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## Creative and Arts-Based Research Methods in Academic Research. Lessons from a Participatory Research Project in The Netherlands

van der Vaart, Gwenda; van Hoven, Bettina; Huigen, Paulus

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## **Creative and Arts-Based Research Methods in Academic Research. Lessons from a Participatory Research Project in the Netherlands**

*Gwenda van der Vaart, Bettina van Hoven & Paulus P.P. Huigen*

**Key words:**

creative research  
methods; arts-  
based research  
methods;  
participatory  
research;  
multifaceted  
knowledge;  
community  
resilience

**Abstract:** This article contributes to the discussion on the value of creative and arts-based research methods to researchers interested in community resilience. Based on a participatory research project that used a mix of these methods conducted in a Dutch village, we provide more nuanced, concrete insights into their value. We elaborate on the three project stages: walking interviews, group discussions, and a creative workshop that resulted in an exhibition, and on the challenges encountered during our project. We discuss how each project stage contributed to producing *multifaceted knowledge*. Researchers can benefit from the discussions about the process and implications of creative and arts-based methods such as ours as, to date, there has been relatively little methodological reflection on these methods. Based on our study, we conclude that despite some challenges, creative and arts-based research methods have much to offer researchers interested in community resilience. We found they can: 1. generate deep insight by going beyond rational-cognitive ways of knowing and providing new ways of understanding people's real lived experiences and views; and 2. offer ways to "give back" and contribute to a community, potentially igniting a spark among community members to engage in further action and contribute to their community's resilience. This aligns with the, currently often articulated, aims of researchers to directly benefit those involved and to share their research findings with a broader non-academic audience.

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## 1. Introduction

The early 21st century is seen as "a dynamic and exciting time for research methods" (KARA, 2015, p.3), with methodological boundaries expanding across all social science disciplines. A century ago, research was considered a neutral activity, somehow separated from society, and researchers were seen as having no effect on the research process or its outcome. In the second half of the 20th century, things started to change and a new paradigm emerged. In her book "Creative Research Methods in the Social Sciences," KARA noted:

"researchers began to view their work as value laden, symbiotically linked with society and inevitably affected by the researchers themselves ... researchers began to reach out beyond the bounds of conventional research to the arts, other research methods and technology, to find more useful ways to explore the world around us" (p.34). [1]

Nowadays, creative and arts-based research methods are to be found in a researcher's toolkit and researchers from various disciplines have successfully adopted these methods in their work (COEMANS & HANNES, 2017; KNOWLES & COLE, 2008; WOODGATE, ZURBA & TENNENT, 2017). [2]

However, COEMANS and HANNES (2017) noted a lack of methodological reflection on arts-based methods. They argued that, for researchers in this field, discussions about the process and implications of these methods could be very helpful and that it would be interesting if more arts-based researchers were to report on their experiences. In this article, we therefore, explore what creative and arts-based research methods offer researchers interested in community resilience by reflecting on a participatory research project that we conducted involving a mix of these methods. Below, we first provide a brief introduction to creative and arts-based research (Section 2), explain why these methods are attractive to researchers, and note that it can be challenging for researchers adopting these methods to satisfy academic conventions. Following this, we introduce Pingjum, the village where we conducted the participatory research project, the project itself, and the broader study it was a part of (Section 3). We describe the three consecutive stages of the project, giving the background to the research methods used and explaining how we used them in Pingjum. Then, we reflect on three challenges we encountered in using creative and arts-based research methods during our participatory research project. Following this, we discuss the project by elaborating on how the various project stages contributed to producing *multifaceted knowledge*, with each stage revealing another facet of the topics under research (Section 4). We conclude by reflecting on what creative and arts-based research methods can bring researchers interested in community resilience (Section 5). [3]

## 2. Creative and Arts-Based Research—Its Appeal and Challenges

Arts-based research is seen as "any social research or human inquiry that adapts the tenets of the creative arts as a part of the methodology ... the arts may be used during data collection, analysis, interpretation and/or dissemination" (JONES & LEAVY, 2004, pp.1-2). There are many dimensions to arts-based research reflecting the large variety of art genres (such as performance, writing, painting, photography, collage and installation art) and these genres can be used in a variety of ways, for example, as a method or as technical, communication or aesthetic elements (FRANZ, 2010). Furthermore, as KARA (2015) stressed, creativity in research is context-specific, depending on the knowledge, skills and abilities of those involved, when and where the research is carried out and other contextual factors. Researchers using creative and arts-based research methods are often situated within the qualitative research tradition (COEMANS & HANNES, 2017; KNOWLES & COLE, 2008). However, as KARA (2015) rightly observed, there is also very creative work going on in quantitative methodologies. She explained that creativity involves "knowing about various methods but not being bound by that knowledge, such that, if the need arises, you can manipulate and develop theories and methods, within the constraints of good practice, to help you answer your research questions" (pp.21-22). [4]

There are several reasons why researchers could be interested in creative and arts-based research methods. First, these methods can provide fresh approaches and different perspectives (DUNN & MELLOR, 2017). They can be used to ask questions of one's own conventions and disciplinary practices (FOSTER & LORIMER, 2007; HAWKINS, 2011). O'DONOGHUE (2011, p.649) noted that artists "will bring to research ... very different ways of seeing, imagining, understanding, articulating, and inquiring, which leads to better questioning and more robust inquiry practices." He explained that artists' freedom and ability "to work on an edge and between borders of the familiar and the emergent create new possibilities for knowing and working together differently" (ibid.). On a similar note, EISNER (2008) argued that, compared to conventional forms of research, arts-informed methods of inquiry may do a better job when it comes to generating questions or raising awareness of important complex subtleties. [5]

Second, creative and arts-based research methods can add value when it comes to *answering* research questions that cannot (or, at least, not fully) be answered using more traditional research methods such as interviews or questionnaires (COHENMILLER, 2018; DUNN & MELLOR, 2017; FRANZ, 2010; KARA, 2015). DUNN and MELLOR (2017) argued that the emotional and symbolic aspects of people's experiences might not be accessed by mainstream methods that rely on people's verbal or written competence. Quoting ELLSWORTH (2005, p.156), they added: "some knowings cannot be conveyed through language" (DUNN & MELLOR, 2017, p.294). In this regard, LAWRENCE (2008) observed that the arts, by engaging the senses, provoke strong, affective responses for both the creator and the witness of art. Our emotions, she continued, can subsequently provide a catalyst for learning beyond traditional, cognitive ways of knowing. As an example, JOHNSTON and PRATT (2010) wrote a testimonial play that drew

on research on domestic care work. The play transformed conventional research transcripts from interviews with Filipino migrant domestic workers, their children, Canadian employers and nanny agents into a performance installation, and aimed to bring academic research to a wider public in an immediate and engaging way. The authors reflected that "the play forced a sensual exchange, involving much more than words, often evoking an emotional, visceral response" (p.133). In this regard, EISNER (2008, p.7) argued that "the arts in research promote a form of understanding that is derived or evoked through emphatic experience," something that can provide deep insight into what others are experiencing. Reflecting on her interviews that incorporated visual arts methods, COHENMILLER (2018, §57) noted that "through the process of creating the drawings [...] and also discussing the created images, the participants and I were able to reach a deeper level of communication and understanding." In addition, creative and arts-based research methods can offer a safe space for participants to express themselves and foster dialogue, especially about sensitive topics such as experiences of trauma or depression, and topics that are difficult to verbalize such as community and identity (ASKINS & PAIN, 2011; COEMANS & HANNES, 2017; COHENMILLER, 2018; DUNN & MELLOR, 2017). Furthermore, KARA (2015) observed that one of the defining features of creativity in research is that it tends to resist categorical or binary thinking, and that creative methods value contextual specificity and are able to reflect the multiplicity of meanings that exist in social contexts more accurately. Given this perspective, creative and arts-based research methods are often combined with other practices and methodologies in order to enrich or compliment traditional (qualitative) approaches and achieve a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the phenomenon under study (COEMANS & HANNES, 2017; FRANZ, 2010). [6]

Third, creative and arts-based research methods are highly appropriate for participatory, community-based and action research. COEMANS and HANNES (2017) noted that, thanks to their participatory nature and openness to different ways of understanding, the use of arts-based methods in community-based settings can seem a natural fit. They argued that these methods can be used to overcome power imbalances between the researcher and those researched by conducting research *with* the participants rather than *on* them (for more on participatory [action] research see, e.g., BOSTOCK & FREEMAN, 2003; CAHILL, 2007; SALMON, 2007). Many scholars who adopt these methods, as COEMANS and HANNES (2017) noted, hope that they will give a voice to their participants, facilitate richer reflection and dialogue, and enable them to better articulate participants' unique experiences. In this regard, ANWAR McHENRY (2011) argued that they are useful for engaging with and empowering participants through increasing their confidence and facilitating understanding and the development of a stronger sense of place. In line with this, CAPOUS DESYLLAS (2014) argued that arts-based research has the ability to transform and empower, and has the potential to create social change through creativity (using her own research project with sex workers as an example). Moreover, creative and arts-based research methods can be flexibly applied in a variety of contexts and can serve as an effective bridge between generations, cultures, socioeconomic classes and people who are divided along habitual lines determined by existing

agendas and interests (ANWAR McHENRY, 2011; ASKINS & PAIN, 2011; BRICE & FERNÁNDEZ ARCONADA, 2018; TAYLOR & MURPHY, 2014). [7]

The above three arguments help explain why creative and arts-based research methods are so attractive to some researchers. However, despite creative and arts-based research methods having tremendous appeal for a variety of reasons, it can be challenging for researchers using these methods to satisfy academic conventions. Several scholars have observed that creative and arts-based research methods challenge dominant assumptions and conventions around what constitutes research, knowledge and impact, and that this can make it difficult for scholars using these methods to obtain funding and support or to publish their arts-based data (see, e.g., COEMANS & HANNES, 2017; FOSTER, 2012; HAMILTON & TAYLOR, 2017; KELEMEN & HAMILTON, 2015; LAWRENCE, 2008). FOSTER (2012), for instance, noted that arts-based research produces less tangible knowledge than the more traditional forms of social inquiry that produce familiar, "robust" data that can be tested for objectivity, reliability and validity. While the arts can make "embodied experience" central to the process of knowledge (co-)creation (KELEMEN & HAMILTON, 2015, p.21), such emotional and embodied ways of knowing are often ignored and dismissed in the dominant Western culture where rational-cognitive ways of knowing are valued (LAWRENCE, 2008). [8]

With regard to the notion of "impact," PAIN et al. (2015) argued that although "impact" has become an important dimension in how research is evaluated and funded, the way in which it "is conceptualized and measured tends to be very narrow, and unreflective of the diverse approaches to creating knowledge and affecting change that researchers today utilize" (p.4). Here, KELEMEN and HAMILTON (2015, p.3) suggested a more co-productive approach to knowledge that involves new forms of engagement between academics (those traditionally seen as "knowledge makers") and those traditionally seen as "research subjects" (or even "consumers" of academic knowledge). PAIN et al. (2015) stated that the dominant current understanding and measurement of "impact" is especially problematic for such co-produced or participatory research (where research is conducted by a community, organization or group together with academic researchers). We would argue that this equally applies to research that employs creative and arts-based research methods. As HAMILTON and TAYLOR (2017) noted, advocates of these research methods are also asking important questions, such as "how can we decentre subject expertise and interact with research sites in more democratic ways?" (p.134), that are relevant given the current focus on "impact" in research. [9]

### 3. The Research Project and Pingjum

For this article, in which we explore what creative and arts-based research methods can offer researchers interested in community resilience, we draw on a participatory research project that was conducted as part of a broader study addressing the value of arts-based community activities for building resilience in communities. The question of how to achieve resilience has become a matter of significance at societal and communal levels (BRICE & FERNÁNDEZ ARCONADA, 2018). In resilience thinking, "social" aspects such as sense of place, community cohesion and social capital are today gaining greater attention (see, e.g., VAN DER VAART, TRELL, RESTEMEYER & BAKEMA, 2015). The study's specific focus on arts-based community activities, as a potential resource for building community resilience, can be viewed in the context of the growing interest in the value of the arts for communities in general. Further, it aligns with resilience policies that seek to include the everyday life-world and knowledge available within communities. [10]

The research project that this article draws on was conducted in Pingjum. This is a village of approximately 600 inhabitants located in the northern Netherlands. It is situated along the Wadden Sea coast and surrounded by mainly agricultural land. Like many other communities in today's world, Pingjum is experiencing economic, social and environmental challenges. For instance, over recent decades, many of the facilities in the village have disappeared (such as the supermarket and bakery). Nevertheless, Pingjum still has an active village life, including many social associations. Furthermore, relative to other villages in the northern Netherlands, Pingjum hosts many cultural activities and has a relatively large presence of artists (see VAN DER VAART, VAN HOVEN & HUIGEN, 2017). In the media, Pingjum is presented as being open and tolerant, and has the reputation of being an "artist village" (e.g., VAN SANTEN, 2013). [11]

For the research project, we adopted a participatory approach consisting of three stages in which creative and arts-based research methods were used: walking interviews, group discussions, and a creative workshop that resulted in an exhibition in the village (see Sections 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3). Our participatory research project had two main aims: [12]

First, we aimed to actively engage the inhabitants in generating knowledge about their community and its resilience, using their lived experiences as the basis for the study. Through the participatory research project we intended to obtain a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the participants' sense of place, the issues at play in the community, and the overall context in which the local arts and artists exist. Adopting a participatory approach is helpful in this regard as this, as PAIN (2004, p.653) argued, "is designed to be context-specific, forefronting local conditions and local knowledge, and producing situated, rich and layered accounts." Our use of a mix of creative and arts-based research methods, as part of our participatory approach, helped us to understand people's sensory and affective responses to their village and its surroundings. In doing so, we were able to go beyond cognitive ways of knowing (LAWRENCE, 2008).

KELEMEN and HAMILTON (2015, p.22) noted that, through the use of such methods, researchers can "gain a degree of immersive, embodied experience of other peoples' 'situated knowledges'." This provides input for building community resilience, since, as STEINER and MARKANTONI (2013) noted, it is essential to capture and understand the issues that communities face when investigating community resilience. [13]

Second, and connected to the first aim, we sought to make a positive contribution to the community's thinking about and actual resilience. This second aim can be regarded as a form of "giving back" to the community (see, e.g., FORTMANN, 2014; GUPTA & KELLY, 2014; SALMON, 2007) and is in line with the general objective of participatory research practices to benefit the community from which the research participants are drawn (DIVER & HIGGENS, 2014; VIGURS & KARA, 2017). As participatory research actively engages a community, it is more likely to come from and reflect lived experiences and produce more authentic, useful knowledge, and potentially lead to actions that address people's real desires and needs (BREITBART, 2012; PAIN et al., 2015; TRELL, 2013). In this regard, COEMANS, WANG, LEYSEN and HANNES (2015) noted that the use of "artistic elements" in participatory research can stimulate participants to create ideas for their community (and their own lives). They further stated that this very often induces community action and change, which subsequently contributes to community resilience (see also VAN DER VAART, VAN HOVEN & HUIGEN, 2018a). On a similar note, MITCHELL et al. (2011) argued that the "empathic power" of the arts can help open research participants to the existence of different experiences and views, creating a broader perspective and a deeper awareness of "other." This, they noted, will make people more prepared to relate to their community and to take action within it. With regards to our participatory research project in Pingjum, we hoped that our participants, through their involvement in the project, would be stimulated to think together about important places in their village and (potential) changes related to the issues at play in their community and, where deemed necessary, come up with possible solutions or ways to deal with (anticipated) changes. In addition, through its three consecutive stages, the participatory research project worked towards an exhibition in the village hall that aimed to engage the broader community and generate discussion on the meanings of certain places in Pingjum. [14]

The participants for the participatory research project were recruited in several ways, such as by giving a promotional presentation at the annual meeting of the village's interest group, the door-to-door distribution of flyers, an [online blog](#) about the project, and snowball sampling. In total, twenty-eight villagers participated in the project, including thirteen men and fifteen women from different age groups (below 25 years, between 25 and 65 years, and 65 years and above). However, as we reflect upon later, we "lost" some participants over the course of the project, with the number of participants decreasing to sixteen during the second stage and nine during the third stage. [15]

Below, we describe each stage of the participatory research project in more detail, giving the background to the methods used and explaining why and how

we used them in Pingjum. Afterwards, we elaborate on the challenges in using creative and arts-based research methods we encountered during our research project. [16]

### 3.1 Stage 1: Walking interviews

The first stage of the participatory research project comprised 28 walking interviews to enable the researcher to get to know Pingjum, the key issues at play in the community, and the participants and their personal experiences with, and opinions on, living in Pingjum. A growing body of academic literature highlights the value of walking interviews (and other mobile methods) in terms of gaining insight into the spatiality of place experiences (CARPIANO, 2009; HITCHINGS & JONES, 2004; KUSENBACH, 2003; LAGER, VAN HOVEN & HUIGEN, 2015; TRELL & VAN HOVEN, 2010). EVANS and JONES (2011) noted that the method's capacity to access people's attitudes and knowledge about their surrounding environment is seen as a major advantage. They considered walking to be an intimate way to engage with landscape and an approach that can provide insights into both place and self, resulting in more place-specific data than "traditional" interviews. TRELL and VAN HOVEN (2010) argued that, when producing knowledge about experiences of place in "standard" interview settings, some small details or "layers" might be lost because participants are forced to draw on their mental image, or memories, of the place but without visual, audible, olfactory or tactile stimuli. They stated that "sometimes, it is necessary to see, hear, smell or feel a place in order to make sense of it and to communicate it to outsiders" (p.92) and that, therefore, researchers have started to explore research methods that take participants "into the field." A similar point was made by HITCHINGS and JONES (2004) who observed that, when walking "in place" with participants, they were taken closer to the ways in which people encounter their environment, thereby producing richer data. Walking provided an array of unfolding prompts for discussion, triggering conversations and insights that might well have been overlooked during an interview indoors. [17]

Walking interviews are also praised for allowing informal interaction, making participants feel more at ease, and making it easier for them to express themselves in everyday language (LAGER et al., 2015). Further, the method is credited for its ability to put participants "in charge," effectively empowering them in the research process since the researcher is now the one "going along" (CARPIANO, 2009; ECKER, 2017). In this way, walking interviews can reduce the power imbalance between researcher and participants. [18]

During the walking interviews in our study, the participants were asked to take the main researcher, Gwenda VAN DER VAART<sup>1</sup>, on a "tour" through Pingjum and show the places that were meaningful to them and places that, in their eyes, were disputed in the community or were facing potential changes. A camera was taken along, and the participants were asked to take photographs of the places they pointed out to the researcher during their walk through Pingjum. Such a

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1 A young female researcher with no previous connection to Pingjum.

participant-driven approach, by creating opportunities for the participants to be more meaningfully involved, shifts some of the control over data generation from the researcher to the participants themselves (VIGURS & KARA, 2017). In addition, as WOODGATE et al. (2017) noted, such a participatory *visual* approach enables participants to reflect on issues that are significant to them and to think through how they want to represent their own perspectives and experiences around a given topic. Since we informed our participants about the walking part of the interview process in advance, they could already think about the route and the places they wanted to show and talk about before their walking interview took place. We did not provide detailed instructions to the participants about how the walk should be planned. The participants were free to take the researcher to any places they thought appropriate, take whatever route they liked and walk for as long as they wanted. In addition to the walking element, there were interview questions focused on people's opinions on, and experiences with, the various arts activities and artists in Pingjum, the village community and changes and potential changes to the village. [19]

The walking interviews generated situated knowledge on participants' personal village experiences and their views on key issues at play in their community. The outcomes of this first stage were intended as input for the second and third stages of the research project. [20]

### **3.2 Stage 2: Group discussions**

The second stage of our participatory research project consisted of three group discussions. We aimed to bring the participants together and discuss the shared and divergent meanings of particular places in Pingjum among people of different age groups (<25, 25-65, >65). In this way, we aimed to grasp how certain places are seen and valued in the community and, as noted above, hoped to stimulate the participants to also think about existing and potential changes, and to come up with possible solutions or ways to deal with (anticipated) changes. This reflected our project's aim of contributing to the community's (thinking about) resilience. [21]

The group discussions can be seen as a form of focus group, a method that has received considerable attention from a broad range of disciplines since the 1990s (WILKINSON, 2004). BOSTOCK and FREEMAN (2003) explained that focus groups are a form of group interview in which data are generated through the communication between participants, and that they aim to encourage debate and to examine what people think, and how and why. KAMBERELIS and DIMITRIADIS (2013) noted that focus groups encompass a wide range of discursive practices, ranging from formal structured interviews around clearly delimited topics to less formal, open-ended conversations that can unfold in myriad unpredictable ways. Generally, the researcher acts as a moderator but, rather than presenting the participants with a set of questions, instead might present stimulating materials (such as photographs or video clips) or ask them to engage in a specific activity (such as a rating exercise or card-sorting task) (WILKINSON, 2004). [22]

A benefit of focus groups is that they can result in insights that are unlikely to have arisen during individual interviews. WILKINSON (2014) described how the researcher's control over a group's interaction is reduced simply by virtue of the number of participants simultaneously involved, making focus groups a relatively "egalitarian" method. This subsequently enables participants to develop those themes that they see as most important, discussing topics that might have gone unnoticed or given insufficient attention by the researcher. In addition, focus groups often lead to the production of more elaborate accounts. WILKINSON further noted that they can create a "synergistic effect" by enabling participants to react to, and build upon, responses by other group members. Participants, for example, will not always agree with one another and may force each other to justify or defend their beliefs. Moreover, participants may feel empowered by a sense of group membership and cohesiveness (SIM, 1998). On a note of caution, a potential disadvantage of focus groups is that they may lead to bias in the results as some people talk more than others and dominate the discussion because of different personalities or power differences within a group (BOSTOCK & FREEMAN, 2003). [23]

For this second stage of the participatory research project, the participants were invited to the village hall, for one morning, to discuss further the meanings of the places they photographed during their walking interviews. Sixteen of the participants joined the meeting. Those absent were either unable to join due to a scheduling conflict or were not interested in participating. The participants were divided into three mixed-age "discussion groups". The morning started with an icebreaking game, so the members of each discussion group could get to know each other (insofar as they did not already) and a relaxed environment was stimulated. This should promote openness and a willingness to talk, which are important factors in the success of a focus group (BARNETT, 2002). All the photographs of public places taken during the walking interviews were printed and spread out on the tables. In the icebreaker game, each participant was asked to choose one photograph that particularly appealed to them. Subsequently, the participants were asked to briefly introduce themselves and explain why they chose that particular photograph. [24]

Following this, each discussion group started with the main goal of the morning: to discover each other's opinions on, and experiences with, certain places in Pingjum and to reflect more deeply on the significance of those places. The photographs from the walking interviews were again used as stimuli, serving as starting points for the group discussions. We particularly wanted to see if there were any differences with regard to how different age groups saw and valued certain places in their community. Therefore, each "age subgroup" within the three discussion groups was asked to select one or two photographs they would like to discuss in their group. As each discussion group included at least one person from each age group (<25, 25-65, >65), all groups discussed three to six photographs. Discussing photographs can help participants to better reflect upon and explain their perceptions and experiences, and promotes dialogue concerning issues (LOEFFLER, 2005; PURCELL, 2007). In addition to the

photographs, the discussion groups were given some guiding questions to support their discussions of their chosen photographs:

- What does this [photographed] place mean to you personally?
- Why does this place have this meaning for you?
- Has this meaning changed over time? How?
- Do you think this meaning will change in the future? Why (not)?
- Are there differences [with regard to the above] between the younger and older members of your discussion group? [25]

In addition to the photographs and guiding questions, the discussion groups were provided with large sheets of paper and colored pencils and asked to make a poster with which they could present the main results of their discussions to the entire group. This stimulated the participants to keep their discussions focused on the photographs/places and their shared and/or divergent meanings over time, and encouraged each discussion group to reflect on their discussion and summarize its main points. After approximately one hour, each discussion group was asked to briefly present their poster so that all the groups could get a sense of each other's discussions. After these three poster presentations, the morning ended with a concluding discussion on the main results of the morning. [26]

The group discussions generated co-produced knowledge on the discussed topics and revealed shared and divergent intergenerational views that existed within the community on the meaning of particular places in Pingjum. Together with the personal village experiences captured during the walking interviews, these outcomes served as input for the final stage of the participatory research project as described below. [27]

### **3.3 Stage 3: Creative workshop and exhibition**

The third stage of our participatory research project involved a creative workshop that resulted in a one-day exhibition in the village. This final stage served two purposes: the first, during a hands-on creative workshop, being to engage the participants further by asking them to visualize the meanings they attached to certain places in Pingjum. In this regard, WALSH, RUTHERFORD and CROUGH (2013, p.121) commented that arts-based research is "founded on the idea that the arts are useful as a means to *engage* in research as a participatory act that allow those involved to more directly express their voices through artistic media with the goal of enhanced self-expression" (emphasis added). By asking the participants to visualize the meanings they assigned to certain places in Pingjum, we offered them a different means of communication to those used earlier (see below, and COEMANS et al., 2015; FOSTER, 2012). It is important to emphasize that the main function of the artworks is not aesthetic but, rather, to provide a medium through which the participants can exchange their ideas and thoughts (HAMILTON & TAYLOR, 2017). [28]

The second purpose of the third project stage was to "give back" to the village. By exhibiting the participatory research project, we tried to engage the broader community and generate discussion on the meanings of certain places in Pingjum in order to contribute to the community's (thinking about) resilience. Several scholars have noted that creative and arts-based research can make research findings more accessible for a broader non-academic audience and provoke changes in their understanding (see, e.g., CAPOUS DESYLLAS, 2014; COEMANS & HANNES, 2017; FOSTER, 2012; HAMILTON & TAYLOR, 2017; KARA, 2015; KELEMEN & HAMILTON, 2015; MITCHEL et al., 2011). DIVER (2014) explained how local communities are often excluded from knowledge production because academic research uses specialized "academic" language and tends to rely on the written word. In comparison, collaborative research methods with artistic outputs can be a means of "giving back" to communities by reducing the focus on the written word through looking at other means of communication (COEMANS et al., 2015; FOSTER, 2012). In this regard, SORIN, BROOKS and HARING (2012) noted that images of art can transcend words and consciousness to, quoting RUSSELL-BOWIE (2006, p.3), "embody and communicate emotions, ideas, beliefs and values; to convey meanings through aesthetic forms and symbols; and evoke emotive responses to life with or without words" (SORIN et al., 2012, p.17). As LAWRENCE (2008) noted, the arts invite a conversation with the viewer by being able to stir up emotions by touching something deep inside them. Subsequently, the viewers can be stimulated to connect to a personal experience of their own, to tap into empathic connections with issues of (universal) concern, or "to envision alternative realities for a more promising future" (p.75). This could be important in terms of community action and change and, as noted, community resilience. [29]

Nine of the participants were willing and able to take part in the creative workshop (six of whom had also attended the group discussions), which involved them coming to the village hall for another morning. At the start of the morning, the participants were introduced to four students from the Minerva art academy in Groningen who would assist them in their visualization processes. Just as the group discussions built on the photographs taken during the walking interviews, this final stage also built on the materials gathered during the previous project stages. A few weeks before the creative workshop, the participants were sent a printed "inspiration booklet" compiled by the researcher. This booklet contained an overview of the photographs of public places taken during the walking interviews and a selection of corresponding quotes from the walking interviews and group discussions. As such, the "inspiration booklet" presented the participants with an overview of the results of the first two project stages and stimulated them to contemplate the deeper meanings behind the photographs and quotes. Whereas in the previous stages there had been a lot of talking about the meanings of the places photographed, the aim of the hands-on creative workshop was to visualize some of the "stories" attached to these places in Pingjum. The participants could decide for themselves with whom they wanted to work during the morning. Four groups emerged (two groups consisting of two people, one of four people, and one person worked on his own), and each received assistance from one of the art academy students. In addition to the

materials that some participants brought with them, the participants were offered a range of materials (i.e., paint, pencils, the printed photographs, different sizes of paper, old magazines) such that, to an extent, they were free to choose a means to express themselves. At the end of the morning, the groups were asked to present their artworks so that everyone could see and hear about each other's work. [30]

A few weeks after the creative workshop, a one-day exhibition of the participatory research project was organized in Pingjum's village hall. The exhibition featured an overview of the photographs of public places taken during the walking interviews and the four artworks created during the creative workshop (see Figures 1 and 2).



Figure 1: Painting by Marc<sup>2</sup> (own photograph)



Figure 2: Ria and Pepijn's artwork hanging at the exhibition (own photograph) [31]

Each artwork was accompanied by a short text that explained its theme. Although the participants were given the opportunity to write these texts themselves, only one group delivered input for the text. The exhibition also presented opportunities for the visitors to respond to the artworks since an aim was to engage the audience and generate further discussion on the meanings of certain places in

<sup>2</sup> Fictional names are used for the participants.

Pingjum in order to contribute to the community's (thinking about) resilience. Each artwork had its own sheet of paper on which the visitors could write their own opinions on, and experiences with, the themes of the artworks (stimulated by guiding questions printed on these sheets). For example, two sheets of paper were hung next to the artwork photographed in Figure 2. One asked, "What do you experience when you are standing on the dike?," and the other "Which 'side' are you most focused on: the Wadden Sea (like Ria) or the inland landscape (like Pepijn)? Why?." These questions were intended to stimulate the visitors to reflect on their own feelings, experiences and views regarding Pingjum's coastal landscape (see Section 4.3 for further background on the artwork). [32]

Approximately thirty-five visitors came to the exhibition, including the four art academy students, seven of the participants (six of whom had participated in the creative workshop) and their families and friends, and other villagers of Pingjum. After the exhibition, the researcher took the four art academy students to the local pizzeria to thank them for their help and engage in an evaluative group talk on the exhibition. [33]

The third project stage generated "affective knowledge" on the participants' sense of place (Section 4.3). As noted, arts-based research methods actively engage people's senses and can place "embodied experience" centrally in the process of knowledge creation (EISNER, 2008; KELEMEN & HAMILTON, 2015). As LAWRENCE (2008) observed, the arts can provoke strong, affective responses in both the creator and the viewer of art that, subsequently, can provide a catalyst for learning beyond traditional, and dominant, cognitive ways of knowing. In this regard, EISNER (2008, p.7) noted that involving the arts in research can "promote a form of understanding that is derived or evoked through empathic experience" and provide deep insights into what others are experiencing. [34]

### **3.4 Challenges**

Above, we already noted the challenge of accommodating research based on creative and arts-based research methods within academic conventions. Now, we reflect on three challenges we encountered in using creative and arts-based research methods during our participatory research project in Pingjum. [35]

First, engaging the community in our participatory research project was not easy. Although we received positive feedback from the participants once they were engaged, it initially took quite some effort to find villagers willing to take part in our project. We tried to tackle this issue by using several distinct strategies to find participants and emphasizing that, given the large commitment needed to participate in the entire project, they were free to decide at each stage whether or not they would participate. Despite the positive feedback received, we nevertheless "lost" a number of participants over the course of the project. Whereas the project started with twenty-eight walking interviews, the group discussions involved only sixteen participants and the creative workshop just nine. To an extent, this is probably related to practical issues such as participants being unavailable on the date and at the time set for the group discussions and

creative workshop. On the other hand, participants may have considered the second and third stages as less appealing, perhaps because they were unwilling to expose themselves to the other participants or were insecure about their own creativity (indeed, both reasons were expressed by a few participants who only participated in the first stage). In order to keep our research project as accessible as possible and create a good atmosphere, we always ensured (and announced) that there would be plenty of refreshments during the group meetings and emphasized we were keen to learn about the participants' own opinions and experiences. Further, we organized assistance from four art academy students during the creative workshop as this can ease the artistic process for those with little or no expertise or skill in the arts (KARA, 2015). Looking at the level of community engagement during the exhibition, we noted there were approximately thirty-five visitors, which is only a small proportion of Pingjum's 600 inhabitants. Further, the people who attended the exhibition did not use the opportunities provided to respond to the artworks to the extent that we had hoped. MACPHERSON et al. (2017) reported a similarly low level of participation by the general public when reflecting on the challenges and tensions they encountered in a collaborative exhibition they had organized. Despite our slight disappointment, our visitors did at least take their time to wander around the exhibition space and talk and have a drink with one another. If planning similar exercises, it is advisable to think through how to increase people's engagement in this regard. Toolkits such as the recently released "Arts-Based Methods for Transformative Engagement—A Toolkit" could prove valuable (see PEARSON et al., 2018). [36]

Second, there were several uncertainties linked to our participatory research project. COEMANS and HANNES (2017) have observed that it is common in arts-based research for not all the details of the process, likely conclusions and possible impacts to be known in advance, and this was certainly true for our project. With our creative and arts-based research methods, we, to a certain extent, put our participants "in charge" (see also CARPIANO, 2009; TRELL & VAN HOVEN, 2010). During the walking interviews, they determined the route and the places they wanted to show, talk about and photograph (and how). During the group discussions, they chose the photographs they wanted to discuss further, and during the creative workshop the participants decided for themselves with whom they wanted to collaborate and chose the means to express themselves (within the possibilities of the available material and time). Partially shifting control over the data generation and outcomes from the researcher to the participants creates a certain level of uncertainty in such a project (see also VIGURS & KARA, 2017). This, for instance, meant that, at the start of our project, we did not know which topics would emerge and what the final exhibition would look like. Such uncertainties make creative and arts-based research methods both challenging and exciting (see also ASKINS & PAIN, 2011). On the positive side, and more importantly, by actively engaging the participants in this way, our research was more likely to come from and reflect the lived experiences of the community members (PAIN et al., 2015), and therefore be relevant to the community's resilience (see BRICE & FERNÁNDEZ ARCONADA, 2018). [37]

Third, carrying out our participatory research project absorbed considerable time for all those involved. Participants and art academy students had to be found, time-costly walking interviews had to be conducted, the group discussions, creative workshop and exhibition had to be planned and prepared, and the gathered data had to be transcribed and analyzed. These demands were maybe a reason why community members were reluctant to get involved in the research, or dropped out along the way. COEMANS and HANNES (2017) also highlighted the time-consuming nature of arts-based research methods, and added that costs (such as those related to organizing an exhibition, collaborating with artists, or buying good quality equipment such as digital cameras) can be another practical constraint on these methods. [38]

#### 4. Multifaceted Knowledge

Our participatory research project provided a rich insight into Pingjum's village life, the key issues at play in the community and the participants' sense of place and village experiences. Through its three stages, we gained *multifaceted knowledge*, with each project stage providing another facet of these topics. This helped us to understand the context in which the local arts and artists exist and their role in the resilience of the community. For example, a major theme that emerged from the participatory research project was our participants' appreciation of Pingjum's open landscape. This is an interesting theme given that our study was focused on the value of arts-based community activities for resilience-building in communities since it relates to people's attachment to place and their coping with (potential) place change (VAN DER VAART, VAN HOVEN & HUIGEN, 2018b) and, ultimately, the community's resilience. During the walking interviews, several participants took us to personal favorite and/or meaningful places where they encounter and enjoy Pingjum's landscape. Others, who did not select specific places, nevertheless related to the landscape during their walking interviews, expressing their appreciation of Pingjum's landscape in general terms. Overall, during the first project stage, it emerged that the participants greatly value the tranquility and space of Pingjum's surroundings. During the second project stage, Pingjum's landscape again emerged as one of the main topics. The group discussions revealed shared and divergent views, with people, for instance, valuing different elements in the landscape (e.g., trees vs. the open views). During the creative workshop, one group specifically created an artwork around Pingjum's coastal landscape (see Figure 2 and below for more background on this artwork) and another person visualized his "future wish"<sup>3</sup> for Pingjum, painting a landscape in which human beings are intertwined with the landscape (see Figure 1). Marc (male, 25-65) introduced his painting as follows:

"This is actually just a view, from Pingjum towards the meadows, to the landscape. And these [*pointing to the white shapes*] are humanlike beings in the landscape, who are somewhat intertwined with the landscape. A lot of people are intertwined with the landscape, I think, at least in spirit. But perhaps we should grow even more with the

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3 All quotes from the participants have been translated from Dutch to English by us.

landscape, so we no longer live *on* and *against* the earth, but a bit more *with* and *through* the earth ... so we are *part* of the earth instead of standing apart from it." [39]

With his painting, Marc shared his "future wish" for Pingjum, calling for more consideration of the landscape and the earth in general (i.e., "we should grow even more with the landscape" and "we are *part* of the earth instead of standing apart from it"). This links well to our study on community resilience, as it concerns people's place attachment and care for their landscape (see also STOCKER & KENNEDY, 2011). [40]

As noted, we also gained an understanding of key issues that are at play in the community through the participatory research project. Some of these could potentially induce place change and inflict changes on Pingjum's landscape. In earlier work, we reflected on the role of the arts in people's coping with potential place change in light of wind energy developments (VAN DER VAART et al., 2018b). During our project, it became clear that, for many participants, the plans for the construction of a new wind turbine park were difficult to reconcile with their feelings for, and attachment to, Pingjum's open landscape. Acquiring *multifaceted knowledge* on people's sense of place, Pingjum's village life and the key issues at play, helped us to understand the role of the local arts and artists in people's interpretations of, and dealing with, potential place changes in light of the wind energy developments (ibid.). [41]

In order to provide more nuanced, concrete insight into what creative and arts-based research methods can bring researchers interested in community resilience, the next section reflects further on the participatory research project by elaborating how the various project stages contributed to producing *multifaceted knowledge*. [42]

#### **4.1 Personal in-place accounts**

During the first stage of our research project, we got to know Pingjum, the key issues at play in the community and our participants. As noted earlier, walking interviews are praised for their capacity to access people's attitudes and knowledge about their surrounding environment (EVANS & JONES, 2011). In our case, walking with our participants through their village provided an opportunity to gain in-depth understanding of their personal sense of place and village experiences (including their opinions on, and experiences with, the local arts and artists). We learned about the places that are meaningful to them and which, in their eyes, are disputed in the community or facing (potential) changes. The walking interviews resulted in "thick" descriptions of the places and personal situated and rich accounts (PAIN, 2004). As we were "in place" with our participants, we were brought closer to the ways in which they experience their village and given a feeling for their sense of place. Instead of only hearing the participants describe the places they thought relevant, the researcher walked with them through their village and experienced the places first hand, also seeing, hearing, smelling and feeling the places herself. Moreover, as the places themselves provided prompts for discussion, the walking interviews also triggered

new conversations (see also HITCHINGS & JONES, 2004; TRELL & VAN HOVEN, 2010). [43]

An example of a personal, in-place account generated through the walking interviews is provided by Abby (female, 25-65), who took the researcher to a personally meaningful place during her walking interview (see Figure 3).



Figure 3: One of Abby's personally significant places in Pingjum (photograph Abby, walking interview) [44]

Abby explained that she selected this spot on the outskirts of Pingjum as it is one of the places in Pingjum that are important to her. She noted:

Abby: Here, I became emotional for the first time [while being in Pingjum's landscape], I thought "what a nice spot" ... that curvy little ditch, those horses and those flowers ... Here I can really find peace and also something nostalgic, I think.

Interviewer: What makes it so special?

Abby: I very much love green - that is my favorite color. And also, because it is not that tight, that curvy ditch. There is plenty of space, the horses that are walking around. In spring, the foals are walking around here, playing during the evening. It is the slowing down. Just having a look, enjoying. [45]

This quote shows Abby's appreciation of Pingjum's landscape, its tranquility and space. Actually being in the place during the walking interview, rather than recalling from a mental image or memories of the place, resulted in an in-place account of this personally meaningful place. The place itself played an active role in Abby's explanation of her sense of place, as illustrated by her pointing out the horses and choice of words (i.e., "here," "those"). Seeing the horses during the walking interview triggered Abby to reflect on her memories of the place, of being there in springtime and seeing the foals playing around. Abby also invited the researcher to look at the place with her (i.e., "just having a look, enjoying"). In this

way, the researcher was taken closer to the way in which Abby experiences Pingjum's surroundings as she could herself experience the peace ("the slowing down") that Abby finds there. This corresponds to the ideas of KELEMEN and HAMILTON (2015, p.22) who noted that, when using creative and arts-based research methods, researchers can "gain a degree of immersive, embodied experience of other peoples' 'situated knowledges'." [46]

A good example of discussion prompts that were provided by the "outdoors" during many of the walking interviews are the wind turbines surrounding Pingjum. For instance, the following exchange took place during William's (male, 25-65) walking interview:

Interviewer: Here we see a number of windmills on our left-hand side.

William: Oh, a thorny issue! [...] I think those things are very, very ugly. And I experience, and I am afraid, for this village community, that they will split the village a bit in two. There are of course a number of people who will probably get such a windmill on their ground [...] But I think most people, in Pingjum, are against it. Not so much against wind energy, but against the nuisance that it is going to bring. It is ugly for the landscape, those things make an incredible amount of noise [...] I see that as a threat to the village, yes. [47]

As this illustrates, walking interviews have the capacity to access people's attitudes about their surrounding environment and can trigger new conversations as prompts are encountered along the way (see also EVANS & JONES, 2011; HITCHINGS & JONES, 2004; TRELL & VAN HOVEN, 2010). [48]

## **4.2 Shared and divergent intergenerational views**

During the second project stage, our participants from different age groups (<25, 25-65, >65) were brought together to discuss further the meanings of the places they photographed during their individual walking interviews. As already noted, creative and arts-based research methods can serve as a bridge between generations, cultures, socioeconomic classes and people who are divided along habitual lines determined by existing agendas and interests (ANWAR McHENRY, 2011; ASKINS & PAIN, 2011; BRICE & FERNÁNDEZ ARCONADA, 2018; TAYLOR & MURPHY, 2014). By bringing the participants together in discussion groups, a "synergistic effect" emerged. The participants were reacting to and building upon each other's responses, leading to elaborated accounts of the issues discussed (see also WILKINSON, 2014). By sharing their views, the participants co-produced knowledge on the topics discussed and revealed shared and divergent intergenerational views that exist within the community on the meaning of particular places in Pingjum. [49]

In addition, the group discussions led to the disclosure of issues, anecdotes and ideas on Pingjum and its future that had not been raised (or perhaps thought of) during the walking interviews. This benefit was also identified by PAIN et al. (2015) who observed that new ideas can be sparked through the process of

people coming together (with each person bringing ideas, expertise and skills). The ideas that emerged during our second project stage (such as constructing an underground carpark just outside Pingjum and building a "village bench" to stimulate interaction among community members) showed that the participants were thinking about and discussing ways to deal with (potential) changes and to improve village life. This aligns with the aim of our research project to contribute to the community's (thinking about) resilience. A similar finding was noted by BRICE and FERNÁNDEZ ARCONADA (2018) when reflecting on their arts project in Somerset, UK. They noted that the project provided a starting point for the participants to develop and share "new frames of reference," with some participants "seiz[ing] the inspiration to imagine possible responses to current and future challenges" (pp.237-238). The concluding discussion and poster presentations at the end of the project's second stage provided an overview of the discussion groups' most important places and "core values" of Pingjum. [50]

To illustrate the facet that the research project's second stage added to our knowledge on Pingjum, the key issues at play in the community, and our participants' sense of place, we take a closer look at the discussion on the overview of photographs featuring Pingjum's landscape (see Figure 3) that took place in one of the discussion groups. The following exchange took place between Jenny (female, >65) and Vera (female, 25-65) while talking about the shell path alongside the water on the west side of Pingjum (top-left photograph in Figure 4, taken by Pepijn (male, >65) during his walking interview):



Figure 4: Overview of photographs featuring Pingjum's landscape (as used during the group discussions) (photographs made during the walking interviews, by: Pepijn (male, >65), Henry (male, 25-65), Donald (male, >65) and Eric (male, >65) (clockwise from top-left) [51]

Jenny: If you look at the shell path, which we all walk with our dogs, a tree regularly falls down there, and it is never replaced by a new one. And the trees

that are there are quite poor. Yes, I think that is all a shame. I would like to see things differently.

Vera: Perhaps that is something we could accomplish together?

Jenny: No, that is not going to happen, because I once talked about it with the municipality's gardener. It [planting trees] does not fit in this area, people are more fond of meadows and stuff. I think that is a pity, that we do not have a park. [52]

This exchange illustrates that the participants reacted to each other's experiences and views. For example, after Jenny pointed out the poor condition of the trees in Pingjum, Vera proposed joining forces to work on this. The exchange also provides an example of new information that came forward during the group discussions. Jenny had not, at least to this extent, expressed her appreciation of the trees in Pingjum('s landscape) during her walking interview, but now, seeing someone else's photograph during the group discussions, it came across that she was strongly in favor of trees being part of Pingjum's landscape and had even discussed this matter with the municipality's gardener. [53]

Pepijn (male, >65), who was also part of this discussion group, also reflected on the overview of photographs featuring Pingjum's landscape:

Pepijn: I love the space, I love the agricultural farm, I love farms. This is a village where, if you step out of your front door, you look outside at once. Nowadays that no longer happens anywhere. Here, you have it [the views] on all sides [of the village]. You are completely outdoors. That gives me so much space. I think it is very beautiful. You [referring to Jenny] are in favor of parks, I am not a fan of parks at all. On the contrary [...] I love the space as it has developed through agriculture over the centuries.

Vera: But you do not have to agree with each other, I believe.

Jenny: But one does not exclude the other, right? I also love the space. Of course, I think it is wonderful that we can still see the horizon.

Pepijn: ... the sky, those old dikes ...

Jenny: But I am extremely annoyed by the spraying with pesticides, which we all suffer from. So [looking at Pingjum's surrounding], I see different things than you do. [54]

Reacting to Jenny's earlier remarks on the trees in Pingjum's landscape, Pepijn shared his personal view on Pingjum's landscape. As already noted, discussing photographs can help participants reflect on and explain their experiences and perceptions (LOEFFLER, 2005; PURCELL, 2007). In this case, the photographs served as stimuli and illustrations for the discussion. Jenny, for instance, used them to point out the trees, and Pepijn to illustrate the open views from the various sides of the village. As becomes clear from the two quoted exchanges, these two participants had divergent views on Pingjum's landscape and they each value different elements within it (i.e., trees vs. open views). Together, they co-produced knowledge on Pingjum's landscape, with each of them expressing a

different view and highlighting different elements in the landscape ("I see different things than you do"). By listening to each other, the participants become aware of the existence of different views and experiences, and a broader perspective on Pingjum's landscape is created. This is reflected in the literature in the field of creative methodology, which, as HAMILTON and TAYLOR (2017) noted, is beginning to show effects on the participants of arts-based projects such as improved empathy for other people and new experiences and ways of thinking. As noted, such effects can make people more prepared to relate to their community and to take action within it (MITCHELL et al., 2011), changes which are beneficial with regard to the community's resilience. [55]

### 4.3 Deep insights through empathic experiences

Research methods that rely solely on verbal or written competences can, as previously noted, provide limited access to emotional and symbolic aspects of people's experiences (DUNN & MELLOR, 2017). Compared to the first two stages, the final stage of the participatory research project allowed the participants to communicate their views and feelings in a different way (see also COEMANS et al., 2015; FOSTER, 2012). During the hands-on creative workshop, the participants were asked to visualize the meanings they assigned to certain places in Pingjum. As DUNN and MELLOR (2017) commented, this enables participants to draw on both their cognitive capacities and their emotions, experiences and imagination. The four artworks/visualizations that resulted from the creative workshop provided deep insights into the participants' sense of place and also exposed issues that had not previously come to the surface. EISNER (2008) explained that this deep insight into what others are experiencing can be obtained because "the arts in research promote a form of understanding that is derived or evoked through empathic experience" (p.7). [56]

To illustrate the above, we consider one of the created artworks in more detail (see Figure 2). At the end of the morning of the creative workshop, Ria (female, 25-65) introduced this artwork (which she had made together with Pepijn (male, >65) as follows:

"This is the dike [*pointing to the horizontal line in the middle of the painting*], and we are standing back to back with each other. I am watching the Wadden Sea because the Wadden Sea is the reason why I have come to live here. And Pepijn is looking at the other side, to the open landscape. We have painted from these two perspectives. So the sea, of course [*pointing to "her" side of the artwork*]. What I like so much about the Wadden Sea is the vastness. But also the entire trench system, because it so strongly reflects the dynamics of the Wadden Sea, and that is also something I feel for, so therefore I included that [*in the painting*]." [57]

Both Ria and Pepijn have a strong attachment to the coastal landscape around Pingjum. The creative workshop stimulated them to reflect on and talk about their feelings. Such an outcome is also noted by LOWE (2000), who observed that working on an arts project can give participants the opportunity to talk about their experiences. In this way, she argued, they can discover common concerns and

shared definitions of the situations in their neighborhood. In the case of Ria and Pepijn, different interpretations of the "coastal landscape" concept emerged. Whereas Ria is more oriented towards the *seascape*, Pepijn is more oriented towards the *landscape*. Through their mutual painting, they each tried to capture the elements of the landscape that appeal to them as individuals and for which they feel an attachment ("I am watching the Wadden Sea [...] Pepijn is looking at the other side"). [58]

The artworks that were created during the creative workshop were displayed during an exhibition in the village hall. With this in mind, Ria, during her introduction of their artwork, remarked that some elements were still missing:

"What also belongs to this, and which we hope to include during the final exhibition, look.. this is two dimensional, and when you look outside or actually when you are standing there [on the dike] you see everything as three dimensional. But you *experience* it as four dimensional because the senses are also added. Because the Wadden Sea has a certain smell, and you feel the wind through your hair, and you can taste something. So we hope we can include some odors and sounds in our work, or around it. To complete the picture. And that will be very much in line with what we both strongly experience here." [59]

As such, the creative workshop stimulated Ria and Pepijn to reflect on their personal experiences while standing on the dike. Thinking about how to convey these, they realized that they needed to include material additional to their painting in order to present a more complete expression of their sense of place on the dike ("to complete the picture"). As can be seen in Figure 2, Ria and Pepijn indeed added extra material to their artwork during the exhibition. On the left side of the painting, they added a box with materials they found along the coastline and a note saying "look, smell, and admire." On the right side, they added a box with recorded sounds of the coastal landscape and a note "hear, listen, and grow quiet." By including these materials and sounds, Ria and Pepijn added several layers or dimensions to their artwork ("you *experience* it as four dimensional because the senses are also added"). In this way, they appealed even further to the visitors' emotions and imagination, offering them an "empathic experience" and insight into what they experienced when standing on the dike (see also EISNER, 2008). [60]

As the above example illustrates, the third project stage generated affective knowledge, providing deep insights into the participants' sense of place through empathic experiences. Compared to the first two project stages, the hands-on creative workshop enabled the participants to communicate their views and feelings in a different way, and move beyond cognitive ways of knowing. In this regard, LAWRENCE (2008) observed that experiential learning opportunities are present in both the creating and the witnessing of art. Quoting BURNARD (1988, p.128), she noted that "affective knowledge" or the "experiential domain of knowledge" can be "gained through direct personal encounter with a subject, person, place, or thing. It is the subjective and affective nature of that encounter that contributes to this sort of knowledge" (LAWRENCE, 2008, p.69). [61]

## 5. Discussion and Conclusions

In this article, we provide a methodological reflection on our participatory research project conducted in Pingjum. By discussing each project stage in detail and reflecting on the encountered challenges, our reflection provides nuanced, concrete insights into what creative and arts-based research methods can bring to researchers interested in community resilience. In so doing, this article contributes to academic discussions about creative and arts-based research methods. The three project stages produced *multifaceted knowledge*, with each stage exposing another facet of Pinjum's village life and the participants' sense of place and village experiences. The walking interviews generated personal, in-place accounts of people's village experiences and their views on key issues at play in the community, this corresponds to findings from, for example, HITCHINGS and JONES (2004) and TRELL and VAN HOVEN (2010). The group discussions brought the participants together and revealed both shared and divergent intergenerational views that existed within the community on the meaning of particular places in Pingjum. This confirms the synergistic effect of focus groups that WILKINSON (2014) noted. Lastly, the creative workshop provided deep insights into people's sense of place through empathic experiences. This is in line with observations from EISNER (2008) and LAWRENCE (2008) and underlines that, compared to some other creative and interactive research methods such as mental maps or diary keeping (see, e.g., TRELL & VAN HOVEN, 2010), arts-based research methods provoke stronger affective responses, thereby going beyond cognitive ways of knowing (LAWRENCE, 2008). In addition, both the second and third stages of the project disclosed issues that had not been previously raised. This adds support to the idea of combining more traditional research methods with creative and arts-based research methods in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study (COHENMILLER, 2018; COEMANS & HANNES, 2017; FRANZ, 2010). [62]

With the above findings in mind, we now reflect on the implications of our creative and arts-based research methods for the two aims of our participatory research project: to actively engage the inhabitants in generating knowledge about their community and its resilience and, linked to this, to contribute positively to the community's thinking about and actual resilience. With regard to the first, we can conclude that the project helped in gaining insight into the participants' sense of place and village experiences, the issues at play in Pingjum's community, and the overall context in which the local arts and artists exist. The creative and arts-based research methods, by actively engaging the participants' senses and provoking strong affective responses, enabled us to go beyond cognitive ways of knowing (see also LAWRENCE, 2008). These findings are in line with the views of scholars such as CAPOUS DESYLLAS (2014) and WOODGATE et al. (2017) who argued that, with the help of creative and arts-based research methods, a more meaningful understanding of the complex realities of people's lives can be obtained. This is highly relevant with regard to community resilience since, as STEINER and MARKANTONI (2013) noted, it is essential to capture and understand the issues that communities face when investigating community

resilience. This view is supported by several scholars who have argued that the everyday life-world and local knowledge should be incorporated when planning for community resilience (see, e.g., BRICE & FERNÁNDEZ ARCONADA, 2018; STUIVER, VAN DER JAGT, VAN ERVEN & HOVING, 2013; VAN DER VAART et al., 2015). Ultimately, the *multifaceted knowledge* that was produced through the use of creative and arts-based research methods has contributed to a greater understanding of the value of arts-based community activities for the community's resilience. For instance, we found that the arts play a role in people's interpretations of, and dealing with, (potential) place change (see VAN DER VAART et al., 2018b) and that the influence of the arts is context-dependent, with the arts having both binding and dividing influences on the community (see VAN DER VAART et al., 2017). [63]

In terms of our second aim, we can conclude that the participatory research project has potentially ignited a "spark" among the community members to engage in further action and contribute to their community's resilience (see also FORTMANN, 2014; GUPTA & KELLY, 2014; SALMON, 2007 on "giving back" to communities). The project contributed to a cultural practice that already existed in the community, with some artists already making deliberate efforts to strengthen the inhabitants' relationship with their surrounding landscape and to contribute to a sustainable future for their village (VAN DER VAART et al., 2017). However, given the project's relatively small scale and timeframe one should not have unrealistically high expectations in this regard. Nevertheless, we were able to conclude that the adoption of creative and arts-based research methods: 1. stimulated the participants, and the visitors to the exhibition, to think about and discuss their community, their attachments to it, (potential) changes in the village, and ways to deal with these, and to improve village life; 2. stimulated the formation and strengthening of links between community members by providing meeting opportunities by, for instance, bringing together some community members who would normally rarely meet or did not even know each other (especially those in different age groups); and 3. generated discussion on the meanings of certain places in Pingjum and, thereby, opened people up to the idea that different views and experiences existed (e.g., different interpretations of the "coastal landscape"). Such revelations can lead to a broader perspective and deeper awareness of "the other," which can make people more prepared to relate to their community and to take action in it (MITCHELL et al., 2011). Together, these three outcomes might thus have contributed a "spark" to engage in further action. As an example, during the group discussions, the participants were expressing their wishes, and had some ideas such as for the construction of a "village bench" to stimulate interactions among community members. Although these were only ideas, the participants might follow them up and be inspired to work together to achieve the installation of a village bench. This could stimulate the build-up of social capital, which would further contribute to the community's resilience by stimulating people's willingness and ability to work together for a common good (VAN DER VAART et al., 2018a). [64]

However, in our discussion of our participatory research project, we have also noted three challenges related to using creative and arts-based research

methods: the efforts required to engage the community in the project, the uncertainty linked to the project, and the considerable time demands on all those involved. Despite these challenges, our study shows that creative and arts-based research methods can deliver substantial benefits and, therefore, have much to offer researchers interested in community resilience. Specifically, our reflection on our participatory research project in Pingjum demonstrates that creative and arts-based research methods can: 1. generate multifaceted insights by going beyond rational-cognitive ways of knowing (HAMILTON & TAYLOR, 2017) and providing new ways of understanding people's real, lived experiences and views; and 2. present ways to "give back" and contribute to a community, potentially igniting a spark among community members to engage in further action and contribute to their community's resilience. This is in line with currently often articulated aims of research, namely to directly benefit those involved and to share research findings with a broader non-academic audience (MACPHERSON et al., 2017). [65]

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## Authors

*Gwenda VAN DER VAART* recently completed her PhD research at the Faculty of Spatial Sciences, University of Groningen.

Contact:

Gwenda van der Vaart

Known to the Editor

Tel.: +31 6 52317254

E-mail: [gwdvaart@hotmail.com](mailto:gwdvaart@hotmail.com)

*Bettina VAN HOVEN* is an associate professor of cultural geography at the Faculty of Spatial Sciences, University of Groningen.

Contact:

Bettina van Hoven

Department of Cultural Geography, Faculty of Spatial Sciences  
University of Groningen  
Landleven 1, 9747 AD Groningen, The Netherlands

Tel.: +31 50 363 64 22

E-mail: [b.van.hoven@rug.nl](mailto:b.van.hoven@rug.nl)

URL: <http://www.rug.nl/staff/b.van.hoven/>

*Paulus P.P. HUIGEN* is an emeritus professor of cultural geography at the Faculty of Spatial Sciences, University of Groningen.

Contact:

Paulus P.P. Huigen

Department of Cultural Geography, Faculty of Spatial Sciences  
University of Groningen  
Landleven 1, 9747 AD Groningen, The Netherlands

Tel.: +31 50 363 38 96

E-mail: [p.p.huigen@rug.nl](mailto:p.p.huigen@rug.nl)

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