be used as a means of accessing the ‘third space’. These are the concepts that inspire this research and propel it forward in the design process. In the section that follows, landscape is identified as a focus for this research. Through narrative, landscape is explored as a relational setting with ‘third space’ potential in the context of postmodern identity formation.

2.2 Step 2: Identification

Identification, the second step in the design process followed, examines and defines the concepts explored in Chapter 2.1 within constraints that focus efforts in a specific area. The theory that inspired this study is examined in terms of the specific area of interest, namely physical space. This area of focus in the study helps to connect the theory explored to physical landscape as a narrative of identity construction.

2.2.1 Narrative identity and relational spaces (landscape)

The previous section (Chapter 2.1) established that the protean identity of the individual in the twenty-first century can be viewed as nomadic in nature. When linked to narrative through ontology (Somers 1994), this identity finds footholds within the relational setting of

the 'third space'. The discussion that follows introduces the concept that a symbolic exploration of physical landscapes can help to understand its function as such relational settings. The potential of narrative within landscape is established and the implication for nomadic identity explored.

As physical and spatial beings, it is not difficult to imagine that shared spaces have an impact on daily life. It is, however, possible to take for granted the effect that such spaces can have, not only on the individual, but also on the individual's experience of cohabitation. Soja (1996:1) states that a strategic awareness of collectively created spaces and their social consequences has become a vital part of making not only theoretical but also practical sense of contemporary life-worlds, from the most intimate to the most global. Although many landscapes tend to be authored anonymously and are not obviously referential, they are still highly intertextual. They are "the creations of the reader as much as they are the products of the society that originally constructed them" (Potteiger & Purinton 1998:57). Matthew Potteiger and Jamie Purinton (1998:187) use a curb-side garden in New York as an example of how landscapes can function as open narratives where shaped daily by a plurality of voices through subconscious participation. This garden is situated on Twelfth street and forms part of an apartment block. Like many public gardens in Manhattan, the garden is open to anyone passing through it. Some regulars leave their mark on the space by donating plants, while others express gratitude by maintaining and cleaning the area. Some passersby may destroy or disregard the space by damaging plants or leaving trash. These types of unexpected encounters or random exchanges punctuate those acts that are routine, "the street changes as people move, businesses change, and traffic fluctuates. Stories are made every day by those who freely come and go" (Potteiger & Purinton 1998:187).

A landscape is assembled through chance encounters as much as through deliberate manipulation. Its formation is determined not only by natural processes like the seasons, but also by those who interact with the space. This is a locus of intersubjectivity: "[a]s a book collects and compresses information within its binding, the garden gathers knowledge and experience within its walls" (Potteiger & Purinton 1998:164). The idea that gardens function as metaphors for life on a microcosmic scale predates the sixteenth century. Persian paradise gardens were designed in four parts, representing the four corners of the world. Through the selective metaphors of the plants and décor, these gardens became continents (Potteiger & Purinton 1998:73).

Although these types of settings were arguably composed more deliberately than many public or private gardens today, they offer insight into the symbolic value of spaces. Similarly,

a city is a collection of world spaces, each area containing a variety of local and global parts (plants, soil, decor and debris). The act of forming spaces, deliberate or not, is a collaborative act: “the physical form of the city gathers and absorbs the memories of the many purposes, ideas, and traditions of those who have shaped and lived in it: The demands and pressures of social reality constantly affect the material order of the city” (Potteiger & Purinton 1998:170). These shared spaces are like constellations of memory projecting unique narratives that the community can recognise and partake in. The actual textures of a familiar neighbourhood are thus narrative textures too. When a neighbourhood feels like home, the houses, gardens and people one passes on its streets evoke stories (Potteiger & Purinton 1998:6). A shared space is never completely empty, nor emptied of symbolic value, as long as the parts of its composition evoke memory. These landscapes exist through personal experience, word of mouth and collective memories associated with the space and its components. They are densely imagined with overlapping histories and intersecting events. The cohabitation of these spaces saturates and embeds meaning into them that evokes narrative associations (Beauregard 2005:39).

According to Potteiger and Purinton (1998:20), landscape is a locus for individual and collective experience. As such, it becomes a vast mnemonic device. Moreover, they postulate that almost any element in a landscape can provide access to a memory. From woodlots, street corners, old trolley tracks, thresholds, to the tools used to shape the landscape: all of these have the potential to evoke a story (Potteiger & Purinton 1998:20). It is these spaces and the elements within them that individuals can associate with and share in the stories. Whether it is the space itself that evokes memory or a particular shrub or flower, access to the narratives of shared spaces is possible through the recognition of an individual’s story emplotted within it. Although this stimulation of memory may be individual, it also functions in relation to other individuals whose narrative associations may overlap or intersect within the constellations of stories that make up the space. The overlapping and intersection offers the potential for mutual recognition and sharing of stories.

There is another dimension of shared spaces that is also important. Although each microcosmic site within a city has its own particular composition and contributors, the boundaries created by walls, fencing, hedging and paving are permeable by the larger context of the city, the state or province, the country and other global influences. The boundaries of any space cannot simply be removed to force meaningful connections. It is by virtue of having many different structuring limits at play simultaneously that the urban site is unbound (Kahn 2005:293).

According to urban planner Andrea Kahn (2005:294), the concept that urban spaces are relational constellations requires the recognition that these sites exist simultaneously as multiple contexts or as dynamic relational constructs with a myriad of interactions and variable forces at play. “[F]or urban design what matters is gaining [an] understanding of the city *in the site*” (Kahn 2005:295). This type of relational thinking allows narratives to extend beyond the borders of a single space. An urban space can thus be viewed as a relational setting, existing as a ‘third space’ that encourages ‘thirdness’ in its citizens. It allows the individual to recognise his or her connection to the city in part and as part of a larger whole (‘the third in the one’), while at the same time providing symbolic links to the city through narrative (‘the one in the third’). Here the concept of ‘the city’ is more than the spaces it contains. It is comprised of these spaces and the people who share in its construction. Similarly, shared spaces of any origin have the potential of this trait by virtue of being produced in a similar way to the urban spaces discussed. Shared spaces have symbolic value because myriad individuals determine their composition. It is this act of cohabitation that allows meaningful connections to be made between individuals through the common spaces of contemporary life-worlds.

2.2.2 Summary of points of inspiration identified

From the exploration above it becomes evident that the shared spaces can, through narrative, be seen as physical manifestations of the ‘third space’ envisaged by the likes of Bhabha (1994), Soja (1996) and Jessica Benjamin (in Frosh & Baraitser 2009). The symbolic value of ‘third space’ provides a fertile ground for connections to form. The collective memories embedded in each space's composition await recognition and assimilation. The interaction of postmodern nomads through narrative within these relational spaces provides the opportunity to release symbolic meaning. Each individual association has the potential to be recognised and shared. Through the act of sharing these spaces the individual is also opened to connections made by others to the space. This open state of being is articulated by Benjamin's notion of ‘thirdness’ (in Frosh & Baraitser 2009). ‘Thirdness’, or as shown to be similar, Ubuntu (Chapter 2.1), facilitates within the individual the penetration of these spaces. Like narrative reframed through ontology (Chapter 2.2), ‘thirdness’ provides access to shared relational spaces that provide an abundance of symbolic meanings to be gathered and integrated into the self. The postmodern nomad associates with the space and is able to make a symbolic connection with it. Simultaneously, the interconnectedness of these spaces makes it possible for the same connection to be available to others. These connections form relational narratives that are shared by all parties but owned by none. Being connected to a

meaningful space has the potential to be constructive in identity formation. It embraces individual identity as part of a common area of exchange. These are some of the reciprocal building blocks of the 'third space' explored here.

The theoretical exploration in Chapter 2 served as inspiration and focus for the design project that culminates this study. These functions are the first steps in the design process toward this study's design outcome. The paper now proceeds to the conceptualisation, modelling and visual articulation phases in design praxis, as they manifest in the particular design process followed in this research.

Chapter 3 explores the concepts identified through practical application in a workshop activity to translate the theory into practice. The chapter discusses a workshop activity as the conceptualisation, exploration and refinement of the theory in Chapter 2 (these are steps 3 and 4 of the design process). The workshop activity is identified, documented⁹ and correlated to the main concepts that inspire this study. The interaction of individuals in this workshop produces a physical manifestation of the theory to be used in the final design project. Selection of a design medium and communication in the form of storyboarding and a narrative exploration also forms part of Chapter 3. These are the final steps in the design process before the final articulation of the design. It is anticipated that the practice of designing in these steps of the design process will result in the realisation of the symbolic value of the workshop and the theory that lead to its inception.

⁹ The workshop is documented in Chapter 3 as well as in Appendix A and B of this study.

CHAPTER 3: DESIGN PRAXIS

Chapter 2 provides the inspiration and focus that drive the design process in this study. The following sections apply these concepts practically by following the remaining steps in the design process. The steps of conceptualisation and exploration/refinement act as a means to explore the concepts identified more fully in a practical environment to understand its significance before translation into tangible designs. The connections that are explored between the theory¹ and interpretive observations of the workshop activity contribute to conceptualising the theory in practice. The above all forms part of Chapter 3.1. The next step followed in the design process is definition/modelling. At this stage, decisions are made in terms of approach and the medium to be used in the design outcome. This step is discussed as part of Chapter 3.2, along with the steps of communication and finally, production. Communication includes relating the theory from Chapter 2 and the observations and physical outputs in Chapter 3.1 back to the final design. Storyboarding provides a means of communicating these links and defining technical requirements in preparation for the production of the final design. The actual production stage of this research, though discussed in this chapter, is conducted outside the pages of this study in the form of an animated short (Appendix F) that can be viewed on the compact disc accompanying this study.

3.1 Step 3-4: Conceptualisation and exploration/refinement

For the purposes of this study, conceptualisation involves the selection of suitable means of articulating the theory explored in Chapter 2 in a practical environment. In Chapter 3.1.1 a means of articulation is presented and conceptualised in the form of a workshop. The theory is then explored and refined through the interpretive observations of the workshop in practice. This workshop is the first step in actualising the theory that inspired this design research and project. The workshop was planned, executed and documented in May 2010. The following section provides insight into the processes involved in this activity and how it contributes to the synthesis of the overall study. The workshop was documented photographically to support this study and to enable an accurate report of the events and procedures that were followed. Including specifications and sequencing, this documentation is presented in the form of a field journal attached as Appendix A. The physical outcome of

¹ From this point in the study onwards, all instances of the term 'the theory' used refer specifically to the theory covered in Chapter 2.

the workshop is recorded in Appendix B, which shows the 39 individual sheets of paper produced and identifies those sheets used in the final design project.

3.1.1 Conceptualisation: paper making as a workshop activity to explore relational narratives

This study looks at the relational narrative(s) of shared spaces and explores constructive concepts, such as the 'third space', 'thirdness' and narrative ontology for shaping identity. A physical setting provides an area of commonality in which dialogue can take place. Identity in this context is not examined as specific or exclusive, but rather as a mutual and ongoing dialogue that is enabled and strengthened by cohabitation on smaller and larger scales. Each smaller space, for instance a home, work or school, is a microcosm of a larger suburb, city, province or country and provides an opportunity for interactions to take place.

Such a microcosm of shared space was sought and identified for this study. As a platform for dialogue, a workshop was selected purposively as a medium for the research. A workshop is a non-threatening, playful and creative setting that allows participants to relax and enjoy being part of the experience. This was a key consideration in the selection of a workshop as part of the research for this study. The Hatfield Montessori Preschool was chosen as the space for the workshop. It is a site of education, social interaction and cooperation in which young children (aged 2 to 6) spend a significant amount of time forming their identities. This age group was selected purposively, as the innocence of play and exploration would allow an honest, unfiltered interaction with the physical landscape without expectations. Although this specific preschool was chosen for a number of reasons,² other settings have equal potential and could be included in later studies using similar research methods.

This study theorises that the postmodern individual operates in a nomadic fashion when constructing identity. This nomadic behaviour is a process of hunting for meaning within

² Hatfield Montessori Preschool was selected purposively as the preschool for this research for a number of reasons. The school is close to the University and has had much experience working with Postgraduate students from various University departments, including Drama, Music and Psychology. This made the procedures and permissions of the University's ethical requirements effortless, as the school, parents and children are familiar with the procedures necessary to conduct research. The school was also quite ready and willing to facilitate the process and provide the needed supervision and help in organising the structure of the workshop. The school has a large enclosed garden that the children share and play in. Such a shared space was a requirement for this study. A large outside area was available for art activities. This provided a space for the mess and fun of paper making, while requiring minimal clean-up and effort from the school. Coupled with the friendliness and helpfulness of the teachers, parents and children, the Hatfield Montessori Preschool was the ideal setting. It was thus selected and used successfully as a site for this study's workshop research activity.

shared spaces (both physical and metaphorical) and gathering symbolic narratives to integrate into the self. The purpose of the workshop was to allow a group of young individuals (or postmodern nomads) to interact with a physical landscape that they share, to gather from it and produce meaning in some way. It was the intention to find a way to record this interaction so that a physical manifestation of the act of hunting and gathering would be available. The selected activity thus had to have the ability to provide this type of experience and end result.

Paper making seemed to have the potential to fulfil these requirements, while offering relevant characteristics and metaphoric associations that could be integrated into the research. Paper making was thus chosen as the workshop activity.³ The act of making the paper themselves allows the children to participate physically in the formation of their narrative metaphor. The resulting paper is unique to the setting and to each individual. It does, however, also serve other purposes. It is a metaphor of the bond of shared location (having bonding properties itself), and is the visible manifestation or record of the landscape at that time. The children were also asked to bring items from their own gardens to personalise their individual sheet of paper. The resulting sheets are layered with symbols from the shared space of the preschool and the participants in the workshop. The individual sheets are set apart from each other through individual interaction and selection. Each sheet is unique to the child who created it. Together, these sheets build a narrative of shared space, forming a metaphoric volume of both individual and group identity.

The volume of paper created in the workshop serves as a record of that day, the individuals and their selections within the shared space. The paper provided a canvas on which to record the workshop, a surface into which narrative metaphors become embedded and unified. It was found that the pulp created to bond together the items selected from the landscape had added symbolic dimension. Paper was sourced from both the Visual Arts Department and the preschool. These included scraps, old drawings and discarded documents of life's goings on. Among the paper sourced for the pulp were also maps of Pretoria (Tshwane), thus adding a dimension of location to the paper. As maps become dated quickly and thus consigned to the (recycle) bin, it also adds a dimension of time. The paper pulp thus contains and binds together the narratives and metaphors of the workshop. In its composition, it also holds fragments of the shared spaces, lives and activities imprinted on it through the

³ It is worth noting at this juncture that the fixed goal of paper making allows the hunting-gathering process in a shared space to be more focused and specific than may be considered customary to the abstract and multifarious postmodern search for meaning. This focussed activity is an attempt to actualise or experience the theory dealt with in this study in a practical way that may not necessarily account for some of the complexities found in postmodern theory.

discarded paper used in the pulp. This, in turn, is metaphoric of protean identity, a few moments held together as a record of a time and place that shift and change as much as those who inhabit it.

Paper making provides a way to record the workshop and have a physical manifestation of the young postmodern nomads in the act of hunting and gathering. This workshop functions on a metaphoric level and serves as a means to conceptualise and experience the theory that inspired this investigation into a practical application that is explored below.

3.1.2 Exploration: gathering and producing meaning

After deciding on an activity that reflects the theory (conceptualisation), the next step was to conduct and make observations of the workshop activity conducted in May 2010. It was the intention from the start to involve the children directly in physically making the pulp and the actual sheets of paper. This was done to allow a relational narrative to develop from the process of making the paper right from the start. By working together to prepare the pulp (Figure 1),⁴ the children began to interact both with each other as well as the process toward meaning. Meaning in this context is concerned with making connections to the physical space and to those who share it.

The workshop activity gave the children a chance to interact with a space that they share every day in a new way. This part of the activity was presented as a 'nature treasure-hunt' so that the children could interact with their shared location without any specific intervention. The children were tasked with gathering objects into buckets from their immediate environment that they would like to add to the pulp (Figures 2, 3 and 4). The children worked together as a group but also wondered off at times to make their individual selections.



Figure 1: The children of Hatfield Montessori Preschool tear up scraps of paper together to form part of their own new sheets of paper. Pretoria (Tshwane), 4 July 2010. Photograph by author

⁴ These images and others documenting the workshop can be found in Appendix A, an informal field journal that describes the events of the day.



Figure 2: The author and a small group of children set off to gather items for the paper. Pretoria (Tshwane), 4 July 2010. Photograph by Mérani Meyer

In Chapter 2 of this study it was established that shared spaces can be seen as physical manifestations of the ‘third space’ discussed and adapted from Jessica Benjamin (Frosh & Baraitser 2009:164-167). The ‘third space’, as defined in this research, functions as a metaphoric platform whereby connections can be made between individuals who share in the space. Although perhaps unrealised,

these shared spaces have symbolic value that provides fertile ground for connections to form. The children cohabit the preschool and influence the spaces as individuals and as a group. Their interaction with the landscape imparts meaning onto it. Their collective associations and memories become embedded in the space, awaiting recognition and assimilation. The children’s interaction with the landscape through the workshop activity allowed a unique collection of objects such as soil, plants and debris to form a physical blueprint of the landscape’s unique composition. This composition is layered with potential symbolic meaning and associations.

The children behave symbolically as the postmodern nomad would. They ‘hunt’ within a shared environment, a ‘third space’, which they all contribute to in some way and that has meaning for them as individuals but that also overlaps with others who share the space. This hunting is to gather from the space, in terms of the postmodern nomad this is a search for meaning to assimilate. In the workshop activity this concept is translated into the children selecting from the landscape items that they desired to incorporate into their paper. By selecting some items and choosing to ignore others the children gather in a way that is meaningful to them. Each group of children made their own selection from their garden both together and individually. Their selection thus forms a representation of their shared space that would then be recorded within the paper.



Figure 3: Children working together to fill the buckets. Pretoria (Tshwane), 4 July 2010. Photograph by Mérani Meyer

The next part of the exploration brought the children back to the covered area where they had first helped to prepare the pulp. The bits of nature assembled from the garden were combined with the pulp to form the base of the paper that the children would create. The children emptied their buckets into containers of pulp, each helping to mix their contribution into the base solution (Figure 5). The concept represented by the action of combining their selections inside the pulp is that of shared connections to the space. Each child had his or her own contribution to the creation of this base paper, which serves as a metaphor for the preschool as a shared environment.



Figure 4: A child makes a selection from the landscape away from the group. Pretoria (Tshwane), 4 July 2010.
Photograph by Méran Meyer



Figure 5: Children adding their items to the paper pulp to form a base. Pretoria (Tshwane), 4 July 2010.
Photograph by Méran Meyer

Once the gathering was completed, the process of creating the individual sheets of paper could begin. Each child was given a mesh frame to immerse in the base solution. One by one the children submerged their frames into the thick mass of pulp (Figure 6). Bits of the preschool's garden became embedded amid the fibres of the pulp, forming the backdrop for their individual sheets.

Each child's resulting sheet thus contained a part of the contributions they made to the paper as a group. Once again, the children were making their own selection from the pulp, as each frame collected different items. Similar to the process of gathering and selecting from the physical landscape in the treasure-hunt, the pulp and frame allowed the children to bind their individual selections into one sheet. Although the sheet is unique to each child, it also forms part of the group activity. The end result is thus produced by both the group and the individual, without being fully owned by either. In this symbolic way, the children are engaging the concepts of Ubuntu and 'thirdness' discussed in Chapter 2. As individuals they can connect with each other through their collective involvement.

The space of the preschool can be viewed as a relational setting that encourages recognition and narrative association ('thirdness'). The landscape is represented symbolically by forming part of the paper. The paper allows the individual child to recognise his or her connection to the space through the recognition of his or her contribution to the paper ('the third in the one'). An item that one child selected from the landscape and combined in the pulp may end up as part of the base of another child's paper. This provides the opportunity for symbolic links to form. Each child has made his or her selection available to others by contributing to the base pulp. The children can thus discover a link to one another through the paper ('the one in the third'). Both the landscape and the paper function as 'third spaces' providing access to symbolic narratives.



Figure 6: The author helps a child to remove her frame from the base pulp mixture revealing pieces from the 'nature treasure-hunt' embedded in the pulp. Pretoria (Tshwane), 4 July 2010. Photograph by MÉRANI MEYER

After each child had filled his or her mesh frame with the base pulp, the children used the selections made from their home environment to individualise their own sheet of paper. These personal selections function as a way for the children to imprint their own life-space, which lies beyond the preschool, into the paper symbolically. The children brought with them items from the different suburbs that they live in, thus creating a bridge between the larger context of the city (and beyond) and the microcosm of the preschool site.

Like those gathered from the shared space of the preschool, these items also have the potential to form connections. Each item brought can provide access to memory. For example, the narrative texture of a certain flower that one of the children brought could evoke a memory for that specific child, but also for others who have encountered it elsewhere in the city or beyond. These associations form constellations of memory around the object that project unique narratives for the members of the community to recognise and share in. Like the garden in the greater context of New York observed by Potteiger and Purinton (1998), the landscape of the preschool extends into a larger context and forms a site of commonality, a mnemonic device, for individual and collective association. The paper, imbued with artefacts from different spaces, thus serves a similar purpose, functioning as a container for memory. Through associated memory, identities can develop in relation to one another. Memory acts as a means to stabilise identity. Without memory, the self's

experience of the other and the landscape would become incoherent. This is part of the production of narrative meaning through ‘third space’ interactions. By developing connections through shared landscape, a spatial narrative is generated that all can recognise and glean from.

3.1.3 Refinement: reflection on workshop

The workshop provided a platform for the physical and tangible manifestation of the theory of the ‘third space’ pertaining to this research. The act of making paper and the actual sheets themselves provided symbolic and practical links to the theory throughout the exploration step of the design process. These links between theory and practice help to demonstrate the validity of the idea of a spatial narrative in the process of making meaning and relational identity formation. The physical activity became a practical demonstration of the theory’s applicability in the negotiation of shared space. The theory, then, is not entirely abstract, but is reliant on human interaction and the production of meaning to manifest its own relevance. Although the children, teachers and parents involved may not fully comprehend the implications of the workshop from a theoretical point of view, their participation in the process of making the paper is of symbolic value to this research. Through the third and fourth steps of the design process (conceptualisation and exploration/refinement), links could be drawn between the theory of relational spaces and the workshop activity. The activity chosen proved not only to reflect the theory but also to actualise it. The interpretive observations of the theory as it manifest during the workshop help to link the activity and its outputs, the sheets of paper, to the main concepts that inspired this research. The 39 sheets of paper produced in the workshop are the first tangible manifestations of the theory in a visual format. They hold within them the potential to convey these connections between theory and practical implementation. On their own, they are, however, unable to do so. In order to convey this potential the study proceeds to the next phase of the design process, namely communication. This is where the paper is used to inspire and create the final design project, an animated short.

3.2 Step 5-7: Definition/modelling, communication and production

From the conceptualisation, exploration and refinement steps in Chapter 3.1 of the theory from Chapter 2 that is the inspiration and focus of the design project of this study, the design process moves closer to the final design outcome. Chapter 3.2 details the final stages of the design process followed in this research and design project. In the definition/modelling stage

(Chapter 3.2.1), an appropriate design medium is discussed for this research. The theory, the interpretive observations of the workshop activity and the workshop outputs are employed to define a narrative with which to structure the design in the chosen medium (Chapter 3.2.2). Communication in this section takes the form of storyboards and a symbolic narrative. This narrative is linked to the theory and the workshop through the interpretation of samples selected purposively from the 39 sheets of paper comprising the workshop outputs. Much of the final step in the design process, production, is done outside of this document in the form of a digital animation that can be found as Appendix F on the compact disc that accompanies the document. This step is, however, also discussed as the final part of this chapter (Chapter 3.2.3). The following sections thus explore the remaining steps in the design process toward the creation of the final design project.

3.2.1 Definition/modelling: defining the approach

From the first manifestations of the theory in a visual format, namely the paper⁵ produced in the workshop, it is necessary to move beyond the actual paper, as it does not function as a conveyor of meaning in isolation. Although the method followed in its creation has meaning for this research and is meant to visualise the theory, the individual sheets of paper are not innately meaningful. It does, however, have the potential to be used as elements of, and inspiration for, a narrative. In this section, an approach to narrative for the design project is discussed.

To design is to conceive, plan and create. It is to make visible that which is invisible, to visually distil that which cannot be succinctly described in words, to explore, coordinate and ultimately, to communicate (Frascara 2004:2). Many design mediums can employ the stylistic vehicle of the paper to communicate this study's theory through symbolic narrative.

Although potentially rich in visual impact and narrative symbolism, physical and print mediums lack the added dimensions of time, movement and sound of animated mediums.

Animating is not merely the copying or transferring of a design to another medium. To animate is "to give life and soul to a design" by transforming the reality of the design itself (Wells 1998:10). Kyle Cooper,⁶ who studied graphic design at the Yale University School of Art, refers to static design compositions as moments in time, freeze-frames that draw the

⁵ From this point in the study onwards, all references to the term 'paper' refer specifically to the paper created in the workshop and detailed in Chapter 3.1.

⁶ Kyle Cooper is a designer best known for his work in motion design of movie title sequences like *Seven* (1995), *Iron Man* (2008) and *Sherlock Holmes* (2009). He is the owner and managing creative director of Prologue Films (Drate, Robbins & Salavetz 2006:7). Prologue is a design company that comprises a collective of designers, filmmakers and artists that value collaborative relationships and strive to support their clients creatively in order to help them tell their stories (Prologue 2011:[Sp]).

viewer in. He points out that with the multiple images of motion, designers have more at their disposal to involve the audience and transport them to another world. Cooper sees motion design⁷ as a medium that equips designers with a variable that makes it possible not only to look into the universe of the main character but also to present a broader picture of numerous other related stories. "We [designers] now have more frames to let a story unfold" (Drate, Robbins & Salavetz 2006:6-7).

Animation, a medium in motion design, is one of the most dynamic mediums of expression available to creative professions. Its nature continually adapts, adopts and changes according to contexts, offering new narrative and aesthetic possibilities with each articulation. This encourages the exploration of new modes of storytelling and the discovery of new techniques and tools from a range of inter-disciplinary sources (Wells 2006:6-7). Since it allows for conceptualisation, integration and articulation in an adaptive and seemingly borderless creative environment, the medium of animation is a nomadic tool for the designer. Animation is a medium that enables a multiplicity of approaches to storytelling and the expression of thoughts and emotions. According to Paul Wells (1998:68), "animation possesses the capacity to create new modes of storytelling, often rejecting the notion of a plot with a beginning, middle and an end, in favour of *symbolic or metaphoric effects*". This concept is in line with Somers' (1994) reframing of narrative through ontology, which understands chronology through the idea of emplotment. This concept gives significance to narrative moments that are important not because of their order, but rather because of their connection to other configurations within the larger story (Somers 1994:616). Animation provides a means of articulation that echoes the narrative syntax of emplotment. It allows configurations of narrative moments or concepts to be viewed in relation to others.

Making connections to these constellations of symbols is what stimulates memory and facilitates dialogue among people. Stories are metaphors for life, unearthing universally human experiences and containing them within a unique form of expression (McKee 1998: 4,25). Individuals can connect through story by recognising some aspect that relates to the self within the symbolic narrative space. The capacity within the subject to recognise the possibility of a connection ('the third in the one') is encouraged through the use of metaphor and symbolism. These tools of story allow association and recall of memory. The connections and links that are made possible through story allow individuals to share and be present in the narrative space ('the one in the third'). In motion design, the medium, whether

⁷ Motion design is seen as the convergence of graphic design and film technologies into a new form of storytelling (Drate, Robbins & Salavetz 2006:8). It is these technologies that set the designs in motion.

animation or other film techniques, acts as a form of storytelling that engages users⁸ and allow them to participate in the narrative rather than passively viewing it. The task of the designer is thus to involve users and to introduce a story for them to participate in (Drate, Robbins & Salavetz 2006:8-9).

Animation transforms and gives life and soul to design ideas (Wells 1998:10). Like other design mediums, animation has the potential to reveal and make explicit connections between apparently unrelated narratives. Wells (1998:68-126) defines narrative strategies inherent to the medium of animation that enable these kinds of connections. These strategies include *metamorphosis*, *condensation*, *synecdoche*, *symbolism* and *metaphor*. 'Metamorphosis' is specific to visual media and a major constituent of animation itself. It exposes and forges original relationships, allowing unpredictable temporal and spatial connections that accommodate fluid narrative development. Visual narratives thus have the ability to make the invisible visible by translating "an inarticulable experience into a conceivable image system" (Wells 1998:124).

Any narrative with multiple sources inevitably becomes complex. Wells (1998:76-84) proposes strategies to deal with this. He suggests what he calls 'condensation' as a strategy that allows a high degree of narrative information to be presented within a limited time span. 'Conflation' is a defining feature of design mediums, as visual information can be presented concisely through selection and focus amid great complexity. Similarly, rhetorical devices such as synecdoche, symbolism and metaphor can be used in visual narratives to act as shorthand for the viewer (Wells 1998:80). Although not unique to design mediums, these strategies illustrate the potential for narrative exploration through visual articulation and selection.

This study uses the medium of animation to express the narrative potential within relational landscapes and provide a method of synthesis for the process followed and the theory explored.⁹ This is done in an attempt to bring the theory to life through praxis. In this study, animation is used as a platform to approach the relationship between design and theory and to explore the theory via the merits of the medium. The resulting animated short, *My time, my place*, tracks the journey of a postmodern nomad through a landscape of the metaphors inspired and represented visually by the paper created in the relational setting of the preschool. The character encounters other nomads along the way that both influence and

⁸ David Robbins uses the term 'user' to stress the difference between passively viewing a design and actively participating in its narrative (Drate, Robbins & Salavetz 2006:8-9).

⁹ See Appendix F, the animated short, which is in digital format on a CD attached to the back cover of this study.

are influenced. This design project visualises a narrative that explores the theory of relational space and identity formation visually through a symbolic narrative. Through synecdoche, symbolism and metaphor, the narrative for the animated design project develops out of observations from the theory as it was manifest in the workshop (Chapter 3.1.2). This visual design narrative is envisaged as a reflection of the shared experience of place, evoking the concepts of 'third space' covered in Chapter 2 and translating them into a representative form that the user can engage with.

A selection was made from the 39 sheets of paper produced in the workshop (Appendix B). These selected sheets inspire the symbolic articulation of the theory through narrative, visualised in the chosen design medium of animation. The act of working with the paper and selecting from it to inspire and produce a narrative for the design project forms part of the communication phase of the design process followed toward the visualisation of the abstract concepts presented in this study. Rough drawings in the form of storyboards are used to convey meaning and technical details for the final design project. The communication stage also involves reflecting on the theory and the interpretive observations of the workshop activity to define an inclusive narrative. This part of the design process is documented below.

3.2.2 Communication: synthesis of theory and praxis, preparation for visual articulation

Bhabha (1994:1) describes the postmodern individual's existence as marked by a sense of survival on the borderlines of the shifting present. There is a constant awareness of being in the moment of transition, across space and time, producing complex manifestations of difference and identity. Although the lack of fixity causes disorientation, the restless movement is also explorative. The individual's behaviour is thus nomadic in nature, restless and shifting, yet constantly in search of anchors of meaning to sustain existence. This notion is parallel to Frosh and Baraitser's (2009:159-160) metaphor of the nomad that first inspired this research and design project. In this study's animated short, this continuous transitional state is represented by the main character's movement through a paper landscape. This postmodern nomad, dubbed *Pomono* (*Postmodern nomad*, Figure 7), represents the nomadic nature in the postmodern individual. Pomono embodies that sense of searching or hunting amid shifting certainties; that hopeful yearning for a connection to form. This character is specifically intended to be a "tabula rasa", a blank page, as the connection to this concept is taken to be universal. The landscape through which the main character walks is emblematic of communal spaces (physical or symbolic) that have the potential to be opened as 'third spaces' (Chapter 2). These spaces allow the brief penetration of borderlines of the

shifting present so that exchange of meaning and assimilation into the self can occur. This is how Pomono forms a bond with the space and individuals encountered, by gathering from these 'third spaces'. Pomono's identity gradually becomes enriched by and connected to the once unfamiliar landscape and its inhabitants. This concept is represented visually by the character retaining characteristics of the environment and other characters encountered.



Figure 7: *Pomono*, Pretoria (Tshwane), 4 July 2010.
Photograph by author

The actual landscape and all of the characters Pomono meets along the way are constructed using the paper created in the workshop (Chapter 3.1). The sheets that were chosen purposively to form part of the animation short and serve to inspire the narrative that follows. This allows the 'third space' physical landscape of the workshop, embodied by the sheets of paper, to transform into a visual narrative. This narrative points to the theory explored in this study, a theory of postmodern nomads traversing 'third spaces' visualised through animation. The narrative is broken into scenes that explain the inspiration and the symbolic meaning in relation to the study.

Scene 1 (Figure 9):

The sheet of paper that influenced the first scene's narrative contains small branches and leaves, some brown with age, others green and fresh (Figure 8). These leaves inspired the narrative of the first character that Pomono encounters. This character has these leaves on his back, which grow as he interacts with the landscape. The older leaves symbolise the length of time that the character has invested in the space, while the newer leaves are evidence of the potential for new growth. Pomono's identity is in a state of flux and here too is evidence that nature is also unstable. The ordered flux of seasonal change, like postmodern identity, is protean. The soil that covers part of the paper leads to the concept

of the main character's first interaction with the foreign space. Pomono's feet become covered in soil during the journey into the foreign space, this covering functions as an entry point to the first narrative.



Figure 8: The first sheet of paper selected for the animation and detail. Pretoria (Tshwane), 4 July 2010. Photograph by author

The story begins when Pomono arrives in a richly textured landscape. Like the mnemonic New York gardens of Potteiger and Purinton (1998), the nuances in the paper serve as evidence of multiple interactions in and contributions to the metaphoric space it represents. This is doubly true in this instance. The richly textured surface is emblematic of this concept and, as the landscape is derived from the paper made in the workshop portion of this research, it contains the evidence of the mutual selection and individual contributions made by the children interacting in the workshop. This complex space contrasts with the main character's own appearance. The space is layered with objects, colours and textures that are, as yet, not part of Pomono, who, in comparison, is plain and uncomplicated. The main character does not merely enter the space, but rather falls into it. This action reflects the postmodern condition of displacement and the restless adjustments to encountering change. It may also be taken as a subtle reference to the dislocation experienced in the past and continued flux of migration in postcolonial contexts (Chapter 1.1 and 2.1.1).



Figure 9: Storyboard visualisation for and character sketch Scene 1. Pretoria (Tshwane), 4 July 2010.

At first, Pomono is isolated in this landscape, but quickly attempts to form a connection by calling out. The main character is thus opened to interaction from others within the space. By being available, a potential 'third space' is formed. Being open for connections to form is the second principle of the 'third space' theory dealt with in this study. This principle, 'the third in one' (Frosh & Baraitser 2009:166), is a fundamental part of the reciprocal function of 'third space'. This first attempt at opening a 'third space' is unsuccessful: the call goes unanswered. Somewhat disappointed, Pomono nonetheless continues into the landscape in search of meaning and a connection to the space. Connections begin to form as Pomono moves through and searches the space: the unknown becomes increasingly known with each step taken. This is represented by the sand that becomes attached to the character's feet. Pomono does not try to remove the sand, which emphasises an openness to the influences of the landscape. As stated above, such openness is essential to the formation of 'third space' connections. The items embedded in the paper form part of the landscape of the animated short, but also refer to its origins in the gardens of the children who partook in the workshop portion of this research.

This initial interface with the landscape helps Pomono to form a connection with the first character encountered. This first individual is densely layered with elements that echo the landscape. He is standing alone, calmly interacting with the space. This first character is in a dialogue with the space as he waters the ground. The water becomes part of the landscape, enriching it and causing growth in both the landscape and the first character. This is represented by the growing leaves that form part of the character and the landscape. This growth is a symbol of the transformation of identity through reciprocal action.

The water itself is made up of the blue-purple petals of a Hydrangea (Figure 10), a plant of Japanese origin common in South African gardens. One of the children who took part in the workshop integrated the petals into the paper. These petals are visible in the area below the first character. The act of watering adds more petals to the paper landscape, thus enriching it.



Figure 10: The Hydrangea petals found in a second piece of paper that inspired the concept of watering in the animated short. Pretoria (Tshwane), 4 July 2010. Photograph by author

The first character sees Pomono and notices the sand that covers this character's feet. Although the texture and colour of the sand differs, the first character also has this attribute. The recognition of the similarity between the characters opens the reciprocal space between them for interaction. This recognition of a potential connection within others is the first principle in 'thirdness' referred to as 'the one in the third' (Frosh & Baraitser 2009:166) in this research. The first character offers Pomono the chance to enrich the landscape in the same way that he does, watering it. This act transforms the physical and metaphoric space between them into a 'third space' in which meaning can be found and assimilated. Pomono emulates the first character's actions and imparts the petals to the ground. The action is reciprocated by the sprouting of a leaf from Pomono's shoulder, which is symbolic of the assimilation of meaning into the self. Moreover, the watered plant grows, indicating the reciprocal nature of interacting in the 'third space'. Roots also begin to sprout from one of Pomono's feet, emblematic of the bond that is beginning to form with the landscape. The nomadic nature of the postmodern individual does not allow for lingering too long. Pomono thus frees the rooted foot, symbolically ending the connection to this 'third space'. The first character's roots run deep, indicating a long term investment in the landscape. Pomono uses these roots as a ladder to move deeper into the landscape. The interaction with this first

character thus opens the landscape further to the main character, providing new avenues to investigate.

Scene 2 (Figure 13):



Figure 11: The third sheet of paper selected for the animation and detail. Pretoria (Tshwane), 4 July 2010. Photograph by author

Figure 11 shows the paper that inspired the concept of the roots that bond the first character to the landscape and providing a point of access for Pomono to the second scene. The inspiration came from the plant attached to the paper. It stands out from the other elements included in the paper's visual composition because, in contrast, it is a whole plant (not merely a piece of one) that was selected to form part of the composition. The plant also echoes the leaves of the previous scene as a symbol of new growth. The roots provide a symbol of a connection as well as a path towards growth for the main character.

The second character that Pomono encounters was inspired by the sheet of paper in Figure 12. This sheet has a string-like plant that resembles human hair. The way this string is entangled on the surface of the paper evokes the image of a long, unkempt beard. The hairs reach out visually to other parts of and items on the page, as if to ensnare them. The tangled mess of fibres, which seemed to call out for order, came to represent the second part of the narrative.



Figure 12: The fourth sheet of paper selected for the animation and detail. Pretoria (Tshwane), 4 July 2010. Photograph by author

The journey down the roots imparts more of the landscape onto the main character, who is gradually becoming more connected to and enriched by it. The new path leads Pomono to a second character with a long beard. This beard ensnares items from the environment and also holds the character captive in it. This scene is a metaphor for the rigidity of categorical approaches to identity being fixed and without room to accommodate change (Somers 1994: 610-611). The second character is entangled in the space, bound by and entrenched in it. There are things holding him there and isolating him. This is symbolised by the course beard that grows from the character and tangles around the objects in the space. These objects, living green leaves and dead brown leaves, are used as symbols of categorical and binary notions of identity, those imposed by representational narativity (Somers 1994:613). The objects that hold the second character to the space are entangled in the mesh that binds him. The character does not acknowledge Pomono's entrance, nor does he interact with Pomono directly, as the previous character had. This ensnared character represents rigid notions of identity that close spaces down and deny reciprocal interaction.



Figure 13: Storyboard visualisation and character sketch for Scene 2. Pretoria (Tshwane), 4 July 2010.
Photograph by author

Pomono, imbued with the nomadic instinct to hunt for meaning in all spaces encountered, recognises the potential for a connection even in this closed space. The leaves trapped by the beard resemble those that now form part of the main character's identity. This is a visual connection between the main character and the second character. It is a recognition of similarity that allows a story to be shared. Through ontological narrative (Somers 1994), the acknowledgment of the potential of individual stories to form part of a relational, collective and consensual domain, allows identity to escape fixed categorisations.

By once again recognising the 'the one in the third' Pomono opens the 'third space' between the characters. Pomono begins to free the leaves in the space, removing the obstacles that hold the second character down, thereby reopening the potential for dialogue. Pomono releases the leaves from the beard and it recoils, freeing the second character from his bonds. In the act of freeing this character, the string-like beard had begun to entangle itself around Pomono. Pomono frees manages to escape potential ensnarement (falling into the trap of categorical views of identity) with the final tug to remove the largest leaf. The string attached to Pomono breaks off, but remains attached to the arm. This is representative of the experience gained through the interaction, which is integrated into the self. Having gained from this connection, the main character exits this 'third space' in search of further

spaces to connect with and grow from. A final, smaller leaf dislodges and flies away from the second character's remaining beard as he stretches in relief from his confines. The leaf's flight functions as a transition into the third scene as the leaf lands at the feet of the third character Pomono encounters.

Scene 3 (Figure 15):

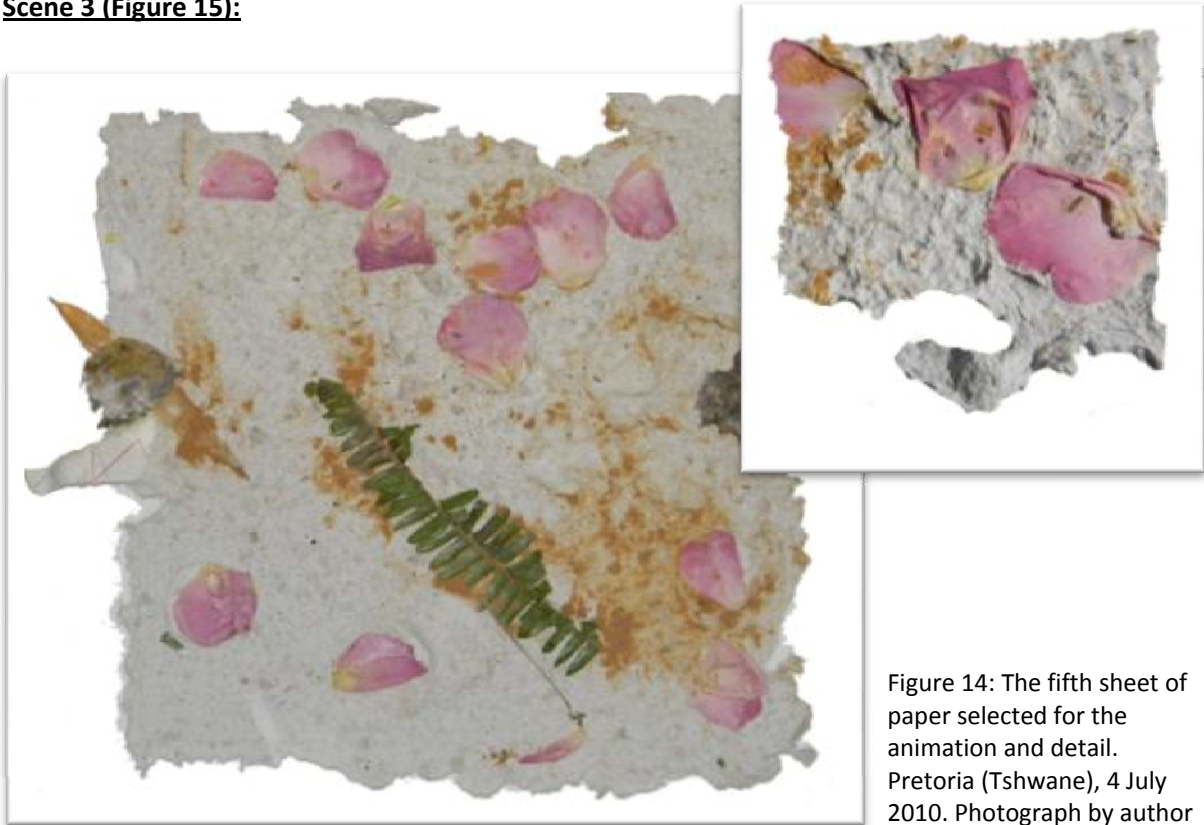


Figure 14: The fifth sheet of paper selected for the animation and detail. Pretoria (Tshwane), 4 July 2010. Photograph by author

The sheet of paper that inspired the third scene was made early on in the workshop conducted for this study (Figure 14). The young girl who created it was very careful and meticulous about the composition of her piece of paper, choosing to decorate it with only rose petals, a single fern and a scattering of sand from her collection of items from home. These elements are each separate on the pale surface. Barely touching, they stand out in isolation, even as they are unified by the composition. The petals had to be pressed firmly yet gently to ensure that they adhered to the paper, a task that took some time and that the young girl¹⁰ performed carefully. It is this act of affixing the petals with effort and the visual traits of the sheet of paper itself that inspired the third scene's narrative.

¹⁰ A photograph of this young girl individualising her sheet of paper forms part of Appendix A. It is figure 20 of this section.

The pink rose petals fall around the third character as she attempts to apply them to herself. She struggles alone in this space, which represents the postmodern pursuit of individualism. She is attempting to assimilate meaning in isolation, an effort that fails. The petals will not adhere to her. The act of attempting to affix the petals to herself but failing is symbolic of the struggle to develop one's sense of self in isolation. Part of the notion of 'thirdness' and Ubuntu, as discussed earlier in this study (Chapter 2), is that the postmodern self is already part of a community, but needs to recognise the potential in him or herself and others in order to develop. The struggle of this third character to develop without such a connection is thus emblematic of the absence of Ubuntu. Here Ubuntu, akin to 'thirdness', is the potential to form symbiotic connections and grow from them. This allows identity to be understood as interdependent, existing not only because of these connections to others in the system but developing out of them as well.

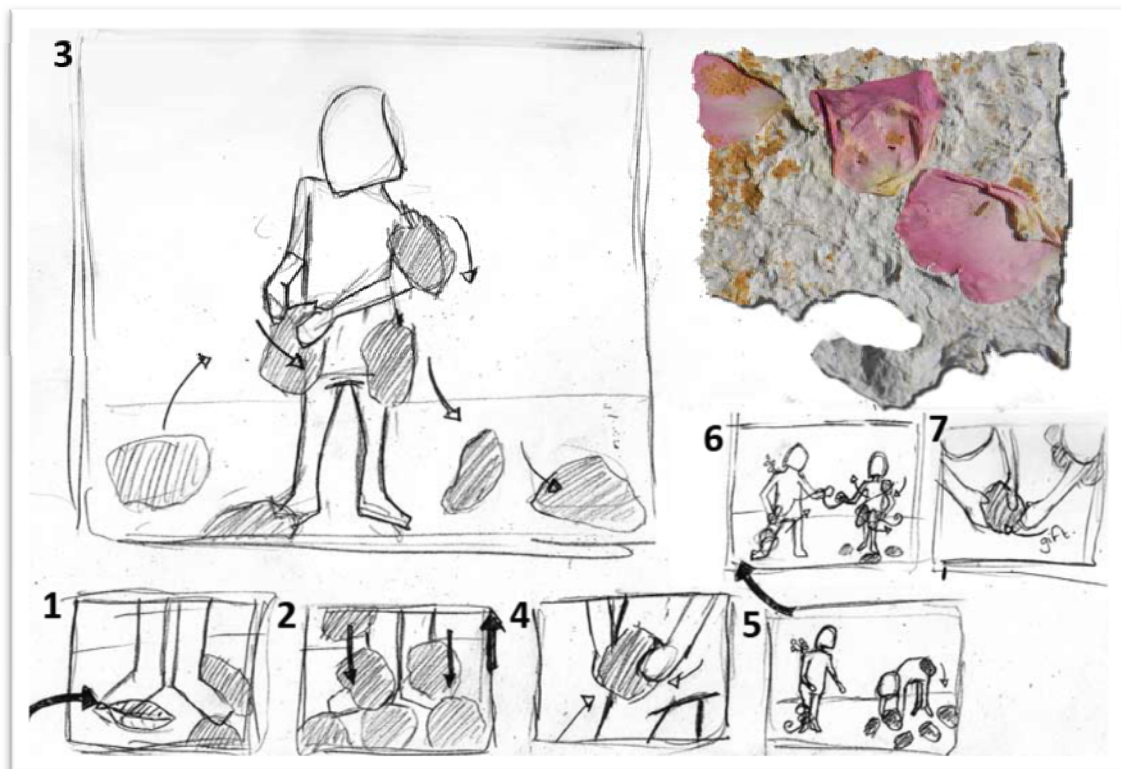


Figure 15: Storyboard visualisation and character sketch for Scene 3. Pretoria (Tshwane), 4 July 2010.

The main character, being nomadic and seeking out connections, already embodies some of the characteristics associated with Ubuntu. Pomono has recognised the potential to make connections with the landscape and individuals who inhabit it and has developed because of them. Within the remnants of interaction with the second character, represented by the string that remains affixed to Pomono's arm, lies a solution to the third character's dilemma. The string is a physical mechanism with which to attach the petals to the third character, but

also represents the ability to exchange stories that are not common to both parties in the mutual space of the 'third'. The string is a narrative of Pomono's experience. Using the string, the third character is able to assimilate the meaning (symbolised by the petals), something which she failed to achieve in isolation. This emphasises the importance of 'thirdness' or Ubuntu within the individual as they interact within 'third space' that opens the individual to experiences and potential growth that are absent in isolation.

At the close of the third scene, Pomono is presented with one of the petals, which is once again symbolic of a narrative exchange. The main character has no trouble assimilating meaning from this gesture, easily fixing the petal to the chest area, emphasising its importance. When Pomono looks up again, the third character has left the space.

Scene 4 (Figure 16):

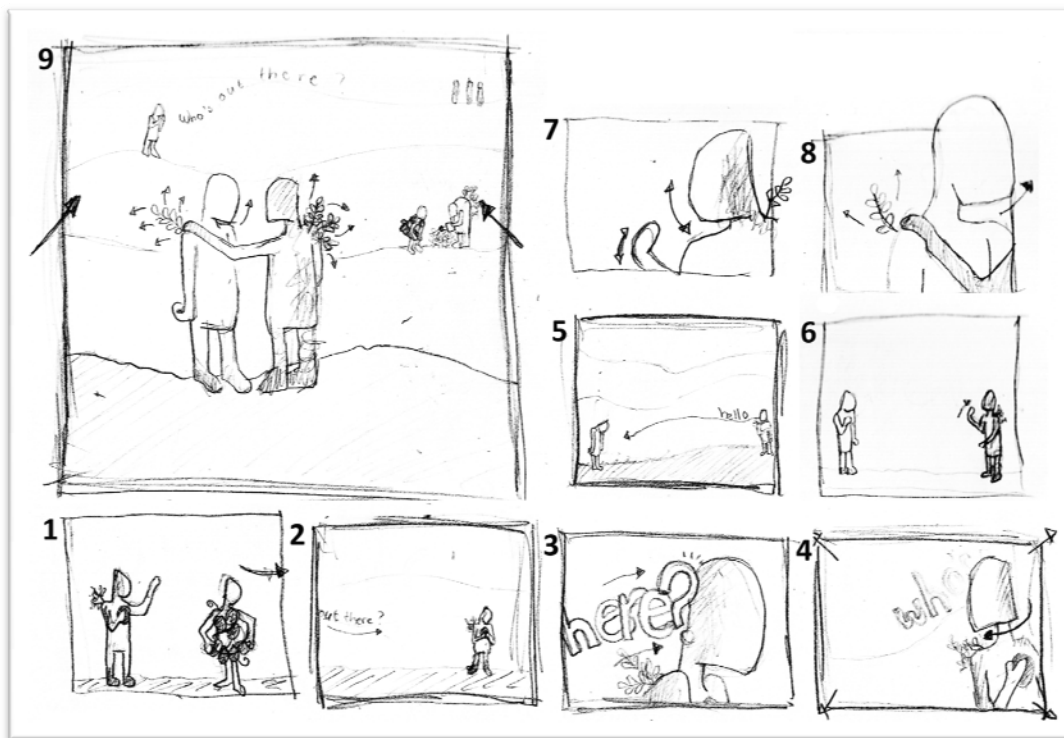


Figure 16: Storyboard visualisation and character sketch for Scene 4. Pretoria (Tshwane), 4 November 2010. Photograph by author

Rather than stemming from a single sheet of paper, this scene was inspired by the journey through the landscape and coming full-circle with it. This is an open-ended final scene that reintroduces the broader sense of the concepts explored, reminding the viewers of what has gone before, but also allowing them to draw their own conclusions.

Alone again in this once foreign landscape, the main character seems less anxious. Pomono has become part of the space, enriched by the nuances of the surfaces that are now

paralleled visually by the main character's appearance. In this moment of seclusion, a call enters the space. The words flow into the main character and, surprised, Pomono turns to greet them. Recognising the call as similar to the one made in earnest at the start of this journey, Pomono responds. The fourth character resembles Pomono at the start of the journey into this new landscape, yet he somewhat more daunted by it. His shoulders are slumped, representing the difficulty which the postmodern nomad faces in the light of strange new encounters. Pomono beckons to this fourth character, who seems uncertain because of the visual dissimilarities between them. He does not yet understand that they are actually alike. Pomono places a hand on the character's shoulder in reassurance and leaves begin to sprout from both of their shoulders, indication the opening of a 'third space' between them. At this stage, the viewer of the animation is made aware of this microcosmic interaction within the context of a greater space. The camera moves away from Pomono and the fourth character toward other characters interacting in the landscape. This emphasises the larger idea of community to which everybody belongs and contributes to. The landscape here functions as a collective narrative in which the postmodern nomad can partake. This participation facilitates the construction of identity in a reciprocal and unselfish manner.

Through the mutual formation of 'third space', the nomad can access and gather meaning from the mnemonic constellations of the memories and stories of others who share the landscape. This has been Pomono's journey to find a sense of belonging in a foreign space. Through the reciprocal interaction with others, Pomono has identified with the space, grown and become enriched by it. A bond or a sense of belonging is thus created. Pomono's journey continues, as do those of the other inhabitants of this space. These concepts are all symbolic of the condition of the postmodern self of today. If open to the potential of concepts like Ubuntu, 'thirdness' and the 'third space', the self can find footholds on the borderlines of the shifting present. This characteristic within the main character is reflected in the journey and punctuated by the recognition of a potential link to the environment and other characters encountered. Pomono reaches out and opens 'third spaces' in which mutual interactions take place. As a result, the main character is enriched and enriches others through these encounters, gradually growing more connected to the space. The condition of displacement, which is inherent to the postmodern nomadic identity and represented symbolically by Pomono, is thus reduced. These moments of interaction can sustain the nomad and enrich identity, providing a place for the *dis*-placed postmodern subject to find meaning and ultimately connect with the spaces and people that affect the individual's life-world.

The section above attempted to form a synthesis between the theory in Chapter 2 and the conceptualisation of that theory in the workshop (Chapter 3.1) through interpretive narrative. The sheets of paper selected from those produced in the workshop serve as a visualisation of the theory and a metaphoric connection between the theory and the design project. The storyboards in this section provide a starting point for the production stage of the design process, helping to outline the interpretive narrative visually and provide some technical details, such as movement, order and camera angles. With the exception of the commissioned music, the production stage of this research, which is discussed in the next section, is conducted for the most part as a solitary design activity, using prior knowledge and skill in the chosen medium. The design outcome does not form part of this document but can be found in Appendix F as an accompanying compact disc.

3.2.3 Production: visual articulation, review and reflection



Figure 17 (left): Initial idea sketches for the shape of Pomono and the clay support figure before being covered in the paper. Pretoria (Tshwane), 4 July 2010. Photograph by author

Figure 18 (above): Creating the characters and working with the paper from the workshop to give unique characteristics to each. Pretoria (Tshwane), 4 July 2010. Photograph by author

The narrative described and visualised in storyboard format in the previous section serves as a guide for the design project, an animated short entitled *My time, my place*. The production stage of the design process began with the development of the characters and the environment. Each character was produced using clay modelling as a base, which was then covered with the paper produced in the workshop (Figure 17 and 18).¹¹ This was done to give

¹¹ The paper used to cover the characters needed to be torn and moulded around the clay. There were a few frames remaining after each child had made their sheet of paper and sufficient pulp to make additional sheets. These sheets were used to cover the characters. It was thus not necessary to damage the children's sheets of paper to create the characters. The individualised sheets of paper

each character a unique appearance that also matches the animation's visual environment, which comprises whole sheets of the workshop paper (see Appendix B). The environment was inspired by the uneven, organic edges of the paper, which resulted from the use of single frames not blocked in by a second frame. Using the second frame would have produced smooth edges. These edges resemble uneven terrain and when used as a backdrop, echo the silhouette of mountains (Figure 19). The richly textured surfaces of the pages selected to form the environment illustrate the story of this real and imagined space visually. It is densely layered with the choices of those who share in and affect it on two levels. Firstly, as the landscape is derived from the real paper made in the workshop portion of this research, it contains the children's' mutual selections and individual contributions, thus reflecting their choices. Secondly, the actual paper serves as a metaphor for an imagined space, inhabited by characters that visually mirror and contribute to the complexity of the landscape.



Figure 19: Uneven edges of the workshop paper as the environment of the animation. Pretoria (Tshwane), 4 July 2010. Still image by author

Unlike the first three characters encountered, Pomono is covered in normal white office paper. This emphasises the main character's difference within the environment (Figure 7). In the last scene the final character encountered brings Pomono's journey full circle as this character is also treated visually in the same way, that is, as *tabula rasa*. This serves as a reminder that this final character is also displaced, and like Pomono, needs to go in search of 'third space' connections to find a sense of belonging, a join to the new space encountered.

According to Aspelund (2006:171), prototyping is an important part of the production phase of the design process. A concept prototype for this research was created in the form of an

used for inspiring the narrative of the animation (Chapter 3.2.2) were photographed, thus preserving the original sheets. The original sheets were returned to their creators.

animatic.¹² An animatic is a fast method to take storyboards into the realm of animation by adding sound and simple animation techniques, such as position, opacity and scale. This is done in order to achieve a basic representation of the concept in motion and time.

Prototyping allows for easier adaptations to be made to the design.

Such adaptations would be more time-consuming during the involved task of

animating. The storyboards created during the communication stage were digitised by scanning them in and separating parts of the flat images into layers to be animated using software. The completed animatic provides a sense of the main movements, camera angles and timing used as a blueprint for the final animation.

Subsequent to the completion of the animatic, the first impressions of the visual feel and animation technique could be experimented with (Figure 20). This test animation provides an initial indication of the movement of the character and the textures of the paper in digital format. For this test, the main character was photographed. This digital image was then divided into joints, which were animated using animation software. A single piece of paper from the workshop was photographed digitally to test the quality of the paper's texture in a digital format. This initial animation test also experimented with lighting and camera movement. This test animation revealed that the lighting was too harsh and that the main character needed additional joints to appear more naturalistic. Aside from this, the process could move forward to the final animation.

The stylistic vehicle, namely the paper made during the workshop, was already decided on in definition/modelling stage (Chapter 3.2.1). As such, the development of content for the animation proved a relatively uncomplicated process. Whole sheets of paper were digitised for animation by photographing and layering them in editing software. These sheets form the environment for the animation to take place in. The characters were all made by hand, using the same paper and a clay model as the base (examples provided in Figure 17 and 18). These characters were also digitally photographed and divided into layers and joints for



Figure 20: Still from the initial animation test (Appendix E). Pretoria (Tshwane), 4 July 2010. Still image by author

¹² This animatic can be viewed as Appendix D, a CD submitted with of this study.

animation. The next step was to create compositions of the introduction, end titles and four defined scenes (Chapter 3.2.2). Once all of the footage (content to be animated) had been arranged into compositions, animating could begin. Using animation software, it is possible to bring these still compositions to life. The addition of movement, sound, cameras and light infuse these still images with the interpretive narrative.

Following the blueprint of the animatic prototype, animating was completed over several months, using past experience and skill in animation software. Extracts from the animation are shown in Figures 21 to 25, which depict the completed compositions of the four scenes and some main points in the animation that reflect the narrative development. A sense of the animation can be obtained from these stills. Like the storyboards, they are moments in time, showing progression in the narrative as well as the lighting, depth of field and camera angles used. These stills show the comparative look and feel of the characters and the environment as they have developed from the storyboard through the stylistic vehicle of the paper made in the workshop (Chapter 3.1).



Figure 21: Beginning stills from the final animation (Appendix F). Pretoria (Tshwane), 6 May 2011. Still image by author

The stills from the animation are presented below in the same manner as those in the storyboard, showing each of the four scenes and parts of the emerging narrative in each scene. The large image provides an indication of the main composition from which the animation stems, while the three accompanying images are main points in the narrative.¹³

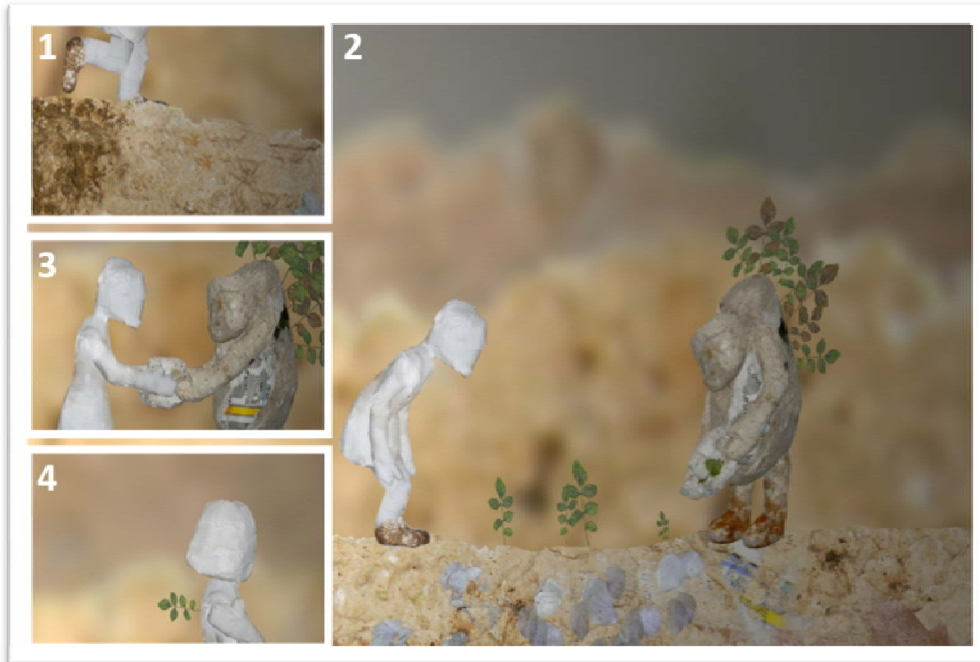


Figure 22: Scene 1 stills from the final animation (Appendix F). Pretoria (Tshwane), 6 May 2011. Still image by author

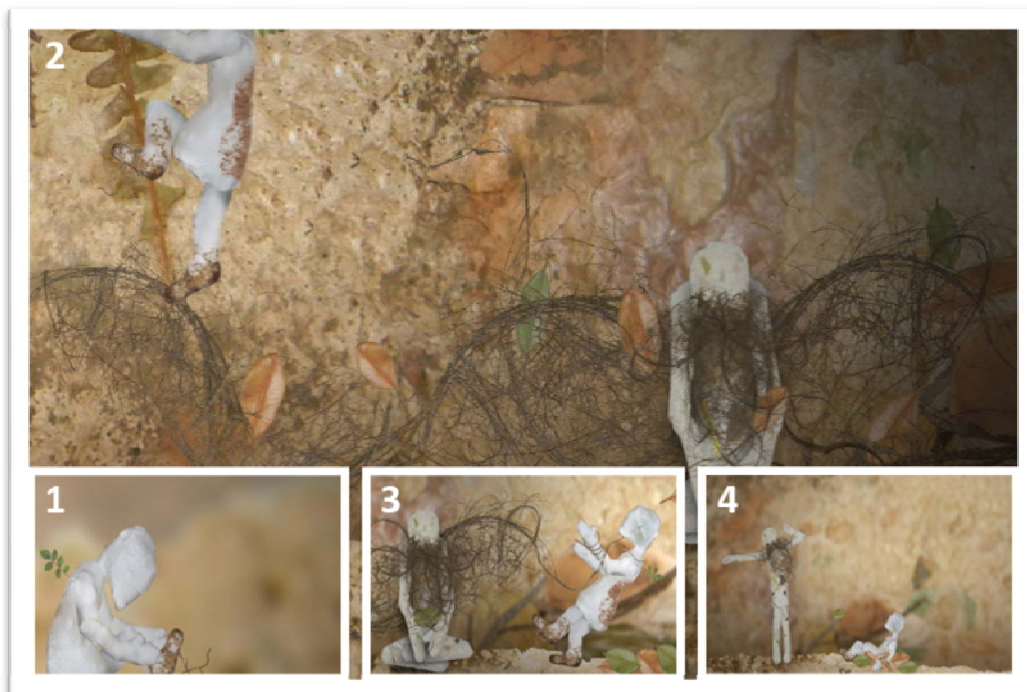


Figure 23: Scene 2 stills from the final animation (Appendix F). Pretoria (Tshwane), 6 May 2011. Still image by author

¹³ The sequence in which the images appear in the animation (Appendix F) is numbered for clarity.



Figure 24: Scene 3 stills from the final animation (Appendix F). Pretoria (Tshwane), 6 May 2011. Still image by author



Figure 25: Scene 4 stills from the final animation (Appendix F). Pretoria (Tshwane), 6 May 2011. Still image by author

The visual articulation of the theory in the form of an animated short evolves from the workshop and extends the theory into praxis. The animated short is a way of breathing life into the theory, to make it visible via narrative metaphors and symbolism. Moreover, it is an expression of the theory as a narrative that extends the concepts into the visual realm. This design outcome can thus also become a potential 'third space', an area in which the viewer

can connect with the ideas of the theory via the animation's levels of narrative. This imagined space that refers back to a physical place is made up of constellations of memories, associations and meaning, all layered into the paper and the narrative itself. Any element of or within this imagined landscape could provide access to memory. This design project as a 'third space' provides a mutual area with which viewers can connect, observe and share the theory. As a symbolic narrative, the animation is open to interpretation. Although it is the intention that the overarching concepts of the 'third space' theory (covered in this research) are represented via metaphor to be more accessible, it is not possible to guarantee a viewer's response to a design or what understanding he or she could take from it.

Control of the experience is not the intention in this study. It is rather the potential for connections to form that is important, as the theory of 'third space' implies. Connections are the building blocks for the displaced nomadic identity. They are the access points to the shared spaces of the everyday that allow mutual exchange of ideas and meaning among individuals. The 'thirdness' within the individual is the ability to recognise the potential in otherness, to seek out connections through the narratives of spatial life and also to be open to connections. 'Thirdness' is a way in which the postmodern nomad can open the spaces traversed and shared as 'third spaces'. Recognition is actively reaching out for a connection to something beyond the self, seeking out and treasuring that which is found specifically because of its difference, its otherness (Frosh & Baraitser 2009:164). The postmodern nomad can find footholds through these connections. This is where the potential exists to find meaning and integrate it into the self. 'Thirdness' or Ubuntu (as shown in Chapter 2) is thus a positive tool in individual and group identity formation amid the flux of the shifting and infinitely expanding world of the twenty first century.

This research has attempted to show that theory inspired from various disciplines outside design discourse can be investigated not only through traditional research methods, but also through the design process, which is usually reserved for praxis. This approach to theory facilitates an understanding that theory is not separate from praxis, but can rather function as inspiration for exploration and innovation in design. The seven steps of the design process followed in this research are *inspiration, identification, conceptualisation, exploration/refinement, definition/modelling, communication* and *production*. These steps allow the theory to be approached as the beginning of a design project. Through the process and the creation of the final design outcome, the inspirational theory for this research is actualised. The animated short brings together the main concepts of this theory and gives a voice to the significance of the paper created in the workshop. The exploration of 'third

space' is both actual and symbolic and can be described and inscribed in journeys to places both real and imagined (Soja 1996:11). The animated narrative design project that marks the end of the design process, articulates the journey of a postmodern nomad that tells the story of relational identity through an imagined space, which reflects in its composition the real shared space and experience of the workshop.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

4.1 Summary of chapters

The broad aim of this research project and report has been to explore the potential of physical landscape to function as a mutual and symbolic 'third space' that can be a positive area for narrative dialogue that facilitates the construction of postmodern identities. The design process outlined in Chapter 1 helps to approach this theory from a design perspective as the start of a design project. The design process is used as a research approach to unpack, explore and communicate the theory of relational identity formation, with the main purpose being the synthesis of theory and praxis. This synthesis is actualised and visualised through the end product, an animated short, which reflects the theory and observations of the research.

Chapter 2 provided an area for theoretical exploration. Frosh and Baraitser's (2009:159-160) metaphor of the nomad provided the first spark of inspiration for the research and design project. This unfixed individual, who hunts for meaning in social environments, both real and imagined, on a local and global scale, became the main inspiration for character of the design project. The nomad is an expression of the postmodern condition of displacement, which may be attributed not only to globalisation but also to the restless migration in a postcolonial time (Ikas & Wagner 2009:1-3). As individuals attempt to find their place in the world, communicating between differing cultures has become a necessary part of daily life. Although inter-cultural negotiation of shared spaces contributes to the nomadic sense of being and unsettles the footholds of belonging, it can also lead to a positive understanding of self in relation to others and the whole. This is the idea behind Jessica Benjamin's 'thirdness', which is a quality the postmodern nomad can utilise to connect with his or her world and those who share in its formation (in Frosh & Baraitser 2009:164-167). This has been the driving force behind the research, which has sought to expose physical landscape as reciprocal areas ('third spaces') that are penetrated by the ability of narrative to forge interpersonal connections via memory and association. Whether a space or a particular element within it evokes memory, this recognition on an individual level intersects the constellations of stories that make up the space and offer an area for dialogue amid those who are open to the space.

In this study, the reciprocal nature of 'thirdness' was paralleled to the African philosophy of Ubuntu as an existing structure that already penetrates potential 'third spaces'. It is a concept that shows an understanding of the self in relation to others. The concept facilitates

communication and the exchange of meaning. This research aimed to highlight the importance of this theory in the negotiation of identity and the understanding of shared spaces. The potential of this theory to help in understanding the process of forging connections was also highlighted. Shared spaces, both real and symbolic, evoke memory and are the access points that allow mutual exchange of ideas and meaning among individuals. This study argues that 'thirdness' or Ubuntu within the individual is an important ability that enables the recognition of potential in otherness and drives the individual to seek out and be open to connections. These discussion points provided the foundation for the design process discussed in more detail further on.

In Chapter 3, the theory was first taken into the conceptualisation phase of the design process to explore and understand the significance of the concepts more fully before attempting to articulate it in the design outcome. This step in the design process involved the practical investigation of the theory through a paper making workshop at a preschool in May 2010. Through the conceptualisation of the theory in the workshop activity, it was possible to observe the theory of 'third space' in practice. The workshop allowed the practical application of the theory in a focussed yet creative activity. The children could partake in the theory without having to comprehend it. The conceptual connections that could be drawn between the theory and the workshop activity serve as evidence that the theory of 'third space' and 'thirdness' dealt with in this study may be taken as instinctive and observable. The importance of the theory therefore lies in its ability to present a particular understanding of how individuals relate to one another and the places that they share in the development of individual and group identity. The interpretive observations of the workshop provided a means of connecting to the theory. The sheets of paper produced in the workshop became emblematic manifestations of this theory and inspired the narrative of the design project.

The next step in the process, namely definition/modelling, entailed deciding on a design medium that could convey the meaning suggested by the sheets of paper. Because of its unique narrative qualities, animation was selected as the design medium. Animation enables narrative articulation in an accessible visual system that encourages participation and allows room for interpretation and engagement. The hermeneutic investigation of a selection from the sheets of paper facilitated the synthesis between the theory in Chapter 2, the workshop and its outputs in Chapter 3.1 and the resulting symbolic narrative of the animated short. Planning through storyboarding and sample animations (animatic and test animation) allowed the refinement of the narrative and the consideration of technical details before the

final design process step, namely production. The sheets of paper played another important role in the final animation. The sheets were used as the stylistic vehicle with which to shape the environment and the characters. It was argued that the narrative of the animation reflects back on the theory that inspired its creation by telling the story of a nomad's journey toward a sense of self and belonging, as observed in the writings of Bhabha (1994), Frosh and Baraitser (2009) and Karin and Wagner (2009). This journey takes place through shared spaces, both real and imagined, that have the potential to provide footholds via metaphor and memory (Soja 1996, Potteiger & Purinton 1998, Kahn 2005). It is only by being open to connections and recognising the potential in the otherness of these relational spaces and their inhabitants that the nomadic identity is nourished and begins to form part of the whole (Battle 2009; Frosh & Baraitser 2009). The nomad, imbued with this ability to connect (having 'thirdness' or Ubuntu) and freed from rigidity through an ontological approach (Somers 1994), can find in narrative a means of accessing the relational spaces traversed. Narrative allows access to the constellations of memory that make up the layers of landscapes. It allows stories to connect those who share the space. Through the visual connective tissue of the sheets of paper and symbolic narrative of the animation; the theory of 'third space' and 'thirdness' that inspired this research forms a synthesis with the design project. By following the design process, the academic research of this study has thus been brought closer to design praxis in the form of the animated design project that culminates this study.

4.2 Contribution of the study

This study attempts to understand and bridge the gap between a particular discourse or theory and the exploration of the theory through the medium of design via the design process. As a result, this study contributes to design discourse in a number of ways.

Firstly, this study uses the design process as a means for exploring various theoretical concepts. Moreover, it provides a way to approach the theory as the inspiration for the design outcome. This type of approach, as a synthesis of abstract theory and practice, is not well explored in design discourse. The approach has the potential to allow research in and for design to engage with theory from a different perspective, thus allowing the theory to inspire design action and bringing discourse closer to praxis, and vice versa.

Secondly, this study has sought to reveal a narrative connection between physical landscape and identity formation in a postmodern context. The aim has been to explore the potential

of shared spaces to function as symbolic places where stories can be recognised, shared and adapted amongst individuals using the design process as a guide. The exploration of this concept has revealed the potential of 'third space' theory as useful and applicable in aiding an understanding of the formation of connections between ideas, individuals and spaces.

It may be argued that 'third space' theory is especially relevant in postcolonial contexts where this sense of displacement is common. These spaces provide an area for dialogue that can help individuals recognise their connection with the space and one another through it. In this study, parallels are drawn between the 'third space' theory of 'thirdness' (in Frosh & Baraitser 2009) and the concept of Ubuntu. This serves to highlight the inherent structures available to South African designers to provide pathways via their work toward a constructive view of the postmodern self. In addition, this study aimed to demonstrate that 'third space' and 'thirdness' are key concepts that both designers and individuals can use towards understanding connections to one another through the shared spaces of everyday life. Thirdly, this study thus provides a connection between the idea of Ubuntu and 'third space', a link that at the time of this study, had yet to be uncovered in other research.

Finally, this study touched on the idea that the design project itself acts as a kind of 'third space', a text that opens up space of dialogue and interpretation. This can suggest that the nature of design or design ontology itself is a kind of 'third space', not only a potential meeting point of theory and praxis, but also a meeting point of visual text and dialogue between the design and its audience. This idea reflects the suggestion that design itself is nomadic. It is suggested that design is not predetermined or closed (Reyburn 2008:11), but rather something that shifts and changes not only as it develops accordance with the narrative experience of the design by its audience. This contributes to an understanding of design as an area in which connections can form, where dialogue can be facilitated not only between designers and their audience, but also among their audience. This contribution presents possibilities for further research.

4.3 Limitations of study and suggestions for further research

This study focussed on the concept that physical landscape can provide a narrative of identity construction, a concept that can be visualised through the process and development of a design project. In this study, the theory of 'third space' has helped to support this concept. This study explores a specific area of 'third space' theory. Given the constraints of this study, such as time and number of pages, it is unable to go beyond it. Although it

provides focus for this paper, the limitation does exclude other interesting permutations and applications of the theory. Bhabha (1994), for example, explores the concept further and presents a 'third space' that is cognisant of cultural differences and histories. It is an area outside the modern concepts of a coherent imagined community, a platform for the enunciation of difference. Bhabha sees the negotiation of identity beneath the encompassing veil of progress as an area for contestation. This view exposes the relationship between choice and determinism in identity formation, which has not been explored in this study. In a postmodern world of globalisation and consumer culture that blankets identities together, questions need to be raised as to whether the individual chooses to form his or her identity or whether identities are formed by colonising forces such as internationalism. Bhabha's work is a prime example of such questions being raised. Although it forms part of the 'third space' theory, this study does not consider these conflicts in postmodern identity formation. The repercussions of globally affiliated identity within a post-colonial context like South Africa is an interesting area for further research in visual disciplines such as design, as the narratives of design outcomes often reflect and disseminate notions of identity to a wide public.

This study explores physical landscape as an incarnation of 'third space', which acknowledges Soja's (1996) encouragement of the importance of understanding the spatiality of human life and being cognisant of how life is linked intrinsically to locality, location and geography. Soja's writings go beyond the above, describing a contemporary consciousness of spatiality, a critical geographical imagination that can influence and encourage social change. Within design discourse, this may be an advantageous area of investigation, as design forms part of modern environments on many levels and could be studied in relation to the way in which these spaces influence, affect and change society.

The 'third space' theory has much potential for further study in many different areas of academic exploration. The spatiality of everyday human life is infused in every discipline and discourse. Moreover, it is much too important to be left to spatial disciplines like geography and urban planning (Soja 1996:22,47). For designers and design research, this theory has much potential left to explore. The flexibility of the concepts allows multiple applications and interpretations that can be beneficial for understanding some of the complexities of the interaction of design discourse with praxis.

This study looked at ‘thirdness’ as having potential for the individual to make connections to one another through relational spaces. However, the study does not examine the implications of this concept and how it would function within the context of a design team. The theory has the potential to be used as a way of understanding and evaluating the relationship, not only between the designer, the design team and the client, but also between the designer, the message and the audience. In a South African context, the inherent ‘thirdness’ of Ubuntu, as discussed in this research, could provide an access point for South African designers to utilise the theory of ‘third space’ through a familiar framework. The potential of the idea of interacting with and exploring overlapping constellations of memory and finding connections in shared physical spaces also has potential in design discourse. New methods could be developed in design outcome testing and public participation that involve the spaces where products are found, used and shared. The idea that the design outcome can be a ‘third space’ (touched on in Chapter 3.2.3 and 4.2) also has great potential for exploration. This approach could expand into examining ‘thirdness’ as a means for designers to connect to their audience, but also as a means for their audience to connect as well.

4.4 Concluding thoughts

In terms of the relationship between design discourse and praxis, this study attempted to understand how the two can be brought closer together. Designers should seek to engage with academia to narrow the divide between theory and praxis and to challenge the “damaging and self-defeating assumption that theory is necessarily the elite language of the socially and culturally privileged” (Bhabha 1994:19). Design and other creative discourses have the opportunity to reveal connections and to express complex ideas in new and understandable ways. Designers can make pathways between discourse and praxis through an engagement with theory and their own creative process and outputs.

The design process in this research has provided the connective tissue to join a somewhat unfamiliar area of research for design. This has allowed these concepts to be approached as the inspiration for a design project. The theory of relational identity formation as explored through the concepts of ‘third space’ has been applied practically and articulated visually through the design process with an unexpected result. The design outcome not only reflects the theory through symbolic narrative, but also becomes a ‘third space’ itself by telling the story. By recognising this potential in design as a shared symbolic space itself, designers can thus provide pathways via their work for the postmodern individual in their nomadic search

for coherence and connections. Furthermore, 'thirdness' is an ability that the designer needs to foster to be aware of the potential in otherness and to look for connections to the audience through the narratives of spatial life. In a South African context, 'thirdness' is already inherent in the cultural symbolism behind Ubuntu. It is a concept that, if understood and implemented by local designers, can provide a structure that already penetrates 'third space', thus unlocking the potential of relational connections.

If one steps back and reflects, it becomes clear that this study has an underlying theme, namely that of finding connections: connections between the postmodern self and the other; connections to the physical and metaphorical spaces shared in everyday life; and finally, connections between theory and praxis. These are connections that join ideas, people and places. They give a sense of belonging and being part of, and important to, a greater whole. In the independent individual there is also a profound desire for a connection. As Bhabha (1994:18) recites from the literary piece *Beloved*: "I am looking for the join ... I want to join ... I want to join".

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