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WALKING THROUGH THE INTERCULTURAL FIELD

An ethnographic study on intercultural language learning as a spatial-embodied practice

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Abstract

Within concepts on intercultural language learning it is generally acknowledged that the 'context' of the individual learning experience plays an important role for the acquisition of a foreign language and intercultural learning processes. A detailed understanding of what it is we call 'context' is still missing – as are studies that focus particularly on the language learning environment *outside* the classroom and the role of everyday space and place for intercultural encounter. This thesis draws largely on spatial theory in addressing space and place as a site of geo-political and social-cultural change, and as a crucial element of intercultural language learning processes.

Narratives, de Certeau (1984: 116) says, are "written by footsteps." The methodological orientation of this thesis follows both the narratives and footsteps of language learners, and as such is anchored in and around the element of movement. In creating a spatial 'method assemblage' (Law 2004) that engages both mobile and visual elements, I am arguing for a methodological change in perspective while giving credit to the perspective of language learners and their everyday routes and learning environments. This argument correlates with the particular methodological tool of 'guided walks', in which researcher and language learner walk together on daily routes within places of significance. Giving walking a central methodological and analytic role within this thesis underlines those moments of intercultural experience, which are based on movement, transformation and the search for the ephemeral.

The particular understanding of intercultural language learning as a 'spatial-embodied practice' emerges from an ethnographic study as well as from a detailed examination of the 'intercultural field'. The various imbalances of the 'intercultural field' effect intercultural language learning through the body, as well as the senses and practices of diversity, and re-shape an awareness of space. Not only increased physical mobility, but the complex networks of flows and transnational interrelations, increasingly transform intercultural experience. From this perspective, this thesis argues that language learners weave their intercultural experience through practices of 'place making' (Ingold 2011), and by moving in between myriad borders and boundaries.

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Acknowledgements

Ich bin dankbar für...
I am grateful for...

Author's declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Signature: _____

Printed name: ULRIKE WOITSCH

Introduction

You cannot travel on the path before you have become the Path itself.
(Gautama Buddha)

Walk on!
(His last word to the disciples)

The Wayless Way, where the Sons of God lose themselves and, at the same time, find themselves.
(Meister Eckhart)

There is no happiness for the man who does not travel. Living in the society of men, the best man becomes a sinner. For Indra is the friend of the traveller. Therefore wander!
(Aitareya Brāhmana)

(Excerpts of Bruce Chatwin's *Songlines*, 1987)

Whoever has undertaken a long walk, a hike or a run, will have experienced the effect the constant rhythm and movement have on body and mind. Not only does it feel physically relieving or re-energising, thoughts and feelings too go through a cycle of deep immersion and reflection. Walking does not only form the spine of this research and acts as a central metaphor, it is above that a tribute to the constant chain of steps of language learners, who, as walkers, cross borders and follow unfamiliar paths on an everyday basis. It is in this sense that this thesis is an invitation to join a walk through the intercultural field and its landmarks, to linger at some particular places, and to listen to the stories language learners have to tell about their individual routes.

This begs the question at the outset: what makes a walk a walk?

A walk lives through the individuality of experience: an unexpected breeze, the sensation of a raindrop on the skin, the changing colours of the trees and the way clouds paint the sky. As well, a walk consists of stops and breaks, a short breath or persistence, fascination or even fear. Walking is a constant mode of arriving and leaving, of resting and moving, and forms and transforms as such our lives. Bruce Chatwin wrote in his book, *Songlines* (1987), about the Australian Aboriginal ontology: "By spending his whole life walking and singing his Ancestor's Songline, a man eventually became the track, the Ancestor and the

song." (Chatwin 1987: 179). Walking then means to change, and it is this element of fluidity and transformation that forms the basis of this thesis.

Before embarking on this journey, it is necessary to unfold the roots of this research, as well as to illustrate the paths we will follow and the modes by which we will visualise the places and moments encountered on the way.

Where this walk began

Figure 1: Classroom in Al-Azhar University, photograph by Schazia Akram

"You are like us" – as 'simple' as this sentence sounds it followed me during the past three years and in the course of writing this thesis. The words, spoken by a young Egyptian student, appeared on my last official day as a teacher of German language at the German Department of Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt. The year behind me was full of intercultural encounter, challenging teaching circumstances, and lots of learning about myself. However, what remained central in my memory of this time was this little sentence and the message it carried. The curiosity arising from this encounter was directed towards the manifold feelings and processes an engagement with difference and diversity creates. I decided to invest time and space to follow these tracks through this project.

Initially, I oriented this broad field of interest to the realms of religion, and, having studied both religious studies and language pedagogy, I was interested in the relationship between 'interreligious learning' and 'intercultural learning'. My fascination for those dimensions of intercultural being that are sparked by a deep belief in humanity led me to position spirituality as the focus of my interest.

The journey I underwent was rich in insights, and personally surprised me in the paths it took and the directions it followed. By including a spatial perspective in my research, I focused more on the learning processes of intercultural encounter in relation to the learning environments, and re-orientated my research towards the academic realms of social-sciences and human geography. The field of spirituality reformed itself within the various moments of embodied practices, affects, and vulnerabilities I encountered during the study and while walking with language learners through the intercultural field.

This intuitive way of following the footsteps of a thesis, and my curiosity, was often of an invisible and quite intangible nature, and was encouraged in this instance by what can be called a 'sensing' or 'grasping' of interculturality and all its moments of 'being in between'. It is this focus that remained with me and which formed an understanding of intercultural learning as a 'spatial-embodied practice'.

Summaries of the paths

This thesis is organised in 'paths'. Our walk begins with Path One and Thomas's experiences in Berlin, followed by Chapter One, in which we enter the intercultural field through a reflection on what it means to be inter-, multi- or transcultural, and in which ways those terms are related to the field of foreign language education. After joining Karin for a walk through Cairo, Chapter Two transfers our theme of interest into the realm of intercultural language learning, and captures the most influential concepts and their general premises on how to learn interculturally. Discussion of these influential concepts will enable the position taken in this research to unfold, and will contribute to the formulation of the research questions within Chapter Three, preceded by Sarah's walk through Mendoza in Argentina.

Path Two challenges the common understanding of 'context' within intercultural experience and positions this critique into a broad mapping of space as an integral element of educational theory in Chapter Four, encircled by the walks of Hashim in Saarbrücken and Veronica in Lyon. Outlining the theoretical argumentation of this thesis places the 'intercultural field' and its inherent 'practices of diversity' in the centre of attention. Chapter Five continues Chapter Four by grounding what we understand as the 'intercultural field' and by developing its connections to intercultural language learning processes. In doing so, I am following the traces of spatial theory and its focus on space and place as well as everyday and global-spatial transformations. After joining Ismail for a

while in Glasgow, Chapter Six will finally allow us a locating perspective – namely by placing intercultural encounter in the middle of global flows, mobilities and networks.

Path Three begins with Wei's walk in Nagoya, Japan, and goes on to translate the earlier arguments of Path One and Two into a methodological framework while creating a spatial method for the research undertaken during the course of this thesis. While wondering in which ways methodology can shed light on mobile as well as rather intangible notions of interculturality, this thesis pursues an interdisciplinary and multiple methods approach in the form of a 'method assemblage' in Chapter Seven. Chan's experience in the 'Scandinavian Club' in Melbourne is followed by Chapter Eight, which introduces a largely ethnographic research design with a particular focus on the senses, as well as on 'multilocality' and the element of movement. These latter two foci are outlined during Chapter Nine and preceded by Vasu's walk through Melbourne.

Chapter Ten concentrates on the findings of the research while developing an understanding of intercultural language learning as a 'spatial-embodied practice', which is illustrated by Joshua's walk in Granada. Here, the thesis highlights the central roles of the 'intercultural body', 'a sense of space', and the transforming nature of 'practices of diversity'. The walk ends with Daniel's reflections on classroom teaching and the Epilogue, which holds thoughts on the pedagogical impacts, the here outlined understanding of intercultural language learning implies.

How to read this thesis

This thesis is centred in the movement of walking and shall as such be read as a journey within evolving paths. In this sense, I decided not to begin with the objectives and aims of this research, but to allow instead their discovery en route through the intercultural field. The basic premises unfold in a gradually developing form and go hand in hand with the theoretical grounding and framework. In the same way, the methodology chapters are placed in Path Three and not, as more commonly done, at the beginning of this thesis. The reason for this lies in a general methodological orientation and the integration of an intercultural method into the findings and conclusions. In other words: the creation of a spatial method for intercultural language learning is central to this thesis and as such is placed in the final path of our walk.

In the course of the chapters the quotes extracted from the interviews and 'guided walks' are added into the text in different ways. Data within the chapters works as explaining and illustrating elements, but is as such not necessarily part of a detailed analysis, as discussed in Chapter Ten. Let me add a short note on how I intended the data to be structured and presented.

The walks

Figure 2: The walks

The data collected for this research is represented in 'walks', which originate from the methodological forms of the 'guided walks' and 'virtual walks'. Finding out about the routes and tracks intercultural language learners follow called for an open form of presentation, a *modus vivendi*, which gives credit to both the process and individuality of experience and leaves space for the reader to follow each individual path. The aims of the walks are to locate the data in its places of origin and to create an understanding of how they form an intercultural field and respond as such to the theoretical background of networks, flows and mobilities that I outline in Path Two. The walks visualise the intercultural field not as one single route, and not as made of one single narrative, but as part of a network of thousands of routes, where stories and places overlap.

In their concrete form, the walks are a combination of narratives, relational maps and photographs taken by the language learners in the course of this research. As much as every place tells a story, the walks aim to follow how language learners read in places and how experience is connected with their learning environment. Walking is after all not chronologically orientated. The routes language learners take follow rather geographical locations: names of towns or particular locations, as, for instance, a trail through the

mountains, a market, a home, a well-loved bakery or a tapas bar. Some walks are accessible through images and mind maps and some not, which is the result of an open methodological approach developing gradually and including visual and arts-based methods during a later stage of this research. Additionally, not all participants provided these extra forms of data due to lack of time or other unknown reasons.

In order to correspond with the theoretical framework of this thesis the walks are not presented collectively within one chapter, but rather interlace the thesis by being placed *independently* in between chapters. Although the placement of the particular walks falls within the particular theoretical themes of the chapters, they correspond moreover with what Mason calls a creative tension of method and approach and the dialogue between them (Mason 2006). The creation of a dialogue between theory and the voices of the field is then another aim of the walks, one which is brought forth by the particular shape of the walks themselves.

The walks are highlighted by their locations, the names of the 'walker' and by an 'Apfelkernzitat' (apple seed quotation) – a small sentence that captures the driving element of the interview and indicates the direction of the walk. The walks speak for themselves and leave space for interpretation. They are, however, linked to the thoughts and theoretical framework of this thesis through a section entitled 'From the notebook'. This chosen form for this thesis follows Bruce Chatwin's practice in his book, *Songlines* (1987), and encapsulates the thoughts and ideas that emerge from the research, and links the field with the theory provided. All three elements (location, apple seed quotation, and the notebook-section) create a navigation system, which, when taken together, accompanies the reader while strolling through the intercultural field. Finally, all translations from German to English, which are part of the walks, are done by myself.

The images

All images throughout the chapters are my own if not stated otherwise. The photographs chosen to accompany particular sections are a vital element of this thesis. Their inclusion did not happen on the basis of a fixed interpretation of their content, but rather as an inspirational and resonating element of the particular methodology, which characterises this research. I clarify the usage of those photographs, which are taken by the language learners and which form an essential part of the 'walks' in Chapter Nine.

A final note to the design of this thesis: imagine it is in the shape of a pop-up book – a form of presentation, that would more fully fit its content and would not only enable the reader to see the chapters and the walks from all possible angles, but would allow him or her to change perspectives constantly.

PATH ONE

Where do we begin walking?

Berlin

I felt I belonged

(Thomas)

The view out the window of the train from Frankfurt to Berlin: This was right at the start of my trip, and a great first impression (I had never seen a wind tower in real life before, only on TV!). It was like a view into the future.

Figure 3: Thomas's virtual walk 1

Thomas is Australian and studies German at Melbourne University. He decided to go for an exchange to Germany because, as he states, "a friend of mine had lived there for a while and it just sounded like a great city and seemed an awesome place to go." This moment of "sort-of just picking something and going for that" was followed by one and a half years in Berlin and the plan to return for a Masters after finishing his degree in Melbourne. He remembers his first weeks in Berlin as follows:

> *I was really lucky because a friend of mine had done an exchange the semester before, and had some friends there. And one of them had gone away for one month, so when I arrived I moved into her room, so I had a place pretty much from day one. And, while I was there, I found this other place I moved into over a year. And the people there helped me with the 'Anmeldungsbestätigung' [registration formula, U.W.] and to enrol. I'd have had trouble doing all of that stuff by myself.*

Asked how he had imagined Germany before arriving, he mentions the role of stereotypes, "Which you almost expect when you go over and then don't really turn out to be like that." He explains further:

> *I didn't try and figure out what they were like. I never really thought it is a very good way to learn about people while trying to group them. It never really works that way. If you are getting to know people, there were things which were kind of similar to the stereotypes and there were opposites, so it makes any preconceptions which you have kind-of irrelevant.*

Thomas describes Berlin as "one of the most multicultural cities I have ever been to" and points to the area he was living in − Neuköln − as "very intercultural and cool to live." This particular area, called 'Neuköln', is often entitled as 'the Turkish district' and is described as a parallel world in regards to that of the 'German world'. Thomas explains his impression of that situation as follows:

> *The thing that I noticed in Berlin, for better or worse, the social groups are more distinguished than in Melbourne. I think we had in Australia the same sort-of situation thirty years ago. […] I found that in Berlin there are some definite Turkish places whereas some people say that's Turkey, that's not Germany. That is a strange sort-of thing. And there are obviously lots of social problems to do with integration and stuff like that. […] But at the same time, I think people take for granted a lot of good things. They come and they sort-of accept it, and if there are any social issues they blame that on a group rather than on any individual. But there was so much good food and good music and sort-of community atmosphere, especially around Kreuzberg and Neuköln, that wasn't German at all or that was influenced by Germans, but that was sort-of a secondary thing, which is interesting.*

And people take that for granted now with food and stuff that is integrated in the city but not used as a positive against the negative aspects that people say and that people love talking about [laughs].

Thomas adds that "the real barrier" is the missing language and therefore the loss of communication: "I mean there are religious differences and stuff, but the main thing standing between especially Turkish people in Berlin and everyone else [laughs] is that the language level is not there."

This Fete de la Musique stage was just outside our house. Karmanoia was a bar around the corner, and definitely the best bar ever. The picture is of the end of a short play. At the beginning he was wearing a T-shirt that said 'Art sucks'. During the play he did random stuff then stripped naked, made a vodka martini slip n slide then chased some kids with a broom. Awesome.

Figure 4: Thomas's virtual walk 2

Asking Thomas about his personal journey with the German language, he mentions that many people ask him whether he is now fluent in German, and goes on to explain, "I do not really know what that means […]. You don't wake up one day and someone gives you a certificate for being fluent. It doesn't make sense but people are always asking as if you know the level you are at." He reflects further:

> T   *It wasn't particularly easy to learn all the different cases and all the complicated stuff, but I felt once I had that down then it was easy to build on that. One problem you do have, being an English native speaker in Germany, is that people want to speak English to you and they want to practice. So I felt like there was sort-of a level above, which we speak German together, but before that it made sense to speak English because it would have been a better way of communicating. But I was lucky that the house I was living in, we all spoke German together and there was also a girl from France who wanted to speak German rather than going to English. So that really helped to get my German above the level of other people's English. And it will be a better conversation in German than it would be in English.*
>
> U   *That must have been something really rewarding.*
>
> T   *Absolutely! There was one time I remember, the time I thought, 'That's it, I reached this level', there. I had to go and get insurance. And I went to the guy and I started in German, and it was all kind of insurance words, and I didn't know, and I [was] kind-of mumbling around a bit. And then he said, 'Oh do you want to speak in English?' and I was like 'OK'. And so I was like jacking on him in English, and he was like 'Oh, not too fast', so I switched back to German and we kept speaking German about these things and I felt like my German won [laughs].*

As a student of engineering, Thomas is very interested in the infrastructure of Germany, and he comments in regards to his experience in Germany as "pretty easy to get around and everything just seemed to work, awesome!" I was wondering about his ways of orientating himself in Berlin during the first weeks:

The week I arrived the U-Bahn went on strike, so I had to ride my bike from Neuköln to Charlottenburg in the snow, which wasn't that fun, but it meant that I got lost alone and discovered many things in between. Otherwise – and that's the thing with the U-Bahn – you have like a station where you get on and another one where you get off, and everything in between is a bit of a tunnel. But when you ride your bike you can see it a lot more.

Russian Graffiti on the Reichstagsgebäude [the building of the German parliament, U.W.]. I wasn't able to find out what it means, but with all the bullet holes still covering so many old buildings, it makes history so much more tangible.

Figure 5: Thomas's virtual walk 3

Regarding the question, whether he got "something like a sense of place?" Thomas answered:

Yes, I felt I belonged. Which was strange, because also the place had so many people who would not call themselves typical Germans, I did not feel that I was particularly different, especially when people thought I'm German [laughs]. So, yes, I kind of belonged where I was. And in my house as well, with my friends and stuff.

Thomas adds that he learned the most about Germany "from the Germans I lived with in both the places I stayed in. And then also people at Uni as well." Thomas's connection to Germans involved, in part, a realisation about the different ways of dealing with distance, both geographically and socially. He tells the following story:

I was used to deal with German bureaucracy and one day I had to call centre link [the Australian governmental agency for social issues, U.W.] and the guy started chatting with me as if we have been friends for ages and I was like, why are you so friendly with me? [laughs] And he was asking how my trip was going and what I was doing and it was just a completely different way of interacting with people. I found in Germany, if you didn't know someone, then you wouldn't try and interact with them personally from the very beginning, but in Australia it seems to be normal. […] A friend of mine came to visit and it was interesting watching him interacting with my friends from Germany and from Europe. Sometimes it was a bit 'peinlich' [awkward, U.W.]. Because my friend would try to say things because they would try to connect with them. And that's just not the way it works.

I asked Thomas if he tried to explain this to his friend and he answered "Yes, I mean, it's not really something you can explain very easily."

We coming to the end of our talk and I am wondering in which ways Thomas's experiences in Germany enriched his way of being:

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I think I'm more independent, because I had to do everything and sort everything out for myself. I mean, there were people who helped, but I kind of avoided help a bit because I wanted to do everything by myself. So in that sense, I think, I know a lot more about [...] how I approach things. Sometimes I do it better or worse. I kind of recognise strengths and weaknesses in that sense. Being able to cope with a completely new place and just manage money – all the boring necessitates in life – without the network of friends and family which used to be there before, which made things kind of easy [laughs].

Unser WG-Wohnzimmer: wo ich Deutsch gelernt habe. Gemütlich oder? Das Fenster war wie ein Fernseher - auf der Strasse gab's immer etwas los.

(The living room of our shared flat where I studied German. Cosy, isn't it? The window was like a TV: there was always something happening on the street.)

Figure 6: Thomas's virtual walk 4

From the notebook: Intercultural language learning, as seen through Thomas's eyes, is the process of learning to see 'things taken for granted' from a different perspective. Taken outside of their everyday environment, such elements (of, for example, diversity) can be observed with distance and a new mindset. What follows this change of perspective is a re-valuing of the 'positive and negative aspects people love talking about', and which are often the source of 'social problems'. Physical movement, such as riding his bike or walking, belongs for Thomas to his intercultural experience in the same way as does contact with his flatmates and the learning of invisible elements of culture, such as keeping or breaking up distance. 'Being able to cope with a completely new place' while stepping out of networks, 'which used to be there before' was then at the core of Thomas's intercultural experience in Berlin.

Chapter One: From multicultural to intercultural

Figure 7: The 'Offshore' in Glasgow

On Mondays I tend to start the week slowly while having coffee in the 'Offshore', a coffee shop right across from the Faculty of Education at Glasgow University. The Offshore has a large window-front, which points directly to the park and a canvas of trees, colourful at this time of the year in the middle of October. I am having hot chocolate (it rains again) and picking *The Herald* from the shelf at the entrance. On page four, the staring title, "Merkel admits: Multicultural society has failed in Germany" catches my eye and is followed by the reading of this stunning and disappointing article – according to Angela Merkel, a multicultural way of living together has revealed itself as to be impossible in present day Germany. I am wondering about this insensitive and generalising statement, unusual for Merkel, who normally is more deliberate in finding words for matters of integration. However, the political background of this statement is not important here. What strikes me is that my own life-world and the ones of many other people living and working in Germany have desperately been dismissed. I myself am married to an Egyptian, my uncle is married to a Japanese woman, and both he and his wife live with their five German-Japanese children in Berlin. Many of my friends work in the field of intercultural language education throughout Germany and dedicate their love and passion for that kind of multiculturality Merkel has just denied. My parents coordinate schools offering

German language in Kazakhstan, my brother leads a Goethe-Institute in Uganda that organises multicultural art festivals on the streets of Kampala, and my cousins studied in Great Britain – all of them returning to Germany with a suitcase full of experiences and hoping to give back some of the gracious hospitality they have been welcomed with in other parts of this world. How can this possibly be interpreted as failure?

<center>Unsettled terms</center>

Fixing a problem?

The term 'multiculturality' is a diverse one and is used in a variety of different fields for an even bigger variety of purposes. In the *Oxford English Dictionary* we find the term entered as 'multiculturalism' (also used as 'multiculturality'), and 'multicultural', describing the latter terms as referring to a "society consisting of a number of cultural groups" (OED online). The adjective multicultural, as Merkel uses it, refers then to a society that is no longer solely determined by Germans, starting with the 'Gastarbeiter' (guest workers) coming to Germany in the early 1960s and the constant immigration ever since. Here, the term 'multicultural' *describes* a situation, which is characterised by a transformed cultural diversity in Germany.

The situation Merkel refers to is seen from a political standpoint. The way politics deals with multiculturality is well known: agendas, regulations and programs developed to adjust practices of diversity to an already existing framework and understanding of German culture and of a multicultural society. Multiculturality, seen from this point of view, can easily give an impression of 'the' multicultural as a static condition or a merely political subject in need 'to be dealt with'. Furthermore, the impression can be developed that the situation is indeed a problem that needs to be fixed. In this sense it is almost understandable if Merkel condemns the multicultural society as 'failed', particularly if she is referring to the effectiveness of governmental regulations, which are expected to work direct and quick.

While the aim of this thesis is not to write an analysis of integration in Germany, the underlying notions of Merkel's statement are right at the heart of it. The mechanisms of politics (as well as media) just-illustrated seem to work as a circle of negative assumptions and constant modes of questioning intercultural identities while arguing for what it should *not* be. The problem of an understanding of a multicultural society in this sense is

threefold: firstly, it excludes the perspective of the multicultural individual and intercultural experience outwith the range of political discourses. Secondly, it represents multiculturality as a problem or problematic aspect of current societies, often concentrating the debates on economic outcomes and visible signs for the success or failure of the multicultural project. And thirdly, it suggests that there is a fixed and stable understanding and ideal of multiculturality that can be achieved fully and completed in time and space. Surely, this is not what multiculturality is about. It is far beyond being a static situation with a clear set of meanings and procedures. It is rather a form of encounter and a state of being multicultural and experiencing diversity. Focusing mainly on "that superficial truth that may be most obviously visible" (hooks 2010: 9), means then to highlight contact but not exchange or mutual understanding. Each person facing an intercultural encounter creates "a common need to respond to the adaptive demands" of the unfamiliar and new environment (Shaules 2007: 1), and the ways of doing this are diverse, dynamic and complex.

Inter-, trans,- or multicultural?

Creating an alternative image of what it means to be multicultural means firstly to examine the variety of words we are dealing with when it comes to multicultural matter.

Multi-, inter-, cross-, trans-, pluricultural, and so forth – the selection of prefixes added to the word 'culture' is long and their usage varies within different languages. Within (British) English and German (the languages I can most speak for), two terms are centre-stage: 'multicultural' and 'intercultural'. Both words are often used simultaneously but are not congruent in their meaning: whereas the word 'multicultural' explains a situation that is characterised by the multiplicity of cultural elements, the word 'intercultural' captures a *dialectic* engagement within this situation and a form of dynamic exchange, which the prefix 'inter' illustrates (Rey-van Allmen 2011). The similar sounding terms 'transcultural' and 'crosscultural' do not necessarily implicate this "dialectic movement or reciprocity" (Rey-von Allmen 2011: 35), which does not mean that interactions are not taking place. Kramsch describes this state of unsettled terminology in the following way:

> Depending on how culture is defined and which discipline one comes from, various terms are used to refer to communication between people who don't share the same nationality, social or ethnic origin, gender, age, occupation, or sexual preference. The nomenclature overlaps somewhat in its use. The 'cross-cultural' or 'intercultural' usually refers to the meeting of two cultures or two languages across the political boundaries of nation-states. (Kramsch 1998: 81)

In this thesis I focus predominantly on the term 'intercultural' (as well as 'interculturality') for the following reasons. Firstly, the dynamic and dialectic notions of the term 'intercultural' and its wide-spread usage within a long tradition of 'intercultural education' suggest its centrality, and correspond in their focus on dynamic practice, as well as with the objective of this research (that is, to focus on individual experiences of interculturality; see Chapter Three). Secondly, instead of extracting different meanings from the intertwined notions and understandings of inter-, trans-, cross- and multicultural, I consider it more helpful to ponder about their common aims and purposes. This will be done within a critical stance and in reference to the challenges intercultural encounter faces within the intercultural field (see Path Two).

Rey-von Allmen (2011) points out that originally the intercultural perspective was created in relation to the situation of migrants in the industrialised countries. This situation created "the need to perceive links between the various elements in play" in order to emphasise "the fundamental importance of interactions, the need to learn to perceive them more accurately and to act accordingly" (Rey-von Allmen 2011: 34.) In the author's understanding, forms of intercultural interaction shall "contribute to mutual respect and the enrichment of mutually supportive communities, rather than strengthen domination and rejection" (ibid.). The development of an intercultural perspective meant nothing less than contributing to an equal society across political, ethnic, cultural and social borders. It is important to note that this perspective does not only include "relationships between groups or individuals from different cultures, but *all relationships between individuals or groups of the same culture*" (Rey-von Allmen 2011: 38, own emphasis). This is a crucial argument for this thesis, as it indicates the inclusion of 'cultural learning' when speaking about intercultural learning throughout the following chapters. In short: the dimension of cultural learning is here understood as intertwined with forms of intercultural learning and visualised in their collaborative status.

We can see already that the term 'intercultural' is not an easy-to-use word at all. As a term, it is rather "cutting across the whole of life in society" (Rey-von Allmen 2011: 37), and covers a huge variety of disciplines as well as ontological dimensions. The wide scope and diversity of its meanings fall together with a more or less undistinguished usage within public and academic discourses. Considering this overloaded status and the arguments of this section, it is helpful to distinguish the intercultural perspective: as a) an appearance of

reality; b) a set of individual practices; and c) a point of focus and visualisation of an equal and just society.

In transition

We can say now that the presence of several terms, such as inter-, trans-, cross- and multicultural, as well as their manifold meanings are a reflector of the current state in a world experiencing mass mobility and movement of populations (see Chapter Six). Whereas 'culture', as the second part of these terms, has been discussed heavily and uncovered as an individual and dynamic set of meanings and practices (Geertz, 1973), the first half of our focal term, 'inter', has been much less focused on. Rey-van Allmen reminds us that "giving value to the prefix 'inter', implies interdependence, interaction and exchange" (Rey-von Allmen 2011: 34). The word 'inter' captures then a moment of passage, a moment of changeover, or a transitional stage, which means above all: a *process* of change. MacDonald and O'Regan write in this instance:

> The term intercultural implies a 'going between', and the 'traversing' of an implied 'gap' or 'space' between two or more collectivities. Therefore, the project of intercultural communication must necessarily interrogate two phenomena: not only the nature of the space between cultures thus expressed (the 'inter-cultural'); but also the implied homogeneity of the cultural groups between which this space opens up (the 'intra-cultural'). (MacDonald & O'Regan 2009: 3)

This process of 'traversing a gap or a space' in between assumedly homogenous cultural groups is at the centre of this research and aims to shed more light on the characteristics of 'going between' – especially in regards to the learners' individual everyday environments.

That learning is never static but rather a developmental experience is elaborated by Joseph Shaules in his book, *Deep Culture. The Hidden Challenges of Global Living* (2007). He argues that intercultural learning "involves (hopefully) an ever greater ability to construe the perceptual world found in a new environment," and exemplifies these forms of learning as "resistance, acceptance and adaptation" to whatever the individual circumstances of the learning experiences are (Shaules 2007: 3). While Shaules' argument of developmental learning will be a recurrent subject within this thesis, I focus here on his statement of interculturality as a process of change with a direction (such as resisting, accepting or adapting). I argue that *'being in between' does not necessarily have a direction, neither is it necessarily in need of it*. Whereas politics and educational systems work on the basis of directions and outcomes, intercultural encounters have their own journeys outside these

realms, making it impossible to say how this state of 'being in between' should or should not look. The state of being culturally 'inter' or 'in-between' means to realise that words and their corresponding meanings differ in significant ways outside their usual contexts and social fields, and the reactions towards this multiplicity of meaning are complex, messy and multi-directional (see Path Three). Alred et al. state in this regards the following:

> People born and socialised into specific groups tend to assume that the conventions and values by which they live within their groups are inevitable and 'natural'. It is when they have some kind of experience which leads them to question these given conventions and values – but not necessarily to reject them – that they begin to become 'intercultural' in our sense. (Alred et al. 2003: 3)

In which ways the experience of interculturality interferes with intercultural learning as an object of education is addressed in the next section.

An educational project

So far, I have followed the different meanings of interculturality as a description of reality, an individual practice or a future goal. This section highlights interculturality as a *project* embedded in the field of education, whether it concerns curricula for schools or university programs, training for economic institutions, or diverse global and international organisations.

The role of education within intercultural encounter is significant and increased considerably from the early 1990s. In its origins, intercultural education merely occurred in the realms of business and professional exchange. Alred et al. explain:

> In the USA and in Europe, it [intercultural education, U.W.] has been used by those who prepare people for short or longer term residence in another country when, for professional and work-related reasons, they find themselves obliged to leave the familiarity of their own cultural environment. (Alred et al. 2003: 2)

At this time, the purpose of intercultural education concentrated on preparing people to leave their familiar environments based on relations between business partners in trading, finances and global organisations. However, immigration and globalisation changed the nature of intercultural training and education in significant ways. The linear direction of learning 'at home' and applying the knowledge while 'going abroad' transformed into a

rotating direction while intercultural encounter itself became a part of everyday life. Intercultural education, therefore, needed to widen its perspective to include a variety of disciplines and recreate the intercultural as an interlinking element of *interdisciplinary* studies. The birth of cultural studies aimed to combine those strands in one field of study, which was understood rather as a thematic field of research than a clear-cut academic discipline (Hall 1992).

Within the field of intercultural language education the intercultural element received increasing attention and replaced a focus on 'culture as a separate entity' with a focus on the interaction between cultural elements, practices and adjoining academic disciplines (see Chapter Two). Corbett states:

> English language teaching has long been a multidisciplinary field in practice, but it has drawn mainly upon research into linguistics and psychology for its theoretical insights. An intercultural approach continues to draw upon these disciplines, but gives equal weight to other areas of research and practice in the humanities and social sciences. Some of these disciplines, such as anthropology and literary studies are well established; others, such as media and cultural studies, are relatively young and still developing. (Corbett 2003: 3)

The general aim of intercultural language pedagogy transformed in order to prepare language learners for their experiences of intercultural *being* – in both places abroad and in their 'own' societies. Alred et al. distinguish in this sense between 'intercultural experience' and 'being intercultural': whereas the first is "simply a statement of fact, of an encounter between particular groups [...] to experience otherness in a range of ways," the authors explain 'being intercultural' as

> the capacity to reflect on the relationships among groups and the experience of those relationships. It is both the awareness of experiencing otherness and the ability to analyse the experience and act upon the insights into self and other which the analysis brings. Experience alone is therefore not enough. (Alred et al. 2003: 4)

Intercultural language education is in this regard a project at the heart of intercultural education, which re-works intercultural meaning making and makes an intercultural world in the language classrooms. Phipps points out: "we are already more or less interculturally competent from living in intercultural worlds" (Phipps 2008: 11). Enabling students, entrepreneurs, travellers, businessmen, academics and all who encounter the process of crossing borders and languages to learn to be intercultural aims then as well to bring

together life-worlds within diverse educational settings and paradigms. Intercultural learning is as such more needed than ever:

> Deep cultural learning is an important issue in an age of globalization and the frequent crossing of cultural boundaries. While the total amount of cultural differences in the world may be decreasing, the number of deep intercultural experiences is increasing dramatically. (Shaules 2007: 5)

The question remaining is: is there such a thing as 'the' intercultural we can refer to within the project of intercultural education? Surely, there is not. In the same way, as there is not 'the' culture but only constructed social realities (Berger & Luckmann 1966), there is no such thing as 'the' intercultural – there are as many different 'interculturalities' as there are individual life-worlds and relationships between them. An alternative would be to speak about 'an' intercultural, which does not necessarily has to have a direction, as pointed out earlier. The educational project of learning and teaching about interculturality is centred in the *journeys* of the 'interculturalists' themselves – the walkers, sojourners and transgressors 'in between' life-worlds and languages. It is in this sense that, in whatever shape and form interculturality appears and visualises itself, it needs to create its own voice and tell its stories of how it is to be intercultural or to live in a multicultural world – beyond the notions of failing and succeeding, exemplified in the policy language I discussed earlier.

Cairo

I was realising that you have to do the first step with a smile

(Karin)

K̲arin and I are meeting at a language course for Arabic in Cairo. We are starting to talk in the cafeteria of the language school and drinking fizzy drinks on the balcony, fleeing from the freezing air-conditioned atmosphere of the language institute. Karin, who is in her mid-thirties, is visiting Egypt for the third time and aiming to improve her speaking ability in Arabic, which she studies in Germany alongside her job as a social worker. Karin got interested in Arabic and the Arabic region through friendships to Jordanians, whom she visited in their home country – "daraus hat sich dann so allmählich entwickelt, dass ich dachte, warum fang ich dann nicht an Arabisch zu lernen" (from this it gradually developed that I thought, why do I not start to study Arabic?). She adds that her aim of learning the language was to "ja, reinzukommen, die Gesellschaft zu verstehen, die Leute zu verstehen, sprechen zu können" (well, to get inside, to understand the society, to understand the people and to be able to speak).

Being in Egypt and studying at the language school is the result of what Karin describes as "Eigeninitiative" – one's own initiative to speak and learn a language properly, at home and in its original places. We are both fascinated by the international atmosphere in the language school, which buzzes from the sounds of different languages and its intercultural feeling. However, once entering the street outside the language school, "man fühlt sich halt als ein anderer Teil der Welt hier, oder, wenn man hier erstmal ankommt" (you feel as though you are in a different part of the world here, or while arriving here). Karin remembers that during her first time in Egypt, "da hatte ich Angst rauszugehen" (I was afraid of going outside) but "Ich hab' mich dann wirklich gezwungen – jetzt, sonst sitz ich nur im Zimmer" (I was forcing myself to go out – now, otherwise I am only sitting in my room). She goes on: "beim ersten Mal war ich wirklich gestresst, durch den Lärm, durch alles. Aber jetzt fühle ich mich eigentlich ganz frei und ungestresst und es stört mich auch nicht [mehr]" (the first time I was really stressed because of the noises, because of everything. But now I actually feel quite free and unstressed and it doesn't bother me anymore). I am interested in the feeling of freedom Karin mentioned, and ask:

> U   Was könnte das noch hervorgerufen haben, das Gefühl von Freiheit, dass man sich jetzt weniger gestresst fühlt?
> K   Also, ich denk schon die Gewohnheit, die Gewohnheit und natürlich auch eine innere Einstellung, wenn man gewisse Sachen übergeht. Eine gewisse Portion Selbstbewusstsein muss man zwar auch haben aber ich möchte sagen dass ich keine Probleme mehr habe.
>
> (U   What could have caused this feeling of freedom and feeling less stressed?
> K   Well, I think the habit, and of course, as well, an inner attitude, to elide particular things. A specific amount of self-confidence is necessary too, but I must say I don't have problems anymore.)

What makes Cairo special regarding the everyday stress-level is exemplified in our talk about the intensive 'soundscape' of the city and the feeling of constantly being present as a foreigner in particular areas of the town:

> Bist du in 'wust al balad' [city centre, U.W.] wirst du ständig irgendwie angesprochen, nicht weil du halt blond und so schön bist, sondern weil sie dich in irgendeinen Laden ziehen wollen, damit du das und das kaufst. […] Zu Anfang war es immer so, dass ich mich dann schuldig und unhöflich gefühlt habe, weil ich nicht geantwortet habe wenn mich jemand gefragt hat woher man kommt und so weiter. Aber jetzt [denke ich], man kann einfach auch nicht alles... man muss es übergehen, denke ich. Sonst landet man halt ständig in irgendeinem Laden und fühlt sich dann gedrängt 'was zu kaufen.

(If you are in 'wust al balad' [city centre, U.W.], somebody constantly tries to talk to you, not because you are blond and pretty but because they want to sell you something. [...] In the beginning I felt guilty and unfriendly because I was not answering if somebody asked me where I'm coming from and so on. But now [I think], you can't simply... you have to elide specific things, otherwise you will end up every time in a different shop and feel like you have to buy something.)

Karin favours walking to riding in a car and explores the whole city on foot, saying that during her first visit to Egypt, "da hatte ich immer Angst den Weg zu verlieren" (I was always afraid of losing the way). She says that the ability to speak the Arabic language was one form of dealing with this type of fear: "dass man keine Angst hat, selbst wenn man sich verläuft. Man findet sich dann wieder sprachlich raus" (that you are not afraid even if you get lost. You are finding your way out through the language). Experiencing different responses and perceptions towards herself, Karin stresses the fact that those responses were dependent on the particular areas she was moving through. For instance, in the area of Cairo's graveyards, one of the poorest parts of the town, Karin experiences that "da ist es ganz anders, und du wirst da überhaupt nicht irgendwie angemacht. Es sind also sehr nette Leute und freundlich; so hab ich jedenfalls das Gefühl. In gewisser Weise hab ich gemerkt, dass man den ersten Schritt mit einem Lächeln oder so tun muss, oder?" (it is so different there, nobody is trying to chat me up. Those are all nice people, friendly; this is at least what I feel. In a special way I was realizing that you have to do the first step with a smile, right?). Karin adds that people normally opened up if she was speaking a bit of Arabic.

I ask Katrin how she would describe the general image of the 'Western person' in the Arabic society and she answers: "ich denk schon schlecht" (I believe it is not a good one). In which way, I wonder, and Karin answers "leicht zu haben" (easy to get) and "naiv, dumm" (naïve, stupid). She adds that she felt embarrassed observing this situation where Western women reconstituted these popular images of the women from the Western movies. For Karin, her experience with Muslims is based on trust and belief in common values. She speaks about her first language school, where the teachers wore "weiße, lange Kleidung und die Frauen ganz verschleiert" (white, long clothes and the women were completely covered), and adds that she perceived this in a positive way:

Aber das habe ich, wie gesagt, auch als positiv empfunden, weil ich mich da wirklich weg gefühlt habe, und dachte 'ja, jetzt ist man halt hier' [lacht]. [...] Ich muss sagen, ich fühl mich eigentlich unter Leuten, [...] die wir im Westen eigentlich eher fürchten [...] wohl und sicher.

(I perceived this, as I said before, as positive, because it felt like being away, and I thought, 'Yes, now you are here' [laughs]. I have to say, I'm feeling pretty safe and comfortable among those people [...], who we in the West are more or less afraid of.)

The media is in Karin's eyes an influential element that influences people's opinion without critically reflecting it. She says: "die Leute [nehmen] erstens alles von den Medien und so ist es dann. Das wird dann weitergeplappert, wichtig, klug. Es wird eben so getan als wissen die genau, was wie wo ist und dabei wissen sie eigentlich gar nichts, weder über den Islam noch über das Leben hier, aber es wird geredet. Es wird von den Medien übernommen" (people firstly take all from the media and this is it. Then, everything is gossiped, important, clever. It is as if they would know exactly what is when and where, and in reality they don't know anything, neither of Islam nor about the life here, but it is talked about. They are taking it from the media). For Karin, people who are living a religion, and for whom religion is a central element of life, deserve trust. She says that instead of addressing the difference and separation of religions, one should rather focus on the

similarities: "und das Gemeinsame ist ja das Endziel letztlich. Wirklich Gott... das ist in allen Religionen gleich meiner Meinung nach" (and the similar is then the end goal. Really God... that is in all religions the same, in my opinion). Finally, Karin adds that what is important, is to show interest in the other: "Also wichtig ist denke ich hier auch, das Interesse am Anderen zu zeigen."

From the notebook: A vital theme in Karin's walk is that of 'representation'. The images of Islam in the public media are transformed by her not only through repeated travelling to Cairo but also by critically reflecting about public images of Muslims and religion in general. By trying to get in contact with Egyptians during her walks she experiences different reactions in different locations but initially 'finds her way out' by speaking Arabic and 'doing the first step with a smile'. In overstepping the hurdles of fear and stress she experienced in the beginning of her intercultural journey she encounters a notion of freedom which interlinks with an 'inner attitude' and also with the 'elision of particular things'. As her intercultural experience circles vividly around elements of religion and public mainstream understandings of Islam, she suggests working less on the differences and more on the similarities between 'Western' and 'Muslim' societies, and to re-create the gift of trust, especially in questions of faith and visual symbolic appearance.

Chapter Two: The mediating language learner

> In recent years, language learners have come to be described in terms of 'cultural mediators', 'border crossers', 'negotiators of meaning', 'intercultural speakers' and such like. Language learning is becoming increasingly defined in cultural terms and these new names and targets for language learners imply a reconceptualisation of the language learning endeavour. (Roberts et al. 2001: 1)

The last section made recent developments of interculturality in both educational and non-educational frameworks visible. In the following, I will concentrate on the disciplinary area of this research, that of foreign language pedagogy, while providing an overview about central debates and key concepts on intercultural language learning. Whether the ways to engage with interculturality are to acquire competences and skills or forms of critical citizenship, whether it is to be an ethnographer or to develop a life skill per se, the following concepts aim to understand what being, becoming or learning intercultural within a language pedagogy framework might mean.

From rote learning to language immersion

While being in Melbourne and learning Spanish, I met Marian who is forty-six years old and already retired. Marian has a very traditional background in language learning and studied Latin and French at school, having thirty-seven years in between these and her current experiences in learning a foreign language. Reflecting on this situation Marian explains: "We had no conversational French, we learned French words and did some reading in French but we did not speak French with anybody. It was mainly memory and rote learning so that you would practice things over night to make it stick to in your memory. But this conversational use of language did not happen at all. That is a major difference from now, where the whole idea is to get you immersed in the language. It's not about learning by rote, it's to get you saying things and doing things and getting involved, so it is quite a different way of learning, I think."

Marian's reflections illustrate the shifts that took place in the methodology of foreign language teaching in the last forty years. In current language pedagogy, combined approaches of communicative and intercultural models are used in the language classroom, aided by auditory and visual elements and mediated in a playful manner in order to get the language learner 'involved' and 'immersed in the language', as Marian explained. This, however, has not always been the case.

<u>'Listen and repeat!'</u>

Back in the 1960s, *behavioural* conceptualisations about learning in general dominated the academic realm and focused on 'stimulus' and 'response' as the major patterns of learning. The language classroom was affected by this learning theory through 'grammar translation method', which concentrated on structures, rules and rote learning. The subject of 'culture' was separate from teaching about language and appeared in the form of informative knowledge about 'a country and its people', encapsulating elements of geography, history, politics, traditions, and so forth.

In the 1970s, this approach was replaced by the *communicative approach*, which understood language learning as a mode of performing communicative interactions and drills – all embedded in the situational contexts of the 'target country'. Although culture, here, was more or less integrated into the language teaching, it had the status of a background feature of dialogues and texts and was not a central element of interest. The main focus within this approach was to be able to communicate like a native speaker while using the language 'properly' and without any mistakes. Holme develops a critique of the communicative approach:

> In its pure form, the communicative view makes unwarranted assumptions about the learner as a user of the target language. It asserts that the learner will use the TL [teaching language, U.W.] in a set of situations that can be mapped out in advance. It makes little allowance for how the learner's own cultural background may determine the type of encounters that they are likely to have and the forms that these will take. It does not recognise that the meanings the learner may want to express are not an automated response to a given context but a product of the individual's cultural background and how that shapes their encounter with another culture. (Holme 2003: 29)

Holme identifies one major lack of the communicative approach: culture is not a fixed, but a shifting construct, which varies from situation to situation and corresponds with the individual background and life-world the language learner brings to each communicative situation. Understanding culture on the basis of automatic communicative responses alone does not fit with the individual real-life experiences, language learners engage with.

This communicative approach was followed by another shift within language pedagogy we already mentioned, a shift towards *intercultural communicative models*. During the 1990s, the subject of culture got relocated to the centre of language education and understood language and culture as acquired through dynamic interactions, with one being essential to

the full understanding of the other (Holme 2003: 18). The transformed modes of cultural formations urged language pedagogy to connect communicative patterns and structures more closely to the context of their origin and the diverse meanings attached to them. This shift towards intercultural language pedagogy was developed furthermore as an answer to transformed social and global relations, in which

> old certainties around particular social class, ethnic, national and other groupings and identities have fallen apart. In their place are new alliances and the formation of new identities. As boundaries are crossed and new maps of social and cultural life are drawn and redrawn, so there is more turbulence, more ambivalence and more negotiation is needed. (Roberts et al. 2001: 5)

Culture with a capital C?

Introducing culture as a central element into the language classroom opened up a whole new discourse about 'cultural literacy' and the related discourses about *race, ethnicity, class and gender*. In 1988, Hirsch et al. stated: "Getting one's membership is not tied to class or race. Membership is automatic if one learns the background information and the linguistic conventions that are needed to read, write and speak effectively" (Hirsch et al. 1988: 22, cited in Corbett 2003: 26). This 'background information' referred mainly to traditions in teaching 'culture with a capital C': those elements of philosophy, music and art, which are described as 'high culture' and are often bound to an elite group of the society (Tomalin & Stempleski 1993).

This understanding of culture and its pedagogy was critiqued and reworked intensively during the 1990s vis-à-vis the wider framework of post-structural thinking that rose in prominence during that decade. The question of how to teach culture without reinforcing essentialist understandings was a central point within debates, and remains, as such, central within present discourses about intercultural education. The goal of the "educated native speaker who is well versed in the cultural values and products of the elite group in society" was and still is, as Corbett states, "the unspoken assumption behind many ELT [English Language Teaching, U.W.] curricula" (Corbett 2003: 27).

Contemporary theories about cultural identity refer to the latter as "multiple, ambivalent, resourceful and elastic" (Guilherme 2002: 125), and engage with culture as constructed and embedded in a complex process of transformation and interrelationality (see Path Two). What is important for us at this stage is the understanding of the identity of language learners as 'multiple' and 'ambivalent'. This change in perspective enables a replacement

of the common aim of the 'native speaker competence' with the aim of the intercultural communicative competence, which focuses on being 'in between' cultures and understanding the multiplicity of intercultural experience. Byram points out: "Acting interculturally presupposes that one is aware of difference and similarity and can decentre in order to help others to act together – or indeed to act oneself with others – in ways that overcome obstacles of difference" (Byram 2008: 75). In this turn, the role of the language learner itself was promoted to a *mediator* "between different social groups that use different languages and language varieties" (Corbett 2003: 2).

Additionally, language learners are recognised as individuals with particular sets of knowledge and meanings who do not need to adapt to a new language *and* a new identity. In other words: language learners are not 'empty' when entering the classroom and

> are already proficient users of language and inheritors of a rich culture. Extending their proficiency should not entail denial of that fact, but rather their current proficiency as language users and cultural beings can serve as a launching-point for their further education. (Corbett 2003: 28)

However, and as I mentioned already, this shift is a movement in progress, and the interaction between research input and classroom practice has room for improvement (see Epilogue). This brings me to the matter of how language learners engage with interculturality and intercultural language learning in particular.

Acquiring competences and skills

The five savoir's

In his groundbreaking book, *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence* (1997), Byram explains the model of 'intercultural communicative competence' as "a description of the components which contribute to the ability to understand and relate to people from other countries." The model intends furthermore "to be a comprehensive and rich description of what is required in the most complex and also the most favourable circumstances of intercultural communication" (Byram 1997: 5). Byram's book, which was published in 1997 in the middle of global and social changes, is still today highly influential, particularly in its detailed parameters of how to measure and assess intercultural learning in an educational context. The reasons for the success of the model lie as well in the ambitious implementation of intercultural elements into language

learning concepts and in a much needed step beyond the well-known dichotomy of 'language versus culture'.

At the heart of Byram's model are the 'five savoir's', which circle around the three elements of *knowledge, skills, and attitudes* (Byram 1997). The French word 'savoir' can be translated as 'to be aware' or 'to know' and is categorised into five sub-themes:

- savoir être (attitudes);
- savoir comprendre (skills of interpreting and relating);
- savoir apprendre/faire (skills of discovery and interaction);
- savoir s'engager (critical cultural awareness/political education); and
- savoirs (the knowledge dimension of intercultural learning) (Byram 1997).

These savoir's have to be acted in order to bring to life changes in skills, attitudes and knowledge and to form eventually what Byram terms 'intercultural communicative competence'. This competence consists of three elements: a) linguistic competence; b) sociolinguistic competence; and c) discourse competence (Byram 1997:48). Whereas the form of linguistic competence captures the ability to produce and interpret language successfully, the second sociolinguistic form concentrates on the skill to extract diverse meanings formerly taken for granted and to negotiate those with interlocutors (whether native speaker or not). Finally, discourse competence entails the development of those strategies, which are in need to interpret "conventions of the culture of an interlocutor or are negotiated as intercultural texts for particular purposes" (ibid.).

Language learners, in this sense, learn how to extract meanings from intercultural encounter in linguistic, discursive and social ways and engage with interculturality based on the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Guilherme summarises the contents of Byram's model while arguing that the

> main target for the foreign language/culture learner/teacher is no longer to imitate a circumscribed and standardised model of a native speaker (…). Instead the focus is on the interaction between cultural actors that is, on the intercultural encounter. (Guilherme 2002: 124).

The following figure is an excerpt from Byram's book, which shall summarise the main features of intercultural communicative competence and visualise the interrelation of its elements.
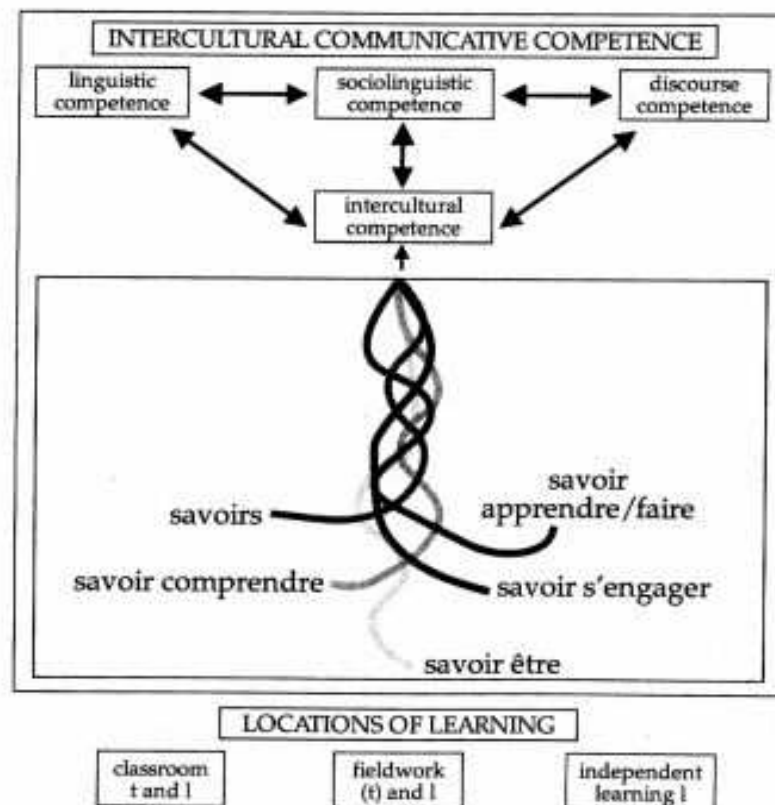
Figure 8: Intercultural communicative competence (Byram 1997: 34)

Becoming critical citizens

On the first day of a beginners class in German I normally paint a large cross with four arrows on the blackboard, fitting a capitalised "W" right at the centre. I ask the students what the 'W' could mean, while giving the hint that language learning, in its beginnings, is all about this small letter. "Wie heißen Sie?" (What is your name?), "Woher kommen Sie?" (Where do you come from?) or "Was sind Sie von Beruf?" (What is your profession?) – by chance, most of the question words in both English and German start with a 'W' and form the spine of the first lessons on a new language: it's all about asking questions. The aim behind those questions is obviously a simple one: to give students the ability to introduce themselves, or, in other words: to explain their identity. In this case, identity is jotted down as one's knowledge about the country of origin, one's name and one's profession. However, as teachers we want to give language learners the tools to explain and present themselves beyond those informative elements and within their own individuality and contexts. What language learning can give is the possibility of independence, and what intercultural language teaching can then add is a developed sense of critical awareness.

As Claire Kramsch stated in her influential book, *Context and Culture in Language Teaching* (1993), language learning is about a critical reflection of identity and about the need to understand others, to understand yourself, and make yourself understood. One approach to include these notions in concepts of intercultural language learning is the model of 'critical citizenship'.

Starting in the 1990s and developing from the philosophical foundations of critical theory, the *political dimensions* of cultural and intercultural learning were addressed in response to the internationalisation of educational systems and the growing importance of transforming identities within globalised societies. Manuela Guilherme, in her book, *Critical Citizens for an Intercultural World* (2002), points out that "education is always political and the disciplines dealing with language and culture even more so because they involve issues of identification and representation" (Guilherme 2002: 154). Developing an eye for injustice and an unbalanced distribution of power is then at the heart of 'critical cultural awareness'. This awareness implies the understanding that culture is not something we possess, but something that changes and shifts within different realities of equality. The aim of intercultural learning is in this turn to deal critically with representations of 'one' culture and develop "a new perspective taken by Self and Other, towards oneself and towards each other" (Guilherme 2002: 167).

The 'intercultural speaker' of Michael Byram's work became, under Guilherme's analysis, a 'critical intercultural speaker', who

> must be aware that the process of modernisation […] has made societies more interdependent and populations more interactive. […] S/he is conscious that national/ethnic cultural identities are made of both persistent and changeable components whose articulation adopts particular forms and meanings in specific circumstances. (Guilherme 2002: 127)

In short: this concept illustrates the ways in which intercultural education deals with elements of diversity, identity, and equality as well as with the practice of raising questions. Critical thinking, as bell hooks points out, pleads for a vision of transformative and emancipative learning beyond borders and is in this sense at the heart of change:

> Critical Thinking involves first discovering the who, what, when, where, and how of things – finding the answers to those eternal questions of the inquisitive child – and then utilizing that knowledge in a manner that enables you to determine what matters most. (hooks 2010: 9)

What Marian described earlier as 'immersing' in a language is widened within an ethnographic approach of intercultural learning to the immersion in the (inter-)cultural spheres of a society. In Chapter One I considered the way modes of intercultural living became an integral part of current industrialised societies in the same way as practices of diversity became a feature of everyday life. Whereas the concept of intercultural communicative competence (Byram 1997) values the role of language learners as mediators of meanings mainly through communication, this concept understands language learners as ethnographers, and includes as such the dimensions of experience and observation. Roberts et al., in their book, *Language Learners as Ethnographers* (2001), describe ethnography as

> the study of a group's social and cultural practices from an insider's perspective. It [...] combines both an experiential element in which ethnographers participate in the life of a community, and an intellectual element, in which theoretical concepts are used and then developed, in order to 'write culture' (Clifford & Marcus, 1986). (Roberts et al. 2001: 3)

Ingold adds that this description of "lives of people other than ourselves" should happen "with an accuracy and sensitivity honed by detailed observation and prolonged first-hand experience" (Ingold 2011: 229). As ethnographers we ask: how do we recognise 'other' cultures? What is the incident that lets us feel that we perceive intercultural matters or that we learn about them? Intercultural language learning understood from this perspective exceeds merely cognitive approaches and builds on embodied and sensory experience – themes that will reappear during the course of this thesis as its central elements. Additionally, the ethnographic approach visualises here the ways in which the field of intercultural language learning and pedagogy borrows various elements from other disciplines in order to become itself an interdisciplinary enterprise.

Barro et al. describe this move towards observing and experiencing within intercultural language pedagogy as follows:

> The notion of the language learner as ethnographer revisits 'communicative competence' [...] and uses the idea of learners undertaking an ethnographic project as a means of linking language development and cultural learning. (Barro et al. 1998: 76)

Although the classroom is still an essential centre for guiding and discussing ethnographic observations of students, the location of learning is understood here as outside the

classroom and in everyday life, be it in the streets, markets or coffee shops in both foreign and home countries. The ethnographic approach developed is based on the critique that being in an unfamiliar environment does not necessarily mean that intercultural learning is an "automatic outcome", as Roberts (2003: 114) makes clear. The ethnographic aim to 'see with new eyes' engages with this critique while highlighting the centrality of ethnographic tools (such as observation and description) in order to perceive practices of meaning making and formally taken for granted notions in a more conscious way. Shaules summarises:

> One of the 'dirty little secrets' of intercultural education is that experiences abroad don't always raise the awareness or tolerance of sojourners. They can also reinforce stereotypes, make sojourners critical or dismissive of the people they meet and cause them to denigrate differences. Worst of all, this usually happens without sojourners realizing it. (Shaules 2007: 2)

To conclude, ethnography lies at the heart of intercultural language learning and tries to approach culture through experience and through what Geertz called 'thick description' (1973). Learning ethnographically about culture or interculturality shall invite the learner to immerse and connect with the people, places, and diverse cultural practices encountered on the 'fieldsites' of intercultural language learning.

Languaging

In her book, *Learning the Arts of Linguistic Survival. Languaging, Tourism, Life* (2007a), Alison Phipps states: "Intercultural communication *is* the human struggle to make meaning culturally and dialectically out of relationships between people, places and praxis" (Phipps 2007a: 19, original italics).

I am alighting from the bus to Midan al Tahrir, the bustling centre of Cairo's downtown. It is hot, probably around thirty-five degrees and I am feeling the sweat running down my back. Someone is passing by me and saying "Welcome" and "You are beautiful." I ignore him, fixing my eyes to the far horizon. "Aisa scarf ya madam? Ten pounds, ten pounds!" "Have a look on my papyrus!" I am heading straight and with steady steps to my target, the tube station. Once I am home I relax and think about the happenings. I am in between notions of blaming myself for being ignorant, disrespectful and stressed and notions of frustration for not being seen as an individual but just as a 'blonde object'.

Phipps describes the development of the term 'languaging' as follows:

> The term 'languaging' is one that I have developed together with Mike Gonzalez (Phipps and Gonzalez, 2004). It has been used before in different contexts and at different times in history. It emerged for us out of the process of struggling to find a way of articulating the full, embodied and engaged interaction with the world that comes when we put the languages we are learning into action. We make a distinction between the effort of using language that one is learning in the classroom contexts with the effort of being a person in that language in the social and material world of everyday interactions. (Phipps 2009: 661)

The concept of languaging describes intercultural language learning as "a life skill. [...] It is inextricably interwoven with social experience – living in society – and it develops and changes constantly as that experience evolves and changes" (Phipps & Gonzalez 2004: 2-3). Languaging consciously includes the realm of 'after-class activities' in intercultural learning, highlighting the fact that languages are learned and embodied in the whole social world, not just in the classroom. Intercultural language learning is in this turn not about abilities, it is about how people are (Phipps 2007a):

> Languages dwell in people. It is people, not the languages themselves that make the difference. It is people who learn and love and language. To continually objectify the technological power of languages [...] means to miss the heart of the matter. It is people who speak other languages. [...] For us to live together in ways that prosper one another we need to be able to listen, and speak, intercultural and in ways that do not see language as a barrier. (Phipps 2007a: 167)

Language learners are furthermore understood as 'languagers' who "move in the world in a way that allows the risk of stepping out of one's habitual ways of speaking and attempt to develop different, more relational ways of interacting with the people and phenomena that one encounters in everyday life" (Phipps 2009: 661). A language learning praxis, which sees and understands intercultural experiences as part of a holistic process, and embodies emotions within everyday life processes is at the heart of the concept of languaging.

Mendoza

Your first experience is realising how much you stand out

(Sarah)

S arah remembers her first moments in Argentina following a long flight from Australia as follows:

> *I remember meeting the coordinator of the school I was going to be volunteering at, she said, 'oh, we've been really expecting you'. And I was like 'you've been really expecting me?' And then later, I realised that in Spanish that is translated to looking forward to seeing you, being excited about seeing.*

Those first moments of her four-month volunteer program in Argentina were the result of Sarah's wish to "learn a language." As she explains "I was like, this is my goal for my gap year and I'm going to do it. So I got involved in this volunteer program and threw myself in, and it worked." She says that at the beginning, "I didn't know any Spanish, and I went and lived with this family. The mum knew very basic English, the dad didn't speak English, and the girl was eight so... I mean, she didn't speak English, he didn't speak English, so I pretty much had to learn it if I wanted to communicate with the people I was living with. Yes, it was pretty intense and it's hard doing it that way, but it made me love the language. And then I came back and studied it."

Our conversation follows Sarah's first months in Argentina and Sarah tells me about her way of orientating in Mendoza:

> S   *I'd get on buses and they would say something to me, I'd ask them a question and they would give me the answer and I wouldn't understand what they are saying and just go and sit on the bus and hope for the best. The amount of times I got lost and went into some scary places on buses, and just wait 'til it kind of, hoped that it goes back to where it came from. [...] I didn't really have anyone I could call either, you know, you just have to hope that your sense of direction was ok. And it isn't a touristy area I was living in, you know, the tourists didn't go there. It was just [...] houses and supermarkets, the local gym, which was interesting and yes, that was it.*
>
> U   *Did you have a feeling for place or did you get a sense of place?*
>
> S   *Definitely. I'd go on different walks and it was good. [...] It was a huge city, really spread out. [...] I didn't really get such a great feel for the city because it was huge, but in my neighbourhood, yes, I had a really good orientation.*

I am curious whether she had a 'favourite place' in Mendoza and Sarah chuckles: "Yes, well, stupidly Starbucks. We loved Starbucks […] it was the only coffee shop you could go to so we just... we would go there a lot. And there was this taco stand near my house that did the most amazing tacos, hand-pressed tortillas. I loved going there and you eat just on a little crate in the street like this, and it's so fresh and delicious and cheap and all the locals are there. That's when you know you're in a really different place. Yes, we would do that a lot. A lot of tacos were eaten. To say the least. I really loved it."

In the following, Sarah describes her impressions of the time- and daily-life structures in Argentina, explaining how she had to get used to the late dinners, which were sometimes at 11:30pm, and how she wondered about the children being awake until late or going to school around noon. All in all, she says that the different structures she experienced,

> *made me really appreciate family actually, because they were so close in how their family worked, and it, yes, it gave me more confidence, definitely. Just to go out and be like 'Oh, I can go into some scary situations', scary just because they aren't familiar, and I will be fine. And you can get by, you've just got to try, see how it goes. So I think it really did give me a thirst for travel. I'm by no*

means a hard core adventurer and I never was. But I definitely feel like it gave me a lot more confidence. And the Spanish, I feel like, is a huge achievement being able to speak another language for me, that's just so special.

One central element of Sarah's intercultural experience in Argentina was the feeling of standing out:

My first experience was being picked up by this grizzly bear man who was the coordinator of the course, and he was waiting for me at this tiny little airport that I flew into, and it was a horrible flight because I get really bad motion sickness. And so I was feeling sick and this guy was like 'Oh, Sarah!' – and your first experience is realising how much you stand out and that was something that stayed with me […]. Just always standing out, and you just look different to everyone else. And they really notice. They stare at you and it's... yes, so that was my first impression.

Sarah experienced her visible appearance up to the point that she "hated the fact that wherever [she] went, [she] really stood out." Even speaking the language did not change this perception, and Sarah goes on: "Regardless how good my Spanish was people knew that I was a foreigner from the get go. I think once I got mistaken for an Argentinean which was like the most amazing moment of my life, but usually they knew just from looking at me. Like a word wouldn't come out of my mouth, they knew I was a foreigner. That kind of gets to you, because you always feel like an outsider."

I am wondering whether, next to this feeling of being an 'outsider', Sarah experienced any 'magical moments' during her time in Argentina?

Yes, I suppose in Argentina when I went to a birthday dinner with the family. They eat these crazy little sandwiches and just ate the weirdest things. And it's just so strange how they do everything so differently, and they are all talking. It's just like a family dinner at home for me. But the setting is completely different, the language is completely different, the food is so different, but for me that was really like a... and I remember going home in the car, and I actually got really homesick. So it kind of goes hand in hand when you feel like you are really there. It makes you go, 'I'm really not at home' [...]. It was really, it was different, it was amazing the whole time.

Sarah describes the ways in which her intercultural experience enriched her as a person:

I think by virtue of us all being young students on exchange we were all very open minded. Well. Not all very open minded obviously, but to an extent, willing to try new things. And you realise that humour does transgress boundaries and you have the same kind of people from every kind of... There are similarities within countries, within cultures, they are not so fixed. And I really found that you would meet the same kind of people in every culture.
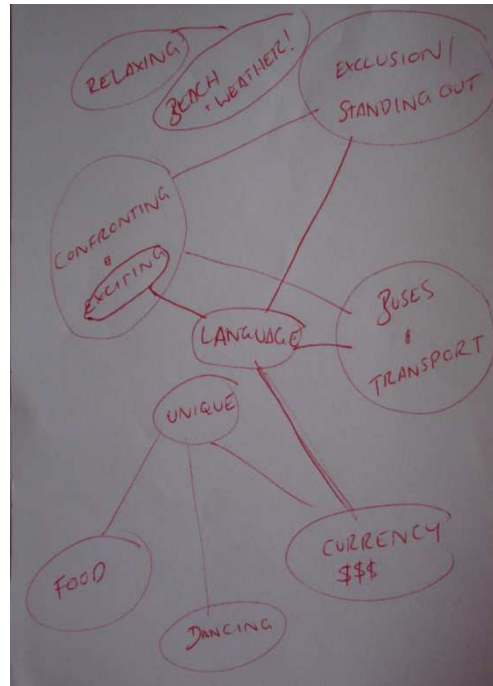
Figure 9: Sarah's mind map

From the notebook: An intensive theme in Sarah's experience is the notion of 'standing out'. The symbols of her body interconnected with a particular space and its inherent meanings she was moving in. Symbols of the body do play an important role within intercultural language learning processes and remind us how strong the influence of the visual perception is within the perception of our environment (Ingold 2000). What is additionally interesting in Sarah's walk is how situations can be described at the same time as 'strange' and 'amazing'. Intercultural experience, it appears, cannot be divided into solely 'good' or 'bad' experiences. In other words: there is nothing like only successful or only failed experience − it is always an intertwined mixture of the both. What Sarah's mind map presents is then the importance of physical elements, such as food, the beach, the weather, the transport, and so forth. for the intercultural experience, as well as their interwoven nature with more bodily forms of intercultural encounter, such as 'standing out'.

Chapter Three: Re-enchanting intercultural language learning

Figure 10: Re-enchanting intercultural language learning

The concepts I have developed to form the present understanding of intercultural language learning beg empirical questions. What happens in practice, in both the classroom and the everyday learning fieldsites? Are the approaches presented – intercultural communicative competence, critical citizenship, ethnography and languaging – able to prepare language learners as authentic and critical interlocutors? And more importantly, to what extent can the classroom prepare the language learner to engage and interact in everyday encounters? Do the curricula of schools, universities, language institutes and departments of adult and continuous education enable the teaching of cultural and intercultural matters as a full subject in, for instance, a two-hour class once per week?

The questions listed above are of a critical and highly important nature; however, to answer them all is beyond the capacities of this thesis. The need therefore arises for a clarification of the focus as well as the positioning of this research and thesis. In the following I concentrate on three premises, which are based on the thoughts of the two latter chapters on interculturality and intercultural language learning concepts. Those premises function as stepping stones for guiding this research in its general direction and argue for the need to re-enchant public understandings of interculturality and intercultural learning.

I chose the term 'enchantment' because it recalls what Phipps describes as "not a fixed state, but a way of working with words, at the textures of memory and perception to meld a future that may enchant what has never been enchanted, and re-enchant where the spell has

been broken" (Phipps 2007b: 6). To re-enchant the image of interculturality means then to provide a changed perspective on the intercultural experience and to critically reflect on terms that shape the understanding of reality in often one-sided ways. After all, the 'working with words' as well as the 'melding of a future' Phipps describes as the heart of enchantment are at the heart of language education and its ontological aims. It is through the following three principles I speak back, in part, to comments concerning 'failed multiculturality' in Europe (given that David Cameron made an almost identical speech four months after Angela Merkel's speech) or to the underlying assumption of interculturality as a problem to be solved. It is to these three premises that I now turn.

Positioning and objectives

Giving voice

An important question arises from the thinking about intercultural language learning: to whom are concepts speaking? Is the audience of, for instance, Byram's concept of intercultural communicative competence sitting on the front desks of classrooms in schools, institutes and universities – that is to say, namely teachers? Or is the audience mainly that of an academic researcher? Or is it each student, learner and sojourner, who engages with the thick of culture and language while starting this journey in the language classroom? In general, all of these forms of audiences are and should be part of language education models but they do play different roles and are addressed in quite varying ways. The literature in the field suggests that much of the academic writing is indeed addressed to teachers as the interface between academic concepts and the learners themselves.

This thesis focuses on the intercultural language learner and chooses the perspective of the intercultural learning experience. The language learner is as such both the key point of interest and the subject of this thesis. The manifold encounters with intercultural language learners I share during this research came about by listening to the voices from the 'intercultural field' (Phipps & Gonzalez 2004), a term I develop throughout Path Two in detail. One reason for choosing this perspective develops in correspondence to the often invisible and unaddressed interface of academic concepts of intercultural learning and the actual worlds language learners live in. The transformation of classroom knowledge into everyday learning processes moves into the centre of attention, followed by questions such as: how does it feel to become a critical citizen, to change an attitude, to acquire a competence, or to get lost in 'deep culture' (Shaules 2007)? In other words: what happens

when the language learner leaves the classroom with the package, we as language teachers send with them on their way?

Let me recall the argument in Chapter One: in whatever shape and form 'the' intercultural appears and visualises itself, it needs to create a voice of its own and tell its stories of how it is to be intercultural or to live in a multicultural world. This is the aim of this thesis: to practice the art of listening to the stories language learners tell and value the lived experience of interculturality. Kramsch reminds us finally that:

> In our times of increased migrations and displacements, when globalization enhances what Pratt (1999) calls the 'contact zones' and the 'traffic in meaning' (2002) among individuals and communities, it is important that we look in richer detail at the lived experiences of multiple language users. (Kramsch 2009a: 2)

While focussing on the interface of the language learner and the 'real world', I am aiming to minimise the form of distance often created by concepts and their more or less 'technical' language or methodologies. Asked about his idea and understanding, of the term 'intercultural learning', Joshua states the following in our interview:

> *Words like that often, sort-of distance you maybe from the idea, or the experience. When you say an 'interculturality', it's sort-of an abstract concept, but you're really just talking about the interaction between cultures.*

Though concepts are by nature at a distance to the realities they are describing – there is still a need to create models in order to improve learning and teaching while implementing those models in practice. Between the academic concepts and the learner in his or her individual life-world lie a bundle of processes or elements, which de facto remain silent and can give the impression that the actual world of intercultural learning takes place in a different sphere or planet. Atkinson argues in this instance:

> Cognitive scientists have now begun to question their field's founding premises, and a richer, more complex interdiscipline is emerging. They increasingly find that understanding the mind/brain means studying it in the body, and understanding the embodied mind means studying it in the world; and this is simply because the mind *is* in the body and the world. (Atkinson 2010: 618-619)

In other words: an *awareness* of the distance between concept and learning experience is essential in order to overcome this distance. Academic concepts have to constantly re-connect to the actual 'field' of learning and to the learners they are referring to. Addressing

the intercultural language learner as a form of audience during the writing of this thesis is then another attempt to decrease the distance of lived experience and conceptual frameworks.

Beyond functionality

To re-enchant intercultural language learning means then as well to speak back to those voices that are limited to being simple tools serving current global demands and which do not value the ontological possibilities arising from intercultural education and encounter. Languages are understood to be in demand as global politics are pursued, job markets filled, and ethnic diversity maintained peacefully. Rizvi comments:

> In the contemporary era, the volume and speed of intercultural exchange has increased at an unprecedented rate, creating greater possibilities of trade, transfers of technology, cultural cooperation and skirmishes and even war, than ever before. Never before has there been a greater need for intercultural understanding and communication. But if this understanding is predicated on essentialist conceptions of culture, rather than within a pedagogically open framework that explores the dynamics of cultural interactions in any ongoing fashion, then no amount of intercultural education is likely to be helpful. (Rizvi 2007a: 402)

A central paradox is revealed where the need for intercultural exchange in a globalizing and interconnected world is growing steadily and the possibilities for teaching languages in a hazard-free-zone without funding barriers, and time limits, and skill-based approaches are decreasing. Additionally, the influence of policy and funding cuts, and the re-organisation of university structures, school curricula, and so forth, lay heavy weight on language education, but are not the only source of pressure. Interculturality is supposed to enable stakeholders to evaluate 'outcomes' in the mainstream global educational project. What these approaches to intercultural education and learning do not consider is that learning languages in an intercultural way involves far more than creating competences and skills. It goes to the heart of the learning process and the journeys of daily encounters of meaning making and creative discovery.

Furthermore, the perception of interculturality is changing significantly in an interconnected and mobilised world as Marian's story reveals:

> *When my son got married, and they got married in Kings Park in Perth, it was in April, very close to Anzac Day [Memorial day for fallen Australian soldiers, U.W.]. And where they got married was very close to the War Memorial from the Second*

World War and I went, oh my Gosh, because three of her friends from Japan came, dressed in beautiful kimonos and I'm thinking 'What's going to happen?', and it was fine. The kids even didn't know about it, it didn't even occur to them, isn't that fantastic? We as an older generation we thought about it but it wasn't there at all. So I think that's part of the young and the new generation and the way everybody does mix in there. Yes, it is good.

What Marian is describing shows both the historical aspects of intercultural experience and the possibility of conflict, which is in fact an implicit element of intercultural learning. However, whereas conflicts can be triggered by certain elements of culture and are represented as such frequently within media-reports, it does not transform the subject of interculturality *itself* to a problem of culture clashes, as Samuel Huntington describes in his work *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996). This way of arguing has left intercultural language pedagogy often at the mercy of political decisions, which,

> while addressing issues that are of immediate practical concern, exacerbate the problem by creating intercultural communication, languages and translation to be a problem, one which an industry of technological fixes may then grow to serve, rather than taking a dwelling perspective on, which is heavier, messier, requires time to be taken in and with languages, places, people and praxis. (Phipps 2007a: 23)

Under this view, processes of intercultural learning have their origin in dwelling, growing, and being intercultural and cannot be understood within static ideas of failing or succeeding. Phipps, who refers to both Heidegger's essay, *Building Dwelling Thinking* (2001 [1971]), and Ingold's (2000) reflections on Heidegger's work, describes within her concept of languaging the process of 'dwelling in language' as the ontological dimension of intercultural language learning. During the course of this research, I followed language learners in their ontological ways of discovering interculturality – a focus indicating again the critique of intercultural language learning as a mere problem-solving activity. Byram touches these ontological forms of learning within his concept of intercultural communicative competence through the notion of 'savoir être' (Byram 1997). Determining the latter as the 'nature of the processes of intercultural communication, Byram divides the latter into a) skills related to interpretation and the establishment of the relationships between aspects of the two cultures; and b) skills of discovery and interaction (Byram 1997: 33). However, there is a significant absence within academic research regarding a deeper understanding of what 'savoir être' is about in actual experience.

Widening the scope

The final step in re-enchanting the image of interculturality within this research is based on a change of perspective regarding the theoretical and methodological framework of the undertaken research. Kramsch gives an overview of how (intercultural) language learning has been researched so far:

> Second Language Acquisition (SLA) has traditionally given more attention to the processes of acquisition than to the flesh-and-blood individuals who are doing the learning. It has separated learners' minds, bodies, and social behaviors into separate domains of inquiry and studied how language intersects with each of them. [...] [N]ot only has language been studied separately from its affective resonances in the bodies of speakers and hearers, but it has been viewed as a transparent and neutral tool for the formulation of thought, for interpersonal communication, and social interaction. In part because of its rationality of its grammar and the logic of its vocabulary, language has been taught and learned mostly as a tool for rational thinking, for the expression and communication of factual truths and information, and for the description of a stable and commonly agreed-upon reality. (Kramsch 2009a: 2)

For Kramsch, research on intercultural language learning is in need of theoretical and methodological tools that enable perspectives beyond those 'stable and commonly agreed-upon realities'. It needs furthermore to open the disciplinary field of this research and enlarge the scope of intercultural language learning while moving beyond its rational basis and information-centred approach. In a similar vein, Corbett calls

> for an inquiry into cultural practices that respects no disciplinary boundaries. Such an inquiry would draw upon literary studies, sociology, history, anthropology and linguistics, and it could as easily stand alone as form part of a foreign language curriculum. (Corbett 2003: 29)

This attempt asks for a theoretical stance that is able to look on experience from a wider scope and from a holistic, all-engaging perspective. It is this need for a more holistic theoretical stance that led to an engagement with the realm of spatial theory in this thesis. Using spatial theory as a theoretical background creates the opportunity to follow intercultural experiences of language learners 'in situ' (in their actual learning environments) and sheds light on the *relationship of experience and the places and spaces where intercultural language learning happens*. The idea that learning a language in an intercultural way is not detached from being and living in this world is a key-premise of this research and asks for a profound examination of what 'this world' implicates in regards to the space and place of actual learning experiences. Tim Ingold raises in his

book, *Being Alive. Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description* (2011), the following question:

> Why do we acknowledge only our textual sources but not the ground we walk, the ever-changing skies, mountains and rivers, rocks and trees, the houses we inhabit and the tools we use, not to mention the innumerable companions, both non-human animals and fellow humans, with which and with whom we share our lives? They are constantly inspiring us, challenging us, telling us things. (Ingold 2011: xii)

In using a spatial approach to intercultural language learning, I am not only turning to the skies, mountains, rivers and rocks Ingold writes about, but more so to the role of after-class activities that Phipps highlights in her concept of languaging as "the effort of using a language being learned in the whole social world, not just in the classroom" (Phipps 2008: 6). To follow this perspective on intercultural language learning through a spatial approach is a key aim of this thesis, one which I will develop in the further paths and in correspondence with the wish to re-enchant those understandings of interculturality that (over-) simplify (public) discourses or silence the diverse and complex ways of being intercultural.

Research questions

The questions at the heart of this research – or rather the 'stepping stones' of our walk through the intercultural field – can be presented as follows:

- How do language learners experience intercultural language learning outside the classroom?
- What roles do place and space play for intercultural language learning processes and for experiencing diversity?
- How does this spatial perspective impact on research about intercultural language learning and its methodological frameworks?

Engaging more closely with experiencing interculturality outwith the classroom means turning attention towards the ontological as well as spatial dimensions of learning to be intercultural. The concept of intercultural language learning needs to *emerge* from the intercultural field itself and is in this sense orientated towards practice and observing intercultural language learning within its very own ground: the spaces and places of intercultural encounter. This means that the understanding of intercultural language

learning cannot be reduced to simple problem-solution schemes, but must rather focus on the multiplicity and mobility of interculturality and intercultural language learning.

The study

In order to present the general steps of this study, I am adopting the first step in my teaching practice for beginners learning German: the 'W-questions'. The footsteps of where, when, who and what illustrate the outline of this research project and its developing nature. Path Three engages then in depth with the methodological assumptions working to form the shape of the research.

Where?

The study took place in three stages located in three places: Germany, Egypt and Australia. I started off doing participant observation in *Germany* during an international summer class for German language as a teacher. Parts of these observational studies found their entry into this thesis through autoethnographic writings, and additionally have a major impact on the basic conceptualisation of this thesis.

The research undertaken in *Egypt* took form while I was enrolled in an Arabic language class, during which time I interviewed a fellow language learner. Additionally, I interviewed three students of Al-Azhar University who had recently returned from a language course in Germany, as well as two befriended Egyptians – one who had just relocated to Cairo after spending six years living and studying in Germany, and one who was shortly immigrating to Australia.

The major part of the research took place in *Australia,* where I conducted the final fieldwork phase of the research project. As an exchange student of Universitas 21, I was located in the Faculty of Education at Melbourne University, which is why most of the research participants are students from Melbourne University. Some of the participants were students of a German language class I taught at the German Department, others I met during participant observation in a university club called 'Cross Cultures'. Additionally, I interviewed language learners whom I met in the two classes for Spanish language I joined during this time, as well as students who recently returned from an exchange year overseas and were contacted by the 'Mobility Centre' of the University of Melbourne on my behalf. The timeline of the research was then as follows.

When?

September 2009

First research stage: GERMANY

- Participant observation as a teacher during an International summer class for German language for three weeks in Hinterzarten

October 2009

Second research stage: EGYPT

- Participant observation as a student during a language class in Arabic language in the 'International Language Institute' in Cairo
- Interviews with a fellow learner of Arabic: Karin
- Interviews with three students of Al-Azhar University: Safinaz, Sheima & Dalia
- Interview with two befriended Egyptians: Hashim & Ismail

January - July 2010

Third research stage: AUSTRALIA

- Participant observation in two language classes for Spanish language at the 'Spanish Cat Language Institute' and the 'Lyceum Language Centre' in Melbourne
- Interviews/'guided walks' with fellow Spanish learners: Wei, Marian, Deidre & Vasu
- Participant observation in weekly club meetings of the university club 'Cross Cultures'
- Interviews/'guided walks'/'virtual walks' with members of 'Cross Cultures': Chan, Megan, Hillary, Harry, Andrew & Lilly
- Interviews/'guided walks'/'virtual walks' with students of the German Department of Melbourne University: Sasha, Graham, Daniel & Adam
- Interview with Stephen, whom I met on the University Campus during a lunch break and who was interested in the theme of my thesis
- 'Guided walks'/'virtual walks' with students who answered an email request for participation in my research sent out on my behalf by the 'Mobility Centre' of the University of Melbourne to all students who had recently returned from an exchange year: Thomas, Veronica, Joshua, Sarah & Kirsten

Who?

All in all, *twenty-six language learners* joined the study either through interviews, 'guided walks', or 'virtual walks'. These participants came from Singapore, Philippines, Australia, China, India, Germany, Egypt and Hong Kong and travelled to a wide array of countries for their intercultural experiences, such as Australia, Germany, Spain, Japan, Argentina, Mexico, Scotland, Egypt, France, Netherlands and Austria. Within their background in travelling and experiencing interculturality, most of the participants were 'cosmopolitan learners' (Rizvi 2007b, see Chapter Five) and were as such the main focus of this study. The age of the participants ranged from twenty to sixty-eight and all of the participants were or are learning a language either at university or in private language institutes. The languages learned during the intercultural experiences were: Spanish, Arabic, German, French, Dutch, Japanese, Portuguese and English.

How?

This section concentrates on the mode of *recruitment of the participants* of this study, which differed between the different research stages. Whereas the research in Egypt was built on personal contacts I made during my year working in Cairo as a teacher, the research in both Germany and Australia needed to be established without any further relations and can be truly entitled as a 'snowballing' mode of a growing research project. Let me explain the latter with a small story:

I am sitting exhausted on a sidewalk on the campus of Melbourne University, which welcomes all students during introduction week of the upcoming semester. I am new in Melbourne and new to this University and while I am thinking about my first impressions, suddenly somebody heads towards me and says, "Hi, my name is Stephen and I am from Singapore. Who are you?" This small unexpected meeting turned out to be one of the key moments of my research, as Stephen became not only my first participant, but told me as well about a university club called 'Cross Cultures', which became one of my focal points to meet language learners and to ask them for interviews or 'guided/virtual walks'.

Additional to those coincidental ways of meeting language learners was my enrolment in language classes during the course of this thesis. Over the last three years I joined three language classes as a student, which thereby enabled me to contact fellow language learners. In the case of Melbourne University, I got in touch as well with the 'Mobility

Centre' of the University, which contacted on my behalf students who recently returned from a language exchange or from studying abroad. The email, which was sent out to over six hundred students, was a crucial help for finding participants for this study. Finally, I got in contact with the German Department of the University of Melbourne and asked for permission to conduct interviews with students learning German at their Department, which was kindly granted. During the course of the research I gained ethical approval from both the University of Glasgow and University of Melbourne.

What?

Whereas the methodology and 'method assemblage' (Law 2004) chosen for this research will be explained in detail in Path Three, this section addresses the spine of the research: the interview. The type of interview I used was a *semi-structured interview*, which (as I highlighted at the beginning of each interview) was supposed to have more the nature of a talk or a chat than that of a formal procedure or (overly-) structured interview.

The research process was subject to constant justifications, which influenced the set of interview questions guiding the encounters with the language learners I met during this study. The transformation of the more or less open set of interview questions followed the diversity of intercultural experience and responded to new insights and understandings emerging from the intercultural field. I started off with the following guiding questions at the beginning of the research process, which evolved around the themes of language acquisition, imagination, perception, place and space, interculturality, and spirituality:

- When did you start to learn a second language and why?
- What were your imaginations and expectations about the country you were going to?
- Why did you decide to come to this country?
- What were your first impressions? Do you remember key-moments?
- How did you learn about the 'other' culture?
- Which role did space and place play – which places were significant for you?
- Were you embedded in a social network?
- What does spirituality mean for you?

Towards the end of the research the final set of questions was centred on the following themes: imagining, perceiving, journey with the language, orientating in place and space, balancing, moments of magic, and the meaning or personal enrichment of being

intercultural. The questions I chose were slightly changed in the terminology they used and aimed to give more space for narratives as well as to highlight the processuality of intercultural learning. The main questions asked were:

- How did you imagine the place/country you were going to?
- What were your first impressions?
- What was your journey with the language?
- How did you orientate?
- How did you balance?
- Were there specific places of significance?
- Did you experience moments of magic?
- What does the word 'intercultural' mean for you?
- How did your intercultural experience enrich you personally?

Chapter Nine gives a more detailed explanation of the form of the meetings with the participants in either 'guided walks', 'virtual walks' or as common interviews. All interviews were supplemented with arts-based methods and visual methods, as outlined in Chapter Eight.

PATH TWO

Following the routes of the intercultural field

Saarbrücken

I will never wear those two shirts again

(Hashim)

Hashim is Egyptian. He is a pianist by profession and studied music in Germany. While supported through a scholarship from his home country, he spent six years in Germany to study piano. His journey within Germany and the German language started when he was accepted at the Academy for Music in Saarbrücken (a town in the west of Germany), where he also learned German at the Goethe-Institute. One of Hashim's first impressions of Germany was, in his own words, "schockierend" (shocking) and a multi-sensory experience in every sense: the place in front of the Goethe-Institute, where he took classes in German, was "nicht immer sauber" (not always clean) and "hat nur einfach nach Bier gestunken" (just stunk like beer) with youth standing around, shouting loudly. This "große Überraschung" (big surprise) was not at all what Hashim imagined Germany to be, rather expecting it to fit more with his idea of "ein wunderschönes Land" (a beautiful country) in relation to its nature and its people. He says that he also expected Germans to be "sehr kühl" (contained) and "zurückhaltend" (cool) and adds that he was aware of stereotypes such as "sie bilden keine Beziehung mit den anderen, sind einfach geschaffen um viel zu arbeiten [...], das sie immer ganz genau sind und immer ganz pünktlich, alles muss ganz perfekt sein" (they don't form any relationships with others, simply live for working [...], they are always very exact and always punctual and everything has to be perfect). That his experiences with the 'real Germany' went towards a different direction is shown in the following passage:

> *Ich habe in Deutschland etwas ganz wichtiges gelernt, was ich in Ägypten nie gelernt hätte: ich bin in einer Umgebung von Menschen und die sind einfach auf jeden Fall Menschen, egal welchen Glauben sie haben. Und ich habe sehr viele Ungläubige und viele Evangeliken oder Katholiken getroffen, die mir viel viel lieber als manche Muslime waren. Also, es ist mir egal, woran man glaubt.*

> *(In Germany I learned something very important, which I'd have never learned in Egypt: I'm surrounded by people who are simply human beings whatever faith they have. And I met many Atheists and Catholics and Protestants whom I liked much more than some Muslims. Therefore, it doesn't matter for me what someone believes in.)*

This narrative indicates that Hashim's experiences in Germany circle a lot around his 'being Muslim in Germany', as well as through his status as a classical musician from Egypt, a combination often perceived as 'uncommon'. A central moment in Hashim's intercultural experience was September 11th and how it affected the way he represented Islam in everyday life. Speaking about his friends at the Academy for Music in Saarbrücken, he mentions:

> *Ich war immer für sie alle [ein] ganz interessantes Thema gewesen, weil ich der einzige Ägypter und der einzige Muslim in der ganzen Hochschule, oder in diesem Bereich Musik war. Außerdem war ich da doch im Jahr 2001, September 2001, nach dieser Katastrophe. Und nach diesem Desaster, was da in der Welt passiert ist, da hat jeder Interesse nach Islam, was ist Islam, was bedeutet das? Was sagt Islam? Was ist der richtige Islam? Und das war für mich dann eine große Verantwortung. Ich musste das richtige... ich hab versucht mindestens das richtige Bild von Islam zu zeigen. Ich hab nur erklärt: was da passiert hat gar nichts mit Islam zu tun, der Islam sagt das und das und das. Und ich hab immer versucht ein richtiger Botschafter für Islam zu sein, das war für mich eine große Verantwortung, weil alles, was ich angezogen habe war wichtig, alles was ich gesprochen habe war wichtig. Wie ich Leute angeguckt habe war wichtig, also ich hab immer wirklich... ich war ein bisschen unter Stress.*

> *(I was always a very interesting topic for them because I was the only Egyptian and Muslim in the whole College or in this kind of music. As well, this was in the year 2001, September 2001, after this*

catastrophe. And after this disaster everybody was interested in Islam, what it is, what does it say, what does it mean? What is the real Islam? That was a real responsibility for me. I had to show the right... I tried at least to show the right image of Islam. I just explained: what happened had nothing to do with Islam. Islam says this and this and this. And I always tried to be a right ambassador for Islam, which was a big responsibility for me, because everything I was wearing was important, everything I was saying was important. How I was looking at people was important. Really, I had really always... I felt a bit stressed.)

One example of his role as an 'ambassador of Islam' and how he experienced the raised awareness and mistrust towards Muslims following September 11th is his story about two dark shirts that he accidentally wore twice in a row. Hashim explains:

Ich war immer so unter Fokus. Das war manchmal unangenehm. Ich hab einmal zweimal hintereinander... eine koreanische Frau hat mich gesehen mit dunklen Hemden. Das war Zufall, absoluter Zufall! Sie kam zu mir und sagte: 'Tragen die Muslime überhaupt keine helle Hemden?' Die zwei Hemden habe ich nie mehr angezogen und ich habe sie beide mitgebracht in meinem ersten Besuch in Ägypten. Also, ich hab schon gemerkt, dass ich immer unter der Lupe war und das war für mich manchmal unangenehm.

(I was always so under focus. Sometimes up to the grade of feeling uncomfortable. Two times in a row a Korean woman saw me with dark shirts. That was a coincidence, an absolute coincidence. She came to me and said, 'Don't the Muslims wear any light-coloured shirts?' Those two shirts, I never wore them again and I brought both of them back to Egypt on my next visit. Yes, I did recognise that I was under observation and sometimes that was uncomfortable for me.)

Despite this experience, Hashim tells me "ich wurde nie gefragt, an wen ich glaube und wenn ich das gesagt habe, das war ganz normal, ganz in Ordnung und wurde respektiert" (I was never asked about what I believe in and if I said it, that was very normal, alright and was respected.) He sometimes got ironical comments about the fastening month Ramadan, such as "wie kannst du das aushalten" (how can you stand that?), or "was macht euer Gott mit euch?" (what does your God do with you?). But Hashim adds that "um ehrlich zu sagen, das waren ganz wenig Leute" (frankly, these were not a lot of people who said this). Asked about whether he felt that he really created understanding with his explanations about Islam, he said "manchmal gab es überhaupt keinVerständnis über Islam, gleichzeitig haben sie aber Respekt gehabt" (Sometimes there was no understanding at all about Islam, but there was at the same time respect).

Regarding the ways of talking about intercultural difference, he says "wir haben über alles gesprochen, über alles" (we were talking about everything, about everything), which was a result of, "weil man sich näher kommt, weil… wir essen zusammen, wir gehen raus zusammen, wir gehen ins Kino zusammen, wir gehen spazieren, wir gehen wandern" (because you are getting to know each other more, because... we are eating together, we are going out together, we are going to the cinema together, we are going for a hike). Furthermore, he says:

Das war immer ganz schön, das war immer ganz lustig. Der Kulturunterschied war immer ein ganz interessantes Thema für uns. Das wir darüber gesprochen haben, was der Unterschied zwischen uns ist und es gab immer viele Fragen, die ich gestellt habe, die sie gestellt haben, es war immer ganz interessant. Und wir waren immer sehr mobil, wir wollten immer mehr wissen und jetzt habe ich sie alle eingeladen nach Ägypten, sie haben mich alle eingeladen nach ihren Ländern. Es war immer ganz interessant. Das habe ich nie irgendwo anders gesehen. Ich hab das nur in Deutschland gelernt und gesehen.

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(It was always so nice and always very funny. The cultural differences were always an interesting topic for us. That we spoke about it and what the difference is between us, and there were always many questions, and I asked them, they asked me, it was always interesting. And we have been very mobile, and they always wanted to know more, and now I invited them all to Egypt and they invited me to their countries. It was always so interesting. I've never seen this somewhere else. I've only seen and learned this in Germany.)

Finally, we talked about the public image of the religion Islam and of the ways it is represented through the media. We had the following conversation:

U	*So wie die Medien Religion in Deutschland und Europa darstellen und so wie jetzt in Europa der Islam dargestellt wird, gibt es da Momente wo du sagst 'das bin ich' oder ist es doch eher ein abstraktes Bild?*
H	*Eigentlich geht es in den Medien gar nicht um irgendeine andere Religion außer Islam.*
U	*Ja.*
H	*Und da kommen in den Medien nur negative Sachen, nicht positive Sachen. Und die Muslime zur Zeit machen das uns noch schwieriger [...]. Die richtigen, die guten, die normalen Muslime sind nicht so wie das, was sie gerade jetzt in der Welt machen.*
U	*Das heisst, die Abgrenzung, die medial durch die Medien stattfindet, wird im täglichen Leben eigentlich gar nicht so gelebt?*
H	*Überhaupt nicht. Ich denke auch überall auf der Welt.[...] Also für mich, Nummer eins auf dieser Erde ist Menschlichkeit und was Religion angeht, [das] ist nur individuell.*

(U	*The way in which the media presents religion in Germany and Europe, and Islam in Europe, are there moments when you say 'this is me', or is it rather an abstract image?*
H	*Actually, if it comes to religion the media deals mainly with Islam.*
U	*Yes.*
H	*And those things the media shows are only negative things, not positive elements. And what some Muslims do these days creates an even more difficult situation. The right, the good, the normal Muslims are not like that, what those are doing at present in the world.*
U	*That means that the polarization the media shows is not lived in everyday lives?*
H	*Not at all. I think this accounts for everywhere in the world. [...] For me, number one in this world is humanity and in regards to religion, [this] is just so individual.)*

From the notebook: Walking with Hashim means to gradually follow a journey that starts from a rather idealistic imagination of Germany but quickly passes by current landmarks of political-global debates, such as the medial representation of 'East' and 'West'. Hashim experiences in the course of September 11th a journey of questioning and answering, of suddenly being an 'ambassador of Islam', and of engaging with the challenges of this task. The label of 'being a Muslim' is in his case visual through, for example, clothing and fastening – themes that became a central element of his interactions with Germans in the course of 'speaking about everything'. Those conversations were interwoven with everyday activities and the development of an interest in the other, which eventually was followed by invitations to visit each other in their home countries. Through Hashim's journey we see that intercultural experience happens in between exclusion and inclusion and circles around complex networked themes such as faith, representations, and signs of the body.

Chapter Four: Mapping the intercultural field

Figure 11: Mapping the intercultural field

Spatial theory and education

> Space may be forgotten as an analytical category open to questioning, but it
> is omnipresent as an unquestioned category in everything we do. (Harvey
> 1996: 267)

Recently, the engagement with spatial theory and practice has increased in the realm of
education. Edwards and Usher's book, *Globalisation and Pedagogy. Space, Place and
Identity* (2000), focuses on aspects of space and place and follows the aim of "developing
interest in the growth of spatial metaphors in the discussion of pedagogy and wider cultural
practices" while highlighting the "increased importance being given to questions of space
in the social sciences and the theorising of space in social theory" (Edwards & Usher 2000:
2). This transition in perspective happens in the course of the so called 'spatial turn', which
forefronts spatial matter within academic discourses (see Chapter Five). Within the area of
education this turn came along with the following critique, stated by Peters:

> Educational theory is dominated by considerations of time, by historically
> orientated theories, by temporal metaphors, by notions of change and
> progress exemplified, for instance, in 'stages of development', whether
> conceived in terms of individual psychology ... or of modernisation theory.
> (Peters 1996: 93, cited in Edwards & Usher 2000: 31)

Peters's critique was part of a reflection on the processes of globalisation and the ways in
which its enduring and all-embracing effects resonated within the field of education. The
reformed relationship of time and space affected the structures of educational institutions,
which can be seen, for instance, in the establishment of open- and distance-learning

approaches, online courses, and the increased demands for lifelong learning as a result of greater than ever migration (Edwards & Usher 2000: 7). Furthermore, the very essence of educational practice became an element of questioning:

> In educational terms, what seems to be implied by the spreading use of spatial metaphors is a questioning, and the possibility of a restructuring, of those hitherto stable boundaries between formal/informal, teacher/student, classroom/home, print/text/electronic text, education/entertainment that play such an important part in defining educational 'spaces of enclosure'. (Edwards & Usher 2000: 46)

The re-structuring of those educational boundaries and spaces also influenced the 'global academy' and the life and work of academics. The latter were re-shaped significantly by global effects – both in the ways of producing new knowledge (research) and the transmission of established knowledge (pedagogy), as Jean-François Lyotard in his influential book, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge,* already pointed out in 1984. He argues that the educational system has been restructured according to a transformed socio-economic structure, as well as by the creation of those forms of knowledge and skills that are needed in the contemporary system (Lyotard 1984). Unsurprisingly, Lyotard's thoughts are still valid today, and the global "spreading of certain ideas" (Edwards & Usher 2000: 7) falls now together with the quickly reshaping demands of transforming borders, boundaries and positioning.

This re-orientation of pedagogy within a wider global frame was brought forward through concepts within the social sciences that increasingly employed spatial metaphors, such as Giroux's 'border crossing' (1992), Bhabha's 'location of culture' (1994), Spivak's writings on the 'margins, outside in the teaching machine' (1993), or Edward and Usher's writings on 'pedagogies of (dis)location' (2000). Although those concepts span a large variety of academic disciplines, a central position within this new exploration of space is held by the field of geography, and human geography in particular. The writings established within this disciplinary area influenced vitally critical thinking and *critical pedagogy,* and influenced as such many other disciplines. Gregory points out that "spatial theories are not restricted to geography, their traditional 'home', but ravel through and between social theory and are 'implicated in myriad topographies of power and knowledge'" (Gregory 1994: 11, cited in Gulson & Symes 2007: 1).

Kalervo N. Gulson and Colin Symes, in their book, *Spatial Theories of Education: Policy and Geography Matters* (2007), highlight the disrupting effect of spatial theory on

'mainstream' understandings of education in their particular field, the policy of education. They write:

> Drawing on theories of space contributes in significant and important ways to subtle and more sophisticated understandings of the competing rationalities underlying educational policy change, social inequality, and cultural practices. Therefore, examining education policy from a spatial perspective is not about creating 'new' problems as such, but rather it is about providing explanatory frameworks that, perhaps, disrupt understandings in, and posit new possibilities for, 'mainstream' education policy studies. (Gulson & Symes 2007: 2)

Those new possibilities of thinking about education under the umbrella of space Gulson and Symes draw upon resonate with writings of Doreen Massey, who recalls in her impressive book, *For Space* (2005), the following memory:

> When I was a child I used to play a game, spinning a globe or flicking through an atlas and jabbing down my finger without looking where. If it landed on land I'd try to imagine what was going on 'there' 'then'. How people lived, the landscape, what time of day it was, what season. My knowledge was extremely rudimentary but I was completely fascinated by the fact that all these things were *going on now,* while I was here in Manchester in bed. Even now, each morning when the paper comes, I cast my eye down at the world's weather (100 °F and cloudy in New Delhi, 46 and raining in Santiago; 82 and sunny in Algiers). It's partly a way of imagining how things are for friends in other places; but it's also a continuing amazement at the contemporaneous heterogeneity of the planet. (Massey 2005: 14, original italics)

This sense of fascination and the tingly excitement about places 'out there' and far away, the notion of magic, which comes together with wanderlust and an urge for discovery, the homage to place and space as a celebration of life and dreams – these elements interrelate with feelings of distance and closeness, of diversity and movement. However, Massey argues in her book that those elements are in need of a critical perspective, which reflects about the 'production of space' Lefebvre (1991) is writing about, as well as the entanglement of space with power-relations (see Chapter Five). In the frame of education, being aware of *naive* imaginations of space and place means: a transformation towards critical thinking about space and an understanding of the classroom as a mirror for the heterogeneity of contemporary global life-worlds. The many individual journeys and paths students went on before or while entering the classroom have a direct impact on their learning experience as well as the imagination and reflection about 'their place in the world'.

Research about space within education asks then about the impact of global spatial transformations on the process of learning and on the nature of education in general, which leads to a central argument of this thesis – namely the insight that *learning and teaching exceed the walls of the classroom*:

> Globalisation has highlighted that learning and pedagogy are not confined to the classroom but take place in a whole variety of life settings. Pedagogy, therefore, now has to be seen in a context wider than the classroom – in relation to curriculum, the identity of learners and socio-economic and cultural contexts. (Edwards & Usher 2000: 7)

Edwards and Usher encourage exploring "the potential offered by the emergence of 'location' as a central interpretative metaphor in reconfiguring a notion of pedagogy that resonates more clearly with contemporary times" (Edwards & Usher 2000: 8). This focus on the emergence of location in contemporary times is crucial for our argument that learning happens in place and needs therefore to be observed and understood in regards to place (I will develop the theme of place as well as of space in Chapter Five). Massey's suggestion to "take some delight in the possibilities it [space, U.W.] opens up" (Massey 2005: 14) is then at the heart of education in general and intercultural language learning and teaching in particular.

Figure 12: The role of space in concepts of intercultural language learning

> Because learning, wherever it occurs, is an aspect of changing participation
> in changing practices. (Lave 1996: 161)

The section focuses on questions about the role of space and place in intercultural learning theories. In short: how is space currently understood in concepts of intercultural language learning? I would like to present three of the most significant concepts that suggest a partially spatial perspective. These are: a) space as 'context'; b) an 'ecological perspective'; and c) the so called 'third space'. It is important to note that space as 'content' of the language class curriculum will be included in the Epilogue. At this point, the intercultural learning perspective is in the foreground.

Space as context

A look at the etymological background of the word 'context' opens up a variety of possible understandings. The *Oxford English Dictionary* describes it as first known in the fifteenth century and stemming from the Latin word 'contextus', which represents a "weaving together of words and sentences," a "connection" or "coherence." This meaning widens over the centuries to the phrase "in the context" and its insight of "what a word means depends upon its connection in past experience" (OED online). The term 'context' refers now mostly to the conditions in which a word, thing or meaning exists, and within an

educational framework is understood as the setting or environment in which learning takes place or is dependent on. But let me develop this argument step by step.

Writings about context within language learning and language pedagogy can be found across a variety of disciplines and are based mainly in the fields of foreign language education, applied linguistics, and second language acquisition. Since the early 1990s there have been significant steps toward including context in research about learning and teaching in general. Jean Lave, in her article, *Teaching, as Learning, in Practice* (1996), argues for "the importance of exploring a social rather than psychological theory of learning" (Lave 1996: 162), and sheds light on the *transforming dimension of context as well as its dialogical encounter with practice*. She writes: "It is useful for trying to focus on the specifics of changing participation in changing practices, most especially on learner's changing conditions and ways of participating" (ibid.). Within the field of education, Lave's influential article introduced the famous expression of 'space/context as a container' and visualised in this way the understanding of space as passive and taken for granted. Space, Lave criticises, is not 'always there' or 'fixed' regardless of what we do or of how things change (Lave 1996).

In a similar way, Adrian Holliday's book, *Appropriate Methodology and Social Context* (1994), is pioneering in the inclusion of social categories in mainly cognitive-oriented research on language learning and teaching. In his book, Holliday reflects on the impact of globalisation on education in the 1990s and distinguishes between the micro and macro aspects of 'social context'. He refers to the micro context as "home-school relation, L1-L2 [native language-foreign language, U.W.] relative status, learners' attitudes and reference groups and so on," and explains the macro context as "the wider societal and institutional influences on what happens in the classroom" (Holliday 1994: 13, based on work by van Lier 1988). Moving on from this understanding, Holliday argues that the macro social context

> concerns the influences from outside the classroom, which, I shall argue, are key in helping us understand what happens between people. Although the final focus, on what happens between people, is micro, these relationships can only be fully understood in terms of the wider, macro picture. (Holliday 1994: 14)

Holliday points here towards the interwoven relationship of the micro- and macro-scapes of intercultural learning, a thought that is described in a similar way by Kramsch:

The dichotomy between language as an expression of personal meaning and language as a reflection of the social order is already inscribed in the very way we write about 'texts' on the one hand and 'contexts' on the other. It reflects the fundamental polarity of linguistic discourse that describes language use as both the creation of texts and shaping of contexts. In order to conceptualize these processes we use two different words, but in fact they are, as Halliday and Hasan write, 'inseparable notions' – much like the dichotomies mentioned above are often two sides of the same coin and act as such upon each other. (Kramsch 2000: 10)

Almost a decade after Holliday's pioneering work Michael Byram and Peter Grundy describe the developments in research about context in their book, *Context and Culture within Language Teaching and Learning* (2003), as the following:

Context and Culture in Language Teaching and Learning is a topic that has developed in many directions and with considerable vigour in the last 10 to 15 years. The origins lie partly within theory and practice of language teaching, and partly in response to the recognition of the social and political significance of language teaching. The two are not unconnected. The advances made in terms of defining the 'content' of language teaching, the emphasis on speech acts, functions of language and the analysis of needs, for example, have led to a greater awareness of learners as social actors in specific relationships with the language they are learning, relationships which are determined by the sociopolitical and geopolitical circumstances in which they live. (Byram & Grundy 2003: 1)

The 'sociopolitical and geopolitical circumstances' Byram and Grundy are writing about summarise the common reference to context as a *condition* in which language learners learn and live. This conditional form of context is tied to the classroom as the centre of attention, and although the need to include the 'outside of the classroom' is stated clearly, an understanding of this 'outside' is rarely investigated. Definitions remain furthermore blurry and space has a more or less passive role. Palfreyman underlines this critique as follows:

Much of the literature on language learning has tended to focus, for practical reasons, on the context of the classroom, or on controlled experimental tasks (Pica and Doughty, 1988; Foster and Skehan, 1996). Findings from the latter are difficult to generalize to learning in other settings. (Palfreyman 2006: 353)

It becomes clear that the term, 'context', adopts here a very open approach that embraces a variety of understandings, foci and perspectives (as, for instance, social, political, geographical, institutional, or personal and individual contexts, and so forth) in theory and research about second language learning. The word context is in this sense a quick-to-use term because of its openness in meaning and reference to 'everything out there'. However,

this openness has a huge impact on the concepts dependent on this term and its related understandings of reality. Phrases such as Holliday's 'outside of the classroom' or Byram's 'sociopolitical and geopolitical circumstances' do consider the social context of the learning experience, but the question of *where* the learning takes place outside the classroom remains more or less silent and leaves the actual language learner *de-contextualised*. Palfreyman states in this regard that

> the role of context in the literature on second language learning tends to be that of a 'container' (Lave, 1993): it is seen as a mere backdrop for a pre-existing individual learner, and is referred to only in so far as it is necessary to explain variation in individual performance. (Palfreyman 2006: 353)

As the question of what a (particular) context looks like arises, so does the need to clarify the complexities and paradoxes that the term 'context' incorporates. Let me take this latter thought into our next section, which develops an 'ecological perspective' on language learning, a significant shift towards the inclusion of space, and a re-conceptualisation of context.

An ecological perspective

Van Lier describes the 'ecological perspective' as the following:

> An ecological perspective on language learning offers an alternative way of looking at the contexts in which language use and language learning are situated. [...] The concept of ecology embraces not only the context of classroom learning but, more fundamentally, the very definitions of language, of development, and of mind. It proposes to be a radical alternative to Cartesian rationalism, body-mind dualism, and the anthropocentric world promoted for several centuries. It replaces these views with a conception of the learning environment as a complex adaptive system, of the mind as the totality of relationships between a developing person and the surrounding world, and of learning as the result of meaningful activity in an accessible environment. (van Lier 1997: 783)

Van Lier illustrates here the following: an ecological perspective aims to reframe language learning as strongly influenced by the complex and diverse environments in which learning takes place. This cognitive approach is in its practical implications strongly directed toward teacher training and methodological decision-making within the classroom and, as such, provides essential insights into the ecology of learning and teaching. Already by 1996, Bailey and Nunan directed the ecological perspective toward those dimensions that teachers and learners bring inside the classroom, and stated clearly the need to listen to such voices in order to explore their identities more in depth. This movement was based on

the insight that *diversity* is a "fundamental component" of language teaching that is "more likely to be the norm than the exception" (Tudor 2003: 7).

The ways that space and locality are examined are here inspired by complexity theory (Larsen-Freeman 1997, see as well Chapter Six) and a learner-centred approach that is captured in research about learning strategies and the "exploration of individual learners' interaction with the learning process" (Tudor 2003: 4). Complexity theory argues that learning cannot be observed in isolation from the lives and localities language learners live in and criticises institutional or political frameworks which seem not to be aware of this shift in perception:

> Learners are not 'simply' learners any more than teachers are 'simply' teachers; teaching contexts, too, differ from one another in a significant number of ways. In other words, language teaching is far more complex than producing cars: we cannot therefore assume that the technology of language teaching will lead in a neat, deterministic manner to a predictable set of learning outcomes. (Tudor 2003: 3)

An ecological perspective sheds light on the 'messiness' of factors influencing the practices within a classroom as well as the complexities and diverse contextual backgrounds learning and teaching engages with. Tudor criticises in this vein the increasingly mechanised understanding of learning and teaching and argues instead for a conceptualisation of learning as a *non-linear movement*:

> The technological perspective focuses on potentialities and assumes a fairly linear relationship between input and uptake. The ecological perspective, on the other hand, focuses on actual realities as they are lived out in particular contexts. (Tudor 2003: 6)

Tudor adds that

> the shift in emphasis from a technological to an ecological perspective on language teaching therefore involves a change in the focus of attention, and therefore a change in what we are primarily concerned with when we talk about 'language teaching'. (ibid.)

Additionally, an ecological approach encourages a *dynamic* view of learning and explicitly reconnects this view to the "kaleidoscope of detail which may often seem conducing, contradictory and, at times, rather trivial" (Tudor 2003: 10). A central element is to work with "situations in their own terms and in the light of the dynamics which operate in these situations" (ibid.). This aim, to study situations *locally*, works with the ecological

perspective, clarifying that "language teaching and learning are always lived out 'locally', in the specifics of a given situation" (Tudor 2003: 8). Tudor terms this concept 'local meaningfulness' and rests the ecological approach on its assumptions.

The move toward change in recognising elements of context and space are made visible in a study on *Language Ecology in Multilingual Settings. Towards a Theory of Symbolic Competence* (2008) by Claire Kramsch and Anne Whiteside. In their article the authors are concerned with the so called 'symbolical competence' language learners create while adapting to the transforming and shifting settings of their individual contexts. Kramsch and Whiteside argue that

> successful communication comes less from knowing which communication strategy to pull off at which point in the interaction than it does from choosing which speech style to speak with whom, about what, and for what effect. (Kramsch & Whiteside 2008: 646)

Here, the choice of speech style is highly connected with the actual location of the speaker and relates to the complex symbolical elements the environment is made of. In other words:

> An ecological analysis of multilingual interactions enables us to see interactions in multilingual environments as complex dynamic systems where the usual axes of space and time are reordered along the lines of various historicities and subjectivities among the participants. While the global economy has deterritorilized and dehistoricized the spaces of human encounters, participants find a way of reterritorializing and rehistoricizing them in their moment-by-moment utterances. (Kramsch & Whiteside 2008: 667)

In this regard, Kramsch and Whiteside argue for the inclusion of embodied perceptions, which I will turn to in Chapter Ten. However, the theme of embodiment is here directed toward the disciplines of cognitive science and social linguistics and mainly aims to understand the successful und unsuccessful use of language. Palfreyman criticises this orientation of research as follows:

> A significant body of literature has developed concerning individual learners and the strategies which they use to learn both inside and outside the classroom (Oxford, 1990; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Wenden, 1991; Oxford and Ehrman, 1995). However, less attention has been paid to the contexts of which the learners in question are a part, and in particular strategies related to the social context (for example Exford (1990)'s 'social strategies') have been discussed less in later work (Chamot and O'Malley,

1996) than the more individual-centred categories of 'cognitive' and 'metacognitive' strategies. (Palfreyman 2006: 353)

Palfreyman adds:

> Between the individual and global levels, shaping both the flow of discourses and the detail of dyadic or small-group interactions, lies a kind of social infrastructure: a network of everyday material and social resources which shapes the language learning process and careers of individuals. (ibid.)

It is this perspective on space with attention to the infrastructure of the everyday that I am following within the theoretical orientation of this thesis, as I will argue in the coming section. Tudor's words are important to note before moving on to conclude this section:

> The ecological perspective [...] has set a more complex and more challenging agenda, one that involves exploring the deep script of human interaction with the learning process, not in isolation, but within the broader context of students' concerns, attitudes and perceptions. (Tudor 2003: 10)

The important questions for this section are then: what impact does this understanding of the learning process have on the learning experiences of language learners and what does it tell about the place and space where learning takes place? Before elaborating on these questions in more detail in Chapters Five and Six, a third influential concept within language learning theory shall be introduced, the concept of 'third space'.

Third space

The concept of a 'third space' is an influential term in postmodern theory and one which has found application in a wide variety of disciplines. The term has its main origin in *The Location of Culture*, written by Homi Bhabha in 1994. Bhabha's influential book inspired many writers to include the notion of 'thirdness' in theoretical and postmodern thinking, especially in the social sciences. A prominent theory about 'thirdness' stems from the American philosopher Charles S. Peirce, who developed his semiotic system in 1898. Peirce distinguished between: 'firstness' – the level of meaning that we get from bodily and sensory processes; 'secondness' – the ways in which we react and derive meaning from verbal processes; and 'thirdness' – the relational and symbolic processes we go through in reading signs and identifying patterns and generalisations (Buchler 1955).

In the realm of foreign language education, the theme of thirdness is used to describe an imagined 'third space' of intercultural awareness and understanding and the interactive

solving of common problems (Martinson 2008). Recently, research about computer-based language learning uses 'third space' as a metaphor for 'virtual space' and its influences on intercultural learning and teaching. Theorising a 'third space within the field of language learning and teaching illuminates those elements of learning that emerge from the famous dualities of language learning conceptions, such as 'self-other', 'us-them', 'individual-social', 'native-non-native speaker' or 'C1-C2' [Culture one-culture two, U.W.] (Kramsch 2009b: 238). Culminating in a so-called 'third culture', the meaning of thirdness builds on the breaking out of those oppositions and relates, in this sense, not to physical space, but rather to the symbolical, intangible, and abstract spheres the term 'space' covers. A third space is therefore

> a symbolic place that is by no means unitary, stable, permanent and homogeneous. Rather it is, like subject positions in post-structuralist theory, multiple, always subject to change and to the tensions and even conflicts that come from being 'in between'. (ibid.)

Kramsch, paraphrasing Bhabha (1994), states that thirdness captures an aspect of meaning that "is already given by our position in the social structure," and generates a space that is "eminently heterogeneous, indeed contradictory and ambivalent" and challenges "dominant seeing" (Kramsch 2009b: 237).

Lo Bianco et al. (1999) recreate the concept of third space for language education as follows: they suggest that language learners, in order to understand their own culture and language contexts ('first place'), learn about the target language and cultural contexts ('second place'), so that they finally develop an intercultural competence that has an impact on communicative choices in social interactions ('third place') (Lo Bianco et al. 1999).

Let me summarise: the concept of a third culture convinces through its articulation of hybridity but leaves it up to the reader to elaborate further on how 'thinking in a third perspective' actually takes place, and, more importantly, what impact spatial configurations have on those learning processes. Although Kramsch is writing about the "highly context-sensitive" character of third culture "adapted to the demands of the environment" (Kramsch 2009b: 239), a clear understanding of what this environment 'is made of' and its characteristics is missing. The question remains: *where and how is this third space emerging*? In order to follow up this inquiry, space has to be freed from its

passivity and mainly cognitive realms and be understood as interdependent with the practised forms of hybridity of the everyday as well as within global spaces.

The theoretical orientation of this thesis

We have just seen how in language pedagogy literature reflections about space as an aspect of intercultural learning appear in a variety of ways yet are not specifically designed or designated as spatially orientated. Within applied linguistics, second language acquisition, and foreign language education space is seen either as a contextual condition (context), a diverse and complex environment (ecological perspective), or an abstract space of intercultural awareness of language learners (third space). The role of space in these three approaches ranges from that of backdrop to that of a shaping factor of classroom activities or an influential element of embodied learning processes. In each case, the questions of the 'what' and 'how' of spatial configurations and its impact on intercultural practice remain mostly silent. A concrete spatial perspective is, in this sense, still waiting to be articulated and included into the canon of theorisations of learning about 'the' intercultural. Furthermore, most of the research undertaken in the field of language acquisition is based on a cognitive orientation, which, by nature, does not attempt to question categories of contextualisation *prior* to focussing on mentally-based activities. Palfreyman (2006: 353) adds in this sense: "Until recently, conceptualization of language learning in Applied Linguistic and ELT [English language teaching, U.W.] had tended to portray 'the learner' as a relatively decontextualized, cognitive being."

Based on this critique about educational concepts I have just shown, I would like to formulate the following three propositions:

- intercultural learning is not happening in a 'container' or 'on a surface';
- intercultural learning is not a merely cognitive or mind-based activity; and
- space is not a passive element of intercultural learning.

Let me now formulate the following statement: *intercultural language learning is in need of a new concept of place.* A concept such as this requires critical attention to configurations of place and space in its various modes of perception. It argues furthermore for a perspective that addresses "both the radical energies and complex junctures" in social engagement with elements of interculture (Papastergiadis 2006: 197). As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the term 'context' originally means a 'weaving together of words' depending on experiences of interrelated conditions, places, and settings in which,

in our case, language learning takes place. It is this original meaning I am reconnecting to when introducing the term *'intercultural field'* (Phipps & Gonzalez 2004).

While it is the purpose of both Chapters Five and Six to develop the dimensions of the 'intercultural field' in more detail, I am here emphasizing how it is interwoven with, as well as produced by, practices of language learners, and I suggest using the phrase 'intercultural field' instead of the widely used term 'context'. The term 'context' is in this way re-conceptualised as a "relatively open and multiply networked field" (Papastergiadis 2006: 209) – a field which transforms itself constantly. In short: the 'intercultural field' is:

- experienced and practiced by the language learner;
- located and situated 'in situ' and in the multiple realms of the everyday; and
- influenced by global-spatial transformations, based on networks, flows and mobilities.

In the following sections, I move on to establish this understanding while grounding and locating the intercultural field over the course of the discussions in Chapters Five and Six.

Lyon

It's obvious that you are vulnerable

(Veronica)

V eronica is Australian, with her parents from Greece and England. She considers herself someone who has "always been mixed" because of the migrant background of her parents. She laughs out loud when telling stories of being perceived as "exotic" by her boyfriend's parents, who live in the Australian countryside, or of people in France asking her why she is not blond, as she is "not a typical looking Australian looking girl." Veronica went on an exchange visit to France while still in High School followed by another exchange to France while in University. As Veronica explains, "in fact I pretty much, when arriving at the university, was focused on going on an exchange [laughs]." She remembers that her first impressions of France

> *didn't really match up in my expectations, more because I think my expectations were of what High School is like here than what it was like there. It was very different [...] because it was winter and I'd have to get up at 6am and it would be dark and it was just so... And then we would all go to school and the kids' routines were so different. They would go to bars after school, just like totally unheard of here, and they would all smoke. But it was also different because I'm a city person who was in the country, and I found that really difficult because I couldn't be independent, I couldn't get anywhere unless someone with a car could get me to places.*

Veronica was able to be more independent during her second visit to France because she was located in a bigger town: Lyon. One first step she took during her exchange was "to put [her] suitcase into storage and then to get a backpack." Veronica's mode of orientating in Lyon was based on the feet: "So I walked around a little bit, like I genuinely just walked and walked wherever it looks interesting."

Figure 13: Veronica's virtual walk 1

She continues telling me about her way of orientation:

> *I get very attached to places. I think for me, with Lyon, it was easy because the city is very well set up, like architecturally it is designed so you can really understand. I don't know how to explain this. Like you can see a long way and you can see the way everything is set up. I went to Paris four or five times, but I never felt like I was connected to the city because I felt I couldn't see it all at once. It was too big for me to understand, like to make a mental kind of picture of [it]. I always felt like Paris was an unfriendly place because I couldn't really grasp its geography very well. [...] I just get the feeling that with Lyon I understood more each area and what people were doing there. I understood the character of each area better because I could kind of work out how they are all connected. In Paris, I couldn't really understand how people were using... like people were everywhere but I didn't know what everyone was doing, you know?*

Figure 14: Veronica's virtual walk 2

This feeling of connecting to a place through understanding its structure involved a longer period of time: "because I was in Lyon for a lot longer than I was in Paris, I got to see how it changed in the time I was there. I think this gives you a sense of understanding a place better if you're watching how things change over six months from summer to winter and things like that." However, Veronica's experiences in France include as well moments which were "a bit dodgy." She explains:

> V   *The company put me on the train from Paris to this really small town and just told me to get off this station and that I'd meet my family there. And I was trying to get off the train and my suitcase was wedged in the door and it was bad because I just got off the plane and then a three or four hour train trip and I was so tired. So I was just like 'someone help me!' in English, which was great... And then obviously the people from the station helped me. It would have been better I did this in French but I just couldn't.*
>
> U   *Especially in moments when you are tired...*
>
> V   *Yes, and there were sometimes cases with aggressive men who would follow you and say stuff to you and it's really difficult to be able to deal with that if you don't have language skills like 'go away'.*
>
> U   *That's the really negative side of it, isn't it? Because if you don't know a place, people can recognise it from your way of moving.*
>
> V   *Yes, it's obvious that you are vulnerable.*

I am wondering how Veronica dealt with this vulnerability of the intercultural experience. I said that during my research in Egypt many students were handling those "moments of crisis" (as Veronica termed it) through their faith, whereas I would sit for ages over a cup of coffee trying to make sense of it. Veronica said:

> V   *I think for me, I have a really strong network of friends here [Melbourne, U.W.], a very supportive network, and I think over there [France, U.W.] it was a matter of setting up another network of friends that can support you when you were struggling. […] I talked to them, even if it wasn't face to face. That was kind of a strategy for me. I think I'm a person who has kind-of rituals or routines. If you are just getting to know a place and you are still kind of a bit lost and you establish your area, then you have got your own bakeries and coffee shops, you know parks and things like that, it's a good way of having something familiar in that environment. I think that's the way I was doing it.*
>
> U   *So did you have a favourite place where you know you can go if you need a treat, or just to*

    V   *Yes, yes. And I had little things like... they had the Arab patisserie which was close to where we lived and every two weeks I'd go there and get desserts, which was a good thing. It's good to have little things like that.*

Those 'little things' helped Veronica to go through the "ups and downs" of her journey with the French language, which ranged from feeling "so excited being there and hearing and speaking the language" to stages where, as she states, "I just don't want to hear people speaking French anymore." She adds that practices "like setting up bank accounts and things like that is such a struggle." On the other hand Veronica found it "great when you see yourself improving and that makes it easy for you to deal with people and [...] it's what makes it worth it, I think, the hard times."

Figure 15: Veronica's virtual walk 3

Veronica concludes that during those challenging times of her intercultural experience "it was difficult to have my normal personality without being able to express myself, like, successfully" and "especially in terms of humour and things like that it is really difficult." I asked her if she still felt that her growing language skills enabled her to integrate into the French society.

> *Well, in my second exchange I did because I was a lot more fluent in speaking. You can really see the difference, the kids over there [other exchange students, U.W.] who had very little knowledge of language, they struggled a lot more because they couldn't connect with the people and everything was kind of outside of them, they couldn't really integrate easily. If you are not really accepted it is difficult to understand, I think.*

At the end of our walk, I asked Veronica how her experiences in France enriched her personally and she answered: "I think especially in this age, I was only nineteen, twenty, it was enriching in that it's difficult and it teaches you how to deal with stuff like that and how to turn it into good experiences."

From the notebook: Feeling accepted is what Veronica attaches to being able to speak the language and therefore being able to 'connect with people'. Moving independently while walking in the city or grasping the structure of a town over a longer period of time is another element which enables Veronica to 'connect' and to gain 'a sense to understand a place better'. What emerges from this process of 'getting attached to place' is a feeling of vulnerability which emerges from not knowing a place at first and being unfamiliar with

its language and its 'mental maps'. Another central theme during our walk were the 'little things' and their relation to place and experience. The coffee shops or the Arab patisserie Veronica talked about performed not only as places of significance but as bridges from space to experience and from orientating to balancing. Walking as such and the everyday locations language learners move in unfold in Veronica's narrative their role as central actors within the complex process of intercultural experience.
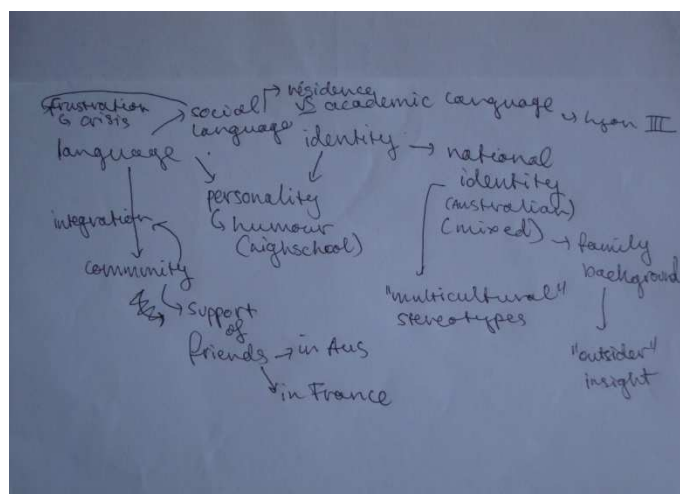
Figure 16: Veronica's mind map

Chapter Five: Grounding the intercultural field

Figure 17: Grounding the intercultural field

> Macro no longer describes a *wider* or a *larger* site in which the micro would be embedded like some Russian Matryoshka doll, but another equally local, equally micro place, which is *connected* to many others through some medium transporting specific types of traces. No place can be said to be bigger than any other place, but some can be said to benefit from far safer connections with many *more* places than others. (Latour 2005: 176, original italics)

To approach the theoretical challenge of grounding the intercultural field I turn my attention towards the writings of Lefebvre, Tuan, Massey, de Certeau, de Sousa Santos and others who give insight to the complex and entangled nature of thinking about spatial transformations. In the course of this chapter I will concentrate on: a) an understanding of space and place; b) the role of the everyday; and c) influences of global transformations on the intercultural field. The guiding question will be: what is the relationship between space, place, and experience and in which way does it reflect back on intercultural language learning processes?

> Is [...] space an abstract one? Yes, but it is also 'real' in the sense in which concrete abstractions such as commodities and money are real. Is it then concrete? Yes, though not in the sense that an object or product is concrete. Is it instrumental? Undoubtedly, but, like knowledge, it extends beyond instrumentality. Can it be reduced to a projection – to an 'objectification' of knowledge? Yes and no: knowledge objectified in a product is no longer coextensive with knowledge in its theoretical state. If space embodies social relationships, how and why does it do so? And what relationships are they? (Lefebvre 1991: 26-27)

The re-emergence of space

Summarising the manifold dimensions of 'space' is indeed far from an easy thing to do. This is not only because of the fundamental philosophical aspect of space, but also because of the historically grown and substantial body of thought. Groundbreaking philosophers such as Descartes, Kant, Heidegger, or Simmel created the spine of a theory of space that was subsequently reflected on in the more recent writings of Bachelard, Merleau-Ponty, Lacan and Arendt, while the conceptual terrain developed in postmodern writings (most significantly by Lefebvre, de Certeau, Bourdieu, Deleuze, Guattari and Foucault) enabled the so called 'spatial turn' (Schlögel 2003) and sparked a wider interest throughout an array of academic disciplines. The 'spatial turn' and the heightened interest in matters of space and place did not occur *ex nihilo.* They emerged in an age of globalisation and wide-ranging political shifts which reconfigured the category of space in a complex and interconnected global world (see Section Three in this chapter). Bachmann-Medick describes this as follows:

> Since the middle of the 1980s, the 'spatial turn' is part of a new orientation within cultural studies and social sciences and the term 'space' celebrates a renaissance of its own. Reasons for this are global political shifts, like the resolving conflict between the two blocks Russia and the USA, and the opening of borders, economically and politically. The idea of a constellation of global networks based on relationships and interdependencies rather than individual, national actors became quite soon a reality, and terms like 'networking', 'globalised' and 'interconnectedness' flourished. These terms, however, are strongly embedded in the notion of space. (Bachmann-Medick 2009: 285, translated from German by U.W.)

This epochal transformation engages a different view on matters of time and the perception of history and reality per se. Social realities were no longer understood on the basis of diachrony and a consecutive 'one after another'. They were rather acknowledged in their *synchrony* and *simultaneity.* Michel Foucault, in his famous essay *Of Other Spaces* (1986

[1967]), describes this epochal transformation as an understanding of the world based on a spatial 'side by side'. He argues:

> The great obsession of the nineteenth century was, as we know, history: with its themes of development and of suspension, of crisis, and cycle, themes of the never-accumulating past, with its great preponderance of dead men and the menacing glaciation of the word. [...] The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at a moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life depending through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein. (Foucault 1986 [1967]: 22)

Although writers such as Foucault gather from this shift that the present era is dominated by space, other writers such as Soja, Massey and Crang accentuate the intertwined concurrence of both factors. There are also a large number of scholars indicating exactly the opposite: the *disappearance of space.* This argument refers to a world where distance is no longer the ruling category and where the impact of transformed communication and information systems evokes the perception of a 'global village'. These tensions in the conceptualisation of space are discussed along traditional ideas of space as homeland and territoriality. While the emerging 'global space' opens up ideological and national borders, it establishs at the same time new borders, local disparities, and spatial demands – boundaries I will discuss in Chapter Six.

Within the spatial turn two dominating directions have been observed: a) the focus on historical events and their spatial configurations; and b) a new awareness of space as a social and cultural production (Frank et al. 2008: 11). One major shift in perspective that the spatial turn was based on turns the attention away from space as an abstract and universal set of norms and moves toward thinking about space as concrete and experienced (ibid.). Space and place are understood as *constructed and not as given* – a thought that sheds new light on the role of the 'actors' within space and the manifold possibilities of human agency (Frank et al. 2008: 8).

In his magnum opus, *The Production of Space* (1991 [1974]), Henri Lefebvre formulates his famous statement that "(social) space is a (social) product" (Lefebvre 1991: 26). He clarifies that space is not just a 'container' or 'mental space', but rather intertwined with social practice, and is, in this sense, a 'product' of human action. While highlighting the multidimensionality of human practice he argues:

> Social space is not a thing among other things, nor a product among other products: rather, it subsumes things produced and encompasses their interrelationships in their coexistence and simultaneity – their (relative) order and/or (relative) disorder. (Lefebvre 1991: 73)

Lefebvre elaborates this thought on the relative order or disorder of social space while writing that "every society [...] produces a space, its own space" (Lefebvre 1991: 31). Indicating that understanding those spaces cannot be revealed solely on the basis of an understanding of one's own space, he argues that what is needed is rather "the introduction of new ideas – in the first place the idea of a diversity or multiplicity of spaces quite distinct from that multiplicity which results from segmenting and cross-sectioning space *ad infinitum*" (Lefebvre 1991: 27, original italics). Social space, in Lefebvre's understanding, is not only a product of human practices but a product of multiplicity per se and should be acknowledged as such. In the following discussion I will bring these theoretical thoughts to the field of intercultural language learning.

Reading in space

Language learners, while 'reading in', at first sight, unfamiliar places, try to decipher the social practices that eventually form space, place, and the perception of them. In Hillary's case, urban space was perceived as so different that it was not even recognised as such in the first instance:

> U   *What was your first impression of Melbourne as a town?*
> H   *Oh, when I left the airport, I tried to find the city, oh where [is] the city? Where [is] the city? I just tried... because in my opinion, cities should be very high buildings. [It's a] very different style from my city, Shenjin.*
> U   *How is it different?*
> H   *My city, Shenjin, [is] very modern, and a very new city. And the buildings [are] very, very tall. We have a lot, a lot of high buildings. But in Melbourne, different buildings. I just feel... tall buildings. That's why it's hard to find the city.*
> U   *How do you feel then, comfortable or not...?*
> H   *It's different styles of the cities. I find [it] not really uncomfortable, I just try to get used to the new city. That's OK. Different city.*

Space is then closely connected to practice, as I have just outlined. Let us listen to Ismail, who tells us how he experienced the different ways of 'producing space' while coming to Australia:

> *It took me a while to figure out the more systematic way of doing normal things*

here. Things in Egypt can be more flexible and more subject to the target and not subject to the system. I had to get used to that things take its time. For example, people told us a situation in Egypt that they don't have water in their building. And they wanted a tank of water and he just asked the doorman and after half an hour they will find three big ropes coming down from the roof and installing the tank. This you can't find here. It took me some time to get used to the differences in my field, how do they hire people and about the contracts. But generally all in all there was nothing really serious. And I expected myself to be homesick here but until now this has not happened. And I think now I started to feel more related to the place and I think now it will be hard to go back to Egypt again.

What Ismail's narrative highlights here is the essential element of learning about the diversity of practices within processes of intercultural learning. Those practices of diversity and their particular modes of 'producing space' are intertwined with spatial configurations around, for example, the 'system' or the 'target', as Ismail puts it. Language learners live, read, and dwell in space and place – their impressions of what they see reconnects to what they have learned and what they have experienced before. In an *experience of diversity* meanings of place and time are reshuffled and re-performed within a formation of overlapping understandings that can simultaneously cause fascination and shock (which we will see in the coming narrative of Sarah). As intercultural language learning is embedded in a complex and globalised society, those experiences of diversity are more than ever in need of being read and experienced on the basis of multiplicity and interwoven meanings. The experience of diverse spatial realities is then what enables language learners to engage with diversity in its various shapes, as the example of Sarah's experience in Argentina illustrates:

U   How did it look like?
S   It was so different.
U   Different – in which way?
S   Well, like in Canberra, for instance, it's all very spread out, very green, very pretty. I don't know if you've been there...
U   No, not yet.
S   There's a lot of money, and when I went to Argentina it was like if I saw a, like a community – what's the word I'm looking for? I'm thinking 'barrio', which is Spanish for neighbourhood, like suburb, like the one that I lived in, in Argentina. If I saw that in Australia I'd be scared, I'd be like 'oh that's a really rough suburb,' or whatever. Everyone's got bars on their windows and I remember getting there and everyone's got those old school keys that they go and open the bars on the doors, and there are bars everywhere and everything is kind-of locked up. And locked away, and you know, we, I grew up somewhere where we didn't even lock the door to our house, so it was

really, you know, huge change for me, going from kind-of seeing everything so open and free – and the kind of house I lived in as just down-sized, amazingly. But it was good, the food was so different, and yes, big shock.

Language learners read in space. They do so through the imaginations and experiences of social practices they bring into the intercultural field. It is in this sense that language learners learn to *practice* diversity while re-orientating in space and place.

The perspective of experience

So far I have used the terms 'space' and 'place' in a quite undifferentiated way. Here, I turn to concentrate on what we call 'space' and the ways in which it relates to what we call 'place' and 'experience in place'.

The title of this section stems from Yi-Fu Tuan's book, *Space and Place. The Perspective of Experience* (2001 [1977]), in which he identifies 'space' and 'place' as everyday terms and "basic components of the lived world" (Tuan 2001: 3). He explains:

> 'Space' and 'place' are familiar words denoting common experiences. We live in space. There is no space for another building on the lot. The Great Plains look spacious. Place is security, space is freedom: we are attached to the one and long for the other. There is no place like home. What is home? It is the old homestead, the old neighbourhood, hometown or motherland. [...] Space and place are basic components of the lived world; we take them for granted. When we think about them, however, they may assume unexpected meanings and raise questions we have not thought to ask. (ibid.)

Whereas the term 'space' carries in itself an abstract and undifferentiated notion and is defined as "an abstract term of a complex set of ideas" (Tuan 2001: 34), the term 'place' corresponds mostly to a specific location. Space in this sense can become a place "as we get to know it better and endow it with value" (Tuan 2001: 6). Tuan points out that when space starts to feel familiar it transforms into place. Additionally, when a person feels attracted to a particular space it transforms into place as well. This annotation of value to a specific place highlights the importance of experience and the range of factors that may be part of the transformation of space into place. With Tuan's idea that experience "is directed to the external world" (Tuan 2001: 9), I recall my argument that intercultural experience is not placed in a passive setting or framework, but is rather based on the mutual relationship between the two. In their close entanglement with experience both terms – space and place – cannot be understood as separate from each other, but as profoundly interconnected.

Throughout this thesis I therefore use the terms 'space' and 'place' synchronically, according to their entangled status.

When experiencing space and place a vast array of *emotions* are evoked and give meaning to an incident or practice. Experiencing space is then not only a matter of social practice; it develops along the lines of imagination and feelings of *attachment or detachment* to places. Human beings, Tuan points out, tend to embody their feelings, imagination and thoughts in tangible form and through places (Tuan 2001: 17). Let us listen in this regard to a moment from the intercultural field:

"Wenn jemand weiss, wo Michael ist, dann bitte ich ihn dringend, es uns zu sagen" – I am standing in front of a class of pupils from about ten different countries during an international summer language course in the heart of Germany's Black forest region, pleading with the students in the classroom to tell me anything in regards to the disappearance of one pupil in my class. The words are hanging in the air and change the classroom atmosphere immediately. Michael, after saying goodbye to two friends, left the summer camp the day before, apparently aiming to go into hiding somewhere in France, deciding not to go back to Ghana, his home country. Nobody speaks and I turn back to the topic of 'Perfekt' as my gaze crosses a large sign placed above the map of Germany at one side of the classroom – "Willkommen in Deutschland!" it says – "Welcome to Germany!"

This autoethnographic moment from the intercultural field is just one example of how different space can be perceived, imagined and governed. For me as the teacher, the most troubling question in this situation was: did any of my teaching encourage Michael in his decision to hide and did I in any way present Germany as a 'too open space' (but how could I possibly not have done this)? The colourful lessons about 'the' German space I taught in the classroom were in this case very different to the subsequent days in Michael's life. Being searched for by the police in Germany and France, he was finally picked up on a train and brought back to the summer camp. Although he became the hero of the camp, the organisers of the summer class indicated that Ghana will most probably not participate in the summer exchanges in the following year(s). The ways in which Michael attached meaning to 'German space' and acted upon those meanings became the indicator of a new, heavy border and cancelled

out the possibility of future intercultural exchange for other Ghanaian pupils of German language.

What this moment from the intercultural field captures is the multiplicity of, for instance, reading, interpreting, living, regulating, closing, opening, feeling, expecting, imagining or connecting to space and the extensive results those practices can have. Furthermore, it exemplifies the relationship of taught representations of space to individual ways of imagining and experiencing space and place. As language teachers, the forms we choose to articulate an image of, and understanding about, a certain form of space (national, cultural, social, political, and so forth) are crucial in allowing language learners to engage with either critical or naive imaginations and significantly transform their understanding of the spaces and places they are living and moving in. I will return to this thought in Path Three.

Open space

Another influential writer tackling the relationship between space and place is Doreen Massey, who, in her book, *For Space* (2005), criticises the fact that space has rarely been thought about explicitly and that the challenges, space and the imagining of space, opens up, are not adequately faced (Massey 2005: 7-8). Those challenges are based on the idea of nation or nationhood, on claims to the exclusivity of space for a particular ethnicity, culture, country, race, and so forth. The public imagination of space is often characterised by the assumption that place is "closed, coherent, integrated as authentic, as 'home', a secure retreat" (Massey 2005: 6). This understanding, in Massey's critique, has "undoubtedly, been the background imagination for some of worst of recent conflicts" – the conflicts and wars based on the struggle for (physical) space and (political) freedom. Massey raises the following question:

> What then if we refuse this imagination? What then not only of the nationalisms and parochialisms which we might gladly see thereby undermined, but also of the notion of local struggles or of defence of place more generally? (Massey 2005: 6)

Let me shortly reconnect this 'failed imagination of space' (Massey 2005) to our earlier story of failed multiculturality in Germany – a statement based on the grounds of *exclusivity*. The impact of political speeches as such is enormous and shapes not only the perception of German reality of so many people (worldwide), but also label elements of multiplicity and diversity as a threat for 'the' German identity and society. Now, this interpretation might sound exaggerated, but it captures an element of truth: the

conceptualisation of 'German space' as limited and exclusive. In order to deal with mis-conceptualisation of space as such an alternative approach is needed, for which Massey suggests three propositions:

- space needs to be recognised as a product of interrelations;
- we need to understand space as the sphere of the possibility of the existence; of multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality; and
- space has to be recognised as always under construction (Massey 2005: 9).

Ideally, this conception can lead to an understanding and creation of an 'open space', described by Massey as follows:

> In this open interactional space there are always connections yet to be made, juxtapositions yet to flower into interaction (or not, for not all potential connection have to be established), relations which may or may not be accomplished. [...] Space can never be that completed simultaneity in which all interconnections have been established and in which everywhere is already linked with everywhere else. A space, then, which is neither a container for always-already constituted identities nor a completed closure of holism. This is a space of loose ends and missing links. *For* the future to be open, space must be open too. (Massey 2005: 11-12, original italics)

How do Massey's inspiring thoughts interact with our thoughts on the intercultural field? Firstly, intercultural learning is a process in between inclusivity and exclusivity. Practices of diversity are emerging within borders and boundaries of a conceptualisation of space such as nation, ethnicity, race, and so forth. The understanding of these categories as 'clear cut' does coincide with exclusive practices and an understanding of space as static and closed (citizenship tests based on facts and knowledge about history, politics, and so forth, are one example in this regard). Reading in, and understanding unfamiliar places is then by no means easy; it requires a multitude of perspectives and critical-creative thinking about seemingly static and stable categories. Intercultural learning is, in this sense, at the heart of learning about the "coeval multiplicities," the "radical contemporaneity," and the "constitutive complexity" space is characterised by (Massey 2005: 8).

Figure 18: Everyday scopes

Three years after I finished my studies I am sitting on the train to Leipzig, the town I was studying in, thinking about what is lying ahead of me: bread rolls with jam and butter for breakfast, reading the newspaper 'Die Zeit' with a 'Milchkaffee' (café latte) in my favourite coffee shop close to the university, meeting friends in the evening in the park with a bottle of 'Radler' (a mixture of sprite and beer), and sitting on the balcony with my former flatmate, listening to the child who is probably still playing flute in a flat somewhere across the inner courtyard. Although such a long time has passed those activities are still in my head and I did miss them often. I am frequently asked what I miss most from Germany and normally those moments just mentioned are priorities on my 'missing hit list'. Some people answer "But you could do some of those things here as well," and they are right. However, it is not just the activities I miss but the places and people attached to them. It is also the normality of those moments and often their simplicity that make them so central and special within the memory of this specific time in my life.

The ways we walk the most, the activities we do the most, the thoughts we think the most – they seem to have the ability to transform to become an almost invisible and unconscious background to our experience. The long-lost watch found on a central spot in the middle of the shelf is just one example of the idea that the familiar is not necessarily the most seen; our ways of perceiving the everyday are more or less made of gaps in the experience of regularity:

> Escaping the imaginary totalizations produced by the eye, the everyday has a certain strangeness that does not surface, or whose surface is only its upper limit, outlining itself against the visible. (de Certeau 1984: 93)

In this section I would like to follow the routes of the intercultural field into the realms of the everyday and the transforming ways of perceiving and practicing them. A focus on the everyday visualises the potential of intercultural learning for creating a changed awareness of those elements, which, as de Certeau puts it, are often taken for granted or remain in the 'upper limit' of perception.

Structuring experience

The academic field that has been most interested in studies of the everyday is ethnography. Referring to research done by Ries, Moran argues that historically the focus of ethnography used to lie on 'primitive' societies and their 'symbolically charged practices', "which bridge the ordinary and the extraordinary: initiation rites, marriages, burials, communal feasts and other ceremonies (Moran 2005: 9). Most of the events listed above can be understood as 'non-everyday', and the aim of ethnographic research as such was to examine the role of rituals in establishing systems of social stratification, kinship relations and cultural identities (ibid.). It was only in the 1980s that the concept of the everyday was introduced into the discourse of cultural studies and its nearby subjects, ending at the same time a period in which the everyday had long been overlooked as 'ordinary' and 'banal' aspects of life not worthy of studying (Gardiner 2006). Gardiner explains:

> First, the everyday was perceived as separate and distinguishable from specialized knowledges and practices; and, second, everyday life was thought to be *problematic,* mainly because it is widely felt that modernity represented a distinct *threat* to the integrity of the everyday, insofar as daily existence was subjected to an extensive process of economic and bureaucratic restructuring, rationalization and commodification. (Gardiner 2006: 206, original italics)

This understanding of the everyday as separate from the social has changed significantly in academic research over the last ten years. Joe Moran, in his book, *Reading the Everyday* (2005), articulates the usage of the term 'everyday' in current academic research as "a wide range of practices undertaken by ordinary people" (Moran 2005: x) that are often approached through a focus on popular culture, consumption, and lifestyle. Moran widens this understanding of the everyday through the inclusion of 'banal' and under-explored aspects of quotidian culture, such as office life, commuting, car parking, motorways, new

towns and mass housing. Moran argues that an understanding of the everyday in this broader way can help to make sense of cultural and social change (Moran 2005).

It is important to note that if we speak about the everyday it is more precise to speak about the *practices* of everyday life, of those which constitute the structures of *every* day and create in their commodification or divergence the experience of diversity. Language learners read the everyday in order to find out about and understand practices of diversity. Let us listen to Sarah reflecting back on her experiences in Argentina:

> *I lived like in a little bedroom. They had a spare bedroom in their house because I think the family gets paid to. So I had my little room which would have been about, you know, a meter and a half wide, and three meters long. Very, very small. And then there was the eight year old. We all lived upstairs and then downstairs there was the kitchen and everything. And I'd get up and I'd go and work in the morning and then come back for lunch. They all have lunch and watch TV and have a siesta, have a big lunch, then they don't eat again until, you know, ten o'clock at night. It was bizarre, and I couldn't, I was like, 'I'm starving'. After a while you just get used to having these huge lunches, not just a sandwich for lunch, and they don't really eat breakfast, breakfast isn't a big deal, it's completely different. I don't know how they... sometimes I was eating dinner at 11:30pm, just because they never got around to it, it was just... And the kid that I lived with, she started school at midday or she started school at one or something, so she left the house at midday to go to school which was obviously really something that doesn't happen in Australia. They are all in bed at 7:30pm and up in the morning at about 7:30am, and this kid was in bed, you know, at midnight sometimes, usually.*

In short: language learners do engage with practices of diversity, not only in the realms of religious, political, historical or cultural dimensions, but through the mundane or supposedly boring realms, such as eating, housing, getting up and going to sleep again, which is visualised in Sarah's example. Seen from this perspective, the everyday is a crucial element of the intercultural field, which lets language learners connect with practices of diversity in a variety of ways. Within the field of language education, Risager reminds of both the "discursive and material, silent sides" of everyday life and argues that "the intercultural speaker needs to be able to use ethnographic methods to seek out, examine, understand and relate to the life of lived communities where there is a greater or lesser degree of linguistic and cultural complexity" (Risager 2007: 230).

From the ordinary to the extraordinary

The ordinary is, however, not separated from the extraordinary and is rather characterised by ambivalence between the two. Highmore explains:

> As the notion of 'everday life' circulates in Western cultures under its many guises (Alltagsleben, la vie quotidienne, run-of-the-mill and so on) one difficulty becomes immediately apparent: 'everyday life' signifies ambivalently. On the one hand it points (without judging) to those most repeated actions, those most travelled journeys, those most inhabited space that make up, literally, the day to day. This is the landscape closest to us, the world most immediately met. But with this quantifiable meaning creeps another, never far behind: the everyday as value and quality – everydayness. Here the most travelled journey can become the dead weight of boredom, the most inhabited space a prison, the most repeated action an oppressive routine. Here the everydayness of everyday life might be experienced as a sanctuary, or it may bewilder or give pleasure, it may delight or depress. Or its special quality might be its lack of qualities. It might be, precisely, the unnoticed, the inconspicuous, the unobtrusive. (Highmore 2002: 1)

The unnoticed elements of the everyday, the streets we have seen too often and the junctions we cross every day, are transformed only with the help of *consciousness*. Intercultural learning is in this sense nothing other than a sudden realisation of reality in unfamiliar environments while experiencing everyday practices in new and unexpected forms. The everyday, if experienced through a change of location, can re-recreate the awareness of those practices, which often remain 'on the surface' of our perception or are taken for granted, as already mentioned earlier. What lies uncovered in this ambivalence of the everyday is an alternative way of thinking about difference that can change the state of the unchangeable and static into the "state of (relative) wakefulness" (Highmore 2002) and possibility. Gardiner highlights:

> The ordinary can become extraordinary not by eclipsing the everyday, or imagining we can arbitrarily leap beyond it to some 'higher' level of cognition, knowledge or action, but by fully appropriating and activating the possibilities that lie hidden, and typically repressed, within it. Such an enriched experience can then be re-directed back to daily life in order to transform it. (Gardiner 2006: 207)

This understanding includes the recognition of diversity and dynamic movement as a universal element of the everyday.

<u>Lebenswelten</u>

Unfortunately, the everyday rarely exists in its pure form; to the contrary: "the everyday is always already read: its lived culture cannot be easily separated from its representations in architecture, design, material culture, news media political discourse, film, television, art and photography" (Moran 2005: ix). What Moran points out here suggests the need for critical reflection about stereotypical representations, which the everyday is highly characterised by. Papastergiadis points out:

> The uneven patterns of global cultural change can be witnessed in the representations of the everyday. As the relationship between the politics of place and cultural codes are redefined by, and against, new global coordinates, so will the aesthetic parameters and the constitution of the symbolic field of the everyday be transformed. (Papastergiadis 2006: 23)

A small excursus: the 'symbolic field' is a concept employed by Pierre Bourdieu, who understands it as a type of social arena or setting in which individuals act on the basis of their social position (Bourdieu 1984). A symbolic field is additionally based on rules, the so called 'habitus' of social beings and specific forms of 'capital' (such as economic, social and cultural). Those elements are incarnated by individuals and their status in the field (ibid.). I will return to thoughts on symbolic elements of the intercultural field in Path Three. For now, I am discussing the possibilities of the everyday for the purpose of critical reflection on representational readings of the intercultural field and how they relate to the 'life-world' of each human being.

The term 'life-world' stems from the German term 'Lebenswelt', and entered the academic realm of (mainly) sociology and philosophy through the writings of Husserl and Schütz. The expression 'Lebenswelt' aims to describe a state of affairs in which the world is *experienced* and *lived*, in other words: the "sum of immediate experiences, activities, and contacts that make up the world of an individual, or of a corporate, life" (OED online). Michel de Certeau argues in his influential book, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), that the cultural practices located in daily routines link the regulative norms of a society with the individual ways of creatively practicing those routines. Activities like walking, meeting friends for coffee, shopping, working in an office, cooking, and so forth, form in de Certeau's eyes an undermining of centralised power systems through its "tireless but quiet activity, in short by its quasi-invisibility" (de Certeau 1984: 31).

I am arguing that gaining insight into the life-worlds of 'others' is at the heart of intercultural experience and provides a real chance to, in de Certeau's words, *undermine* the representational challenges of everyday perceptions we experience every day through media, advertisement and public discourses. Letting language learners become aware of the creativity of practices of diversity through insight into individual life-worlds can undermine hierarchical and symbolic 'readings' of the intercultural field. Altmayer's concept of adapting critical discourse analysis for the language classroom is one example for this approach within the field of intercultural language learning (see Altmayer 2004). Being allowed to enter a life-world in an unfamiliar environment can lead to transformative learning experiences of those 'sensed-sensing energies' Thrift writes about and to which I will return in Path Three:

> We now understand that the spaces and rhythms of the everyday, everydayness and everyday life (Seigworth 2000) are not just a filigree bolstering an underlying social machine but a series of pre-individual ethologies that incessantly rehearse a materialism in which matter turns into a sensed-sensing energy with multiple centres. (Thrift 2007: 17)

In a similar way, Papastergiadis argues that a theory of the everyday has to be located in the "*in between* spaces, the interstices, the margins and the disjunctive zones of the social" (Papastergiadis 2006: 32, original italics). Making language learners engage with life-worlds and not just elements of representation is then a matter of highlighting the 'in between' categories as well as the individual ethologies which relate so importantly to practices of diversity.

Let me summarise: in a time where the everyday itself is the subject of vast global transformations (see next section), the experience of diverse and transforming everyday practices is an integral part of 'ordinary' lives. Intercultural encounter does not only re-enchant former 'boring' elements of everyday rhythms (for instance drinking coffee, using public transport, and so forth), it transforms those elements into a possibility of creating openness for practices of diversity and multiplicity per se. A critical reflection on the symbolic and superficial representations of everyday within media, advertisement, and also text books is then included in this movement. Shifting the focus of learning and teaching interculturality more to the in-between spaces of everyday individual life-worlds and the shared experience of those life-worlds can create an understanding of space as complex, multiple, and coeval as I unfolded in the former section.

Figure 19: Global transformations

I arrive fifteen minutes before the beginning of the class and some students are already waiting in front of the classroom. "Wie geht's?" I ask – how are you? When I turn to Nard, she does not immediately answer. I realise that Nard is from Thailand, which is shaken at the moment by a revolution and violent riots. I ask her about the present situation and other students join in, enquiring about Nard's family and whether they are OK. The atmosphere felt serious and uplifting at the same time. While we were joining Nard's worries for a brief moment we created as well as sense of relatedness and solidarity. The bell rings and we enter the classroom – a small version of the world in one room, I think, while preparing my papers to start teaching.

The shrunken globe

Typing the single word 'connected' into *Google* brings 536,000,000 results – including the notification that the time needed to collect those results was 0.07 seconds. Whereas 'being connected' can certainly be described as a common sense metaphor for the globalised twenty-first century, Held and McGrew (2002: ix) identify the term 'globalisation' as "one of the most fundamental debates of our time." Globalisation, it seems, is a process connecting and affecting the whole globe, "involving the radical reorganizing and reconfiguration of relationships between individuals, groups and organizations so that regardless or not of whether individuals become globally mobile, multiple distant influences affect their lives" (Jones 2010: 5). The scope of global transformation engages on an abstract level with the following dimensions: space and time; territory and scale; system and structure; and process and agency (Jones 2010). The title of this section, 'the

shrunken globe', indicates how those dimensions get reshuffled in their modes and perceptions of time and place:

> Globalisation, simply put, denotes the expanding scale, growing magnitude, speeding up and deepening impact of transcontinental flows and patterns of social interaction. It refers to a shift or transformation in the scale of human organization that links distant communities and expands the reach of power relations across the world's regions and continents. (Held & McGrew 2002: 1)

Whereas the concept of globalisation itself is not new, it was only in the early 1970s that the term 'globalisation' occurred in public and academic debates about the growing political and economic interdependencies between 'Western' states (Held & McGrew 2002: 2). The rising popularity of the term in the 1990s was caused by the global change in the world order, for example, through the collapse of the former Soviet Union and the introduction of capitalism as an economic *world system.* Held et al. (2003: 69) explain these changes as following:

- the extensity of global networks;
- the intensity of global interconnectedness;
- the velocity of global flows; and
- the impact propensity of global interconnectedness.

Whereas these transformations will be the focus of deeper reflections in the coming chapter, I would like to focus our attention on a more critical understanding of globalisation, which, as Hannerz's explains "comes in many kinds, [...] is segmented, and [...] notoriously uneven; different worlds, different globalizations" (Hannerz 1996: 18).

Winners and losers

Globalisation in itself is a contested phenomenon and not a static state of affairs; it is rather a *process* which creates the problem of "how to talk and think about the changes we are witnessing" (Popkewitz & Rizvi 2010: 9). Although the idea of the global and globalisation is produced in almost all current societies, it is far from being experienced "uniformly across the entire planet" (Held & McGrew 2002: 1). A critical questioning of the justification of globalisation refers then to the 'inevitability' of globalisation, an expression used by Massey to criticise attempts "to persuade us that there is no alternative" (Massey 2005: 5). Massey adds that globalisation "is not a description of the world as it is so much as an image on which the world is being made" (ibid.). We can see here that the

concept of globalisation is often critiqued based on understanding it as a static and one-dimensional movement. De Sousa Santos formulates this critique in a similar way:

> The idea of globalization, as a linear, homogenizing and irreversible phenomenon, although false, is prevalent nowadays, and tends to be all the more so as we move from scientific discourse into political discourse and everyday talk. Apparently transparent and without complexity, the idea of globalization masks more than it reveals of what is happening in the world. And what it masks or hides is, when viewed from a different perspective, so important that the transparency and simplicity of the idea of globalization, far from being innocent, must be considered an ideological and political move. (de Sousa Santos 2006: 395)

Globalisation, in de Sousa Santos' view, is moreover "a set of different processes of globalization and, in the last instance, of different and sometimes contradictory globalizations" (ibid.). In other words: there are as many globalisations as there are perspectives on, and understandings of, current global changes. Those different forms of globalisation are entangled in a network of the political-economic interests of various 'global players' and "involve conflicts and, therefore, winners and losers" (ibid.):

> At an abstract level, only a process-based definition of globalization is possible. [...] It is a set of unequal exchanges in which a certain artefact, condition, entity or local identity extends its influence beyond its local or national borders and, in so doing, develops an ability to designate as local another rival artefact, condition, entity or identity. (de Sousa Santos 2006: 396)

Let me linger on these thoughts for a moment. We are living in a world where space is argued upon its global arrangement and the uneven and unequal characteristics of it. With so many refugees living and waiting in detention centres, the arbitrary aspect of space as both desired and refused is sadly obvious and commonly known. The 'global desire' that drives so many to immigrate and travel, even if the future is unsure or insecure, is then another aspect of global transformations that has a strong impact on language learning and teaching, which is also, after all, a project of independence and hope. De Sousa Santos reminds us that the "dominant discourse on globalization is the history of the winners, told by the winners" (de Sousa Santos 2006: 395). Intercultural encounter should reverse this mode of perceiving globalisation and rework common understandings and 'rankings' of place and space. Massey argues in this instance as follows:

> Those who argue that Moçambique is just 'behind' do not (presumably) do so as a consequence of much deep pondering upon the nature of, and the relationship between, space and time. Their conceptualisation of space, its

reduction to a dimension for the display/representation of different moments in time, is one assumes, implicit. (Massey 2005: 7)

Space is most often reduced to simplifying rankings: high-risk or low-risk countries; developed or underdeveloped places; must-see-places to why-would-you-go-*there* places; there are also war-like faux-pas phrases such as the 'axis of evil', and so forth. The particular attributes language learners connect to place in a global dimension do then arise from a global competition between 'good' and 'bad' places. Harvey argues that the

> shrinkage of space that brings diverse communities across the globe in competition with each other implies localised competitive strategies and a heightened sense of awareness of what makes a place special and gives it a competitive advantage. (Harvey 1989: 271, cited in Edwards & Usher 2000: 31)

What follows this form of competition is a common need for a place to "establish itself as a *specific* place, i.e. one of competitive advantage" within the global order (Edwards & Usher 2000: 27, own emphasis). Within intercultural learning experiences, this ranking of place has a direct impact on experiencing diversity. While diversity and interculturality are present in everyday environments and can be accessed without leaving the country, while almost every point of the world map is reachable in either real or virtual ways, language learners are still reconnected mainly to their places of origin. In Massey's words: places or countries are often reduced to "a dimension for the display/representation of different moments in time" (Massey 2005: 7). Let us listen to a part of the conversation I had with Veronica about her study exchange to France (Veronica herself is Australian):

> V   *We also talked about the differences between our own cultures and French culture.*
>
> U   *How did that happen?*
>
> V   *When you find out about each other, about families and stuff, you just naturally ask this kind of question. Like 'How does this work in your country?' or 'What is this like where you are from?' Things like that.*
>
> U   *Have you felt comfortable with this way of asking?*
>
> V   *Yes, sometimes I think it was a lot more easy for us, the Australians, and other countries. I think the American students got a lot of crap sometimes for American foreign policy which really isn't their responsibility, like personally, you know. I think people were really ready to criticise America. But Australia is generally... we are quite small [...] and people's perceptions are mostly positive. Like I had not any... apart from one, saying that Australia is a developing nation and I was like 'No'. But usually it was fairly OK.*
>
> U   *I've been to Arab countries and the reputation of Germany is mostly really*

positive.

V   Really?

U   Yes, it depends on where you are. […] I also felt it a bit weird because it is not me, it's just my country. And then there was this American I went on a journey with in Yemen and he was telling everybody he was from Switzerland. So there is this idea of place, where lots of people immediately connect to, although it often has little to do with you personally.

V   Yes, absolutely, I'd say so. But, I think, most people's perceptions of Australia I can live with and even encourage if I think they are not particularly true. Like people think that Australia is just laid back and, you know 'no worries' – like, relaxed. Which probably isn't as true as I think it is, but I'm like 'Yes, we are totally like that'.

U   So you say yes to something just to make the situation less complicated…?

V   I'd say I'd encourage a positive view of Australia. When you are overseas, you get a lot more patriotic than when you are in your own country.

We can see that intercultural learning deals with all kinds of spatial representations and imaginations and is dealt with in a variety of ways. When understandings of space (such as Australia's reputation for being 'laid back') intersect with a ranking of space, they confront the language learner directly and raise questions about the equality of those global rankings. A heightened global consciousness can then become a trigger for critical reflexivity about the paradoxes of space and relate to the ideals of education for critical citizenship, which I outlined throughout Chapter Two. Let us conclude with a narrative told by Daniel:

I really value that more global perspective, I think that's one of my things that I've learnt about that I value most. My mind and who I am. So I hope that in the future that will enable [me] to respond, and I want to make a difference, and change the world type thing. That's really idealistic […] but I know that I won't be able to do that without the global perspective. I feel like, at the moment, the people who are kind of in power, and the older generation just more broadly, weren't able to have those experiences of connecting with the world in the same way that I have, so they don't understand the way the world is connected in the same way that I do, so that they can't respond in the way that I know that I could to some of the issues, some of the positives and negatives.

Beyond the nation-state

Let me now turn to a concept called 'transnationalism'. Popkewitz and Rizvi introduce this theme as follows:

Under the conditions of globalisation [...], the assumption of discrete national cultural formations can no longer be taken for granted because

there is now an ever-increasing level of cultural interaction across national and ethnic communities. With the sheer scale, intensity, speed, and volume of global cultural communication, the traditional link between territory and social identity appears to have been broken, as people can more readily choose to detach their identities from particular times, places, and traditions. (Popkewitz & Rizvi 2010: 20).

At the heart of the transnational concept is the acknowledgement of the reconfiguration of social formations *across* physical borders and how these formations have highly networked and dense qualities (Vertovec 2009). Whereas "nation-states have defined the social and economic conditions under which people work," "they are no longer the sole arbiter of governing", as Popkewitz and Rizvi (2010: 18) point out in order to illustrate how social practice is increasingly detached from its places of origin. This transformation of social practice is captured in a variety of academic terms, such as Sassen's concept of 'transborderness', or Arjun Appadurai's various 'scapes' he introduced in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalisation* (1996) (see Chapter Six).

Transnationalism is a main element of globalisation; however, it does not only indicate economic and virtual movement across political-geographic borders, but a changed understanding of the structures of identity. An environment which constantly transgresses the boundaries of culture, nation, ethnicity, race, religion, and so forth, has wide-ranging effects on feelings of belonging as well as understandings of multiplicity – in all directions. 'Cultural fear' is just one example of movements that tend to fix and stabilise knowledge up to the point of fundamentalism, understanding hybridisation as a threat. Karen Risager, who addresses aspects of global change within the field of language pedagogy, refers in her book, *Language and Culture Pedagogy. From a National to a Transnational Paradigm* (2007), to the concept of 'banal nationalism' originally formulated by Billig (1995). She argues:

> Banal nationalism finds expression in the many small everyday things and statements that remind us that the world is divided into national states, and that presupposes that this is common sense – a quite natural thing that could not be otherwise. The flag on official buildings; the political map, where countries are clearly demarcated from each other and in different colours; expressions such as 'Australian weather' or 'German birds'; the expression 'the whole country'; the political deixis that lies in the use of 'us' and 'them' – all these are examples of the apparently innocent things that keep alive our national conception of the world. (Risager 2007: 13)

Learning to perceive heterogeneity beyond this merely national perception of space is crucial for all forms of intercultural encounter and disturbs the understanding of

heterogeneity as 'difference' only. Rizvi argues that a *relational* view is needed in order to pursue the aim of an education for multiplicity (an important argument I will return to in Path Three). He terms this form of learning, 'cosmopolitan learning':

> Cosmopolitan learning thus involves both a view of global interconnectivity different from the dominant imaginary of globalization, but also an ethic recommending a certain attitude towards intercultural relations. It conceives of the relation between self and others dialectically, and denies that our cultures are fixed and essentially distinct. It is based on a somewhat optimistic conviction about the creative possibilities of continuous self-examination and transformation. In teaching global interconnectivity, it underscores an ethic that urges us to engage with difference differently and to explore and work towards the possibility of futures that are more democratic and just. (Rizvi 2007b: 8)

This understanding of learning characterises space as necessarily hybrid and the heterogeneity of it as part of an essential human need for variety and change. As Papastergiadis points out: "The identity of the social whole can no longer be represented according to neat categories and discrete boundaries" (Papastergiadis 2006: 36). Massey argues in a similar way for a form of politics which, "rather than working with already-constituted entities/identities, [...] lays its stress upon the relational constructedness of things (including those things called political subjectivities and political constituencies)" (Massey 2005: 10).

In the realm of interculturality, the idea of interrelatedness has to be placed in a central position so that polarisations such as 'us' and 'them' can, while stepping out of well-defined categories as nation, culture, state, and so forth, be *transformed into an implicated 'us' in the 'other'*. After all, in a transnational and globalised world none of 'us' can live without the 'other', and it is exactly this so famous binary that is clearly in need of being replaced by interrelated and relational understandings and vocabularies:

> Clearly necessary are new ways of thinking about economic and cultural exchange in which conceptions of others and ourselves are defined relationally, as complex and inherently dynamic products of a range of historical processes and the contemporary cultural economies of global interconnectivity. Epistemologically, all cultural understanding is comparative because no understanding of others is possible without self-understanding. If this is so then it is important to emphasise not only historicity, criticality and relationality but also reflexivity in all our attempts to imagine and work towards better futures. (Rizvi 2007b: 8)

To sum up: a concept of space based on clear categories of 'nation' and 'culture' no longer matches with the complex and transnational contemporaneities language learners are living

and learning in. *Language learners increasingly have to translate traditional notions of nation, state, culture, and so forth, into a relational framework within current global societies.* The main challenge in a global, transformed world is to think reflexively about spatial arrangements and the shifting realities of identity and heterogeneity; in other words: to pursue cosmopolitan learning (see Rizvi 2007b, Held 2010). As Benedict Anderson wrote in his book, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983), the understanding of 'the' nation or 'the' identity are established on the basis of particular sets of customs, practices, beliefs and symbolic discourses, and the need to divide the self from the other. However, Anderson argues that those characteristics are 'imagined' and used as a form of 'borderline' (Anderson 1983). To transform this borderline between cultures and nations into the possibility of multiplicity is, in my view, the most powerful and important element of intercultural learning and education.

Glasgow

The first thing I realised that there is nothing called the 'Western world'

(Ismail)

Ismail was born in Egypt but spent his childhood until the age of ten in Saudi Arabia, where his father worked as an accountant. Due to constant travel between Saudi Arabia and Egypt, Ismail formed an idea of place as connected to particular values and habits when he was still in his early years, as he tells me in the following:

> I perceived the difference at this time that Cairo is the capital of light. Cairo, where you can go free, where you can go to the cinema and watch very nice movies, where you can have females in the school and you can speak to them and play with them. This doesn't happen in Saudi Arabia, it was complete isolation. From the cleaner to the manager there were only either females or males in the schools, no mixture at all. The only mixture which could happen was between the Egyptian families in Saudi Arabia.

When I ask Ismail about his journey with learning a foreign language he says that his parents were keen on letting him learn English from an early age. He explains more:

> I have an interesting experience because I attended my first and second year of primary school in Saudi Arabia. So during these years my parents were buying the books which are equal to my grade in Saudi Arabia and then hire a teacher for private lessons. But he was not a native speaker, he came from Sudan. And the examples he gave were really inside his culture. For example, he said 'I ate foul', which are beans and typically in Sudan and I think this sentence is rarely used in English speaking countries [laughs].[…] But when I came back to Saudi Arabia I started to learn English in school, and the teacher has been to England for two or three years. So he was deeply inside what he called the British English. And I remember that he told us, it is 'z' for Americans but 's' for British. So he was always emphasizing the British English. And afterwards I was watching American movies and the synchronisation of what is written and what they say and I found it really useful. And this was more the American English. And at this time, I can say, I really started to learn more about the culture. Because if you watch movies, you also learn about the culture. You start to see, what is the Halloween, what is the Christmas, and so on.

I am interested about this learning about other places and cultures through the medium of movies and I ask him if he remembers particular key-moments within those movies:

> Yes, there was one movie I can still remember, and this was a movie about two girls, sisters and they have a father who is a bit conservative and doesn't want his girls to be in a relationship at an early age, like fifteen or sixteen. So he set up a condition at home and said, 'No relationships for the younger girl until the older girl can have a relationship'. What I really liked about this movie is that the entire movie, one and half hour, the younger girl tried to solve the problem based on the condition her father said. But she never ever tried to start a relationship without telling her father, which could be a solution to her problem. In Saudi Arabia you show to the people that you pray, you go the pilgrimage, you wear what a good man should wear – but inside you can sneak around, you can do whatever you want. So what is outside is different than what is inside. Because you have restrictions and you are afraid of breaking these restrictions. But if you don't have a lot of restrictions, extraordinary restrictions, you don't have to lie, this was very important to me.

Reflecting about his impressions from these movies he adds that "as a teenager what I really liked are two things: firstly how the kid at home was speaking to its parents, communicating. It has the right to object, it has the right to say this out loud, it has the right to criticise and to discuss and sometimes it is mad about its parents so it says and expresses it." For Ismail, these modes of communicating presented a "freedom of life, of thinking, of a lot of things" and he concludes that "this is what I really liked and funnily I liked that everything is really clean. At this age I thought, this is life there, this is how it is there."

Ismail's first encounter with the 'world from the movies' was during a visit to Scotland, which he approached with the expectation "to live inside one of those movies." His first impressions were then as follows:

> *People were very decent, very polite. For example, I got a hug from a lady, a friend of a friend, I didn't know her very well and she was dealing with me as a human being, not as a male or a female. The other thing was that you were offered things very generous but not forcing, like we do in Egypt... I was also impressed how people donate books for the second hand shops. In Egypt they will give mainly money, not books. And then in general, people were very systematic, like, you wake up at seven and you go to bars in the evening, it's very systematic. What I did not like was when I was in the museum and saw a video of Scottish troops coming to Cairo – as something to be proud of, which is really strange for me to see this. [...] And they are really willing to see other cultures. This is not the case in Egypt. The Egyptians accept the others, but it's not one of the main important things for the typical Egyptian to travel. Maybe because we still have a lot of things to work on.*

Interestingly, Ismail continues, his image of Egypt changed completely when he came back from Scotland:

> *I missed Egypt, and when I came back I liked Egypt much more than normally. It was a very clear message for me that any other place at the end of the day is a place. There are better things and there are things which are not the same good, but every country has advantages and disadvantages. There is no place better than any other place, it is always relative. Like in the saying: you don't realise your own apartment unless you have seen many other apartments.*

Further travels bring Ismail in touch with more 'Western societies', and he says: "the first thing I realised is that there is nothing called the 'Western world'. There is France, there is America, there is Germany, there is Poland, there is Holland and so on. Every country has its own version of being Western." This learning process was, as he experienced, often mutual:

> *There was a German man in the hostel I stayed in and he told me, 'You are like us, like the Western people or Germans'. He had never had a communication with somebody from the Middle East and he was very surprised that I drink and that I can see the relationships between man and female as the same. And for sure he had a specific perception, and it was surprising for me when he told me that.*

From the notebook:

Walking with Ismail takes us from his early (movie-) imaginations of the 'Western world' to his first intercultural encounters in Scotland and deeper reflections on the theme during travels abroad. Walking with Ismail is in itself like being in a movie: the simplifying images of both the Middle East and the 'Western world' dissolve gradually and culminate in his insight that 'at the end of the day any other place is a place'. In other words: the experience of place is relational. The impact that the media and especially the movie industry has on transporting particular images of 'other's' family relations, and so on, is crucial for any intercultural experience, and grows with a critical awareness of pre-imposed representations as well as personal aspirations and imaginations. The ideal preconceptions of place that language learners bring into the field carry a notion of reflection about their 'own society', which often lacks those bits and pieces that the 'other world' is expected to offer and represent. Ismail's realising of 'differences within Western countries' and the impossibility of subsuming them within spatial-global terms (such as the 'Western world') let him see his own country with new eyes and re-value 'its advantages and disadvantages'.

Chapter Six: Locating the intercultural field

> So the world is on the move and social science more or less reluctantly follows. Agency is imagined as emotive and embodied, rather than as cognitive: the nature of the person is shifting in social theory and practice. Structures are imagined to be more broken or unpredictable in their fluidity. (Thrift 2004: 3)

In the last chapter I highlighted the impossibility of drawing on such categories as identity and culture in the ways previously established in intercultural language education. Within the frame of transnationalism, hybridity and globalisation, the simple understanding of 'the' culture within categories such as the 'nation-state' does not fit any longer and has caused significant changes for the understanding of the intercultural field. This chapter gives a suggestion for how to take this further by relocating practices of diversity at the interface of three principles about space and place: 'flows', 'mobilities' and 'networks'. The guiding questions of this chapter will be: how can we conceptualise diversity outside of rigid categories, and how can we 'read' complexity as one central character of the intercultural field?

It happens that during the time I was working on this chapter major changes took place in Egypt, a country not only connected intensely to my research but also the home country of my partner. As those events and the way they were networked, performed, and distributed correlate quite strongly with the contents of this chapter, I include reference to them, aiming to reconnect a theoretically orientated chapter to actual happenings in present times.

Figure 20: Flows

For the last thirty years political development in Egypt seemed to have stopped. There was no diverse political field and different opinions were repressed by the regime, redirecting all power to only one source: Hosni Mubarak, his family, and intimates. On Tuesday, January 25th 2011, hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets of Egypt to demonstrate against the regime. In doing so, Egyptians followed the happenings in Tunisia, where riots broke out because one young man burned himself out of protest against a country that was not able to give successful graduates a future. What follows on from this is known. The demonstrations in Egypt grew with every moment and within days there were more than two million protestors, the images floating around the world, transported by reporters and live-stream media.

From solid to liquid

> When you see a river from afar, it may look like a blue (or green, or brown) line across a landscape; something of an awesome permanence. But at the same time, 'you cannot step into the same river twice', for it is always moving, and only in culture – even as you perceive structure, it is entirely dependent on ongoing process. (Hannerz 1992: 4)

Water is flowing, time is flowing, people are flowing, money is flowing, words are flowing – is everything flowing? Strictly speaking only liquids and gases can be part of flow; solids, as their natural opponents, do not have this substantial flowing character. The term 'flow' summons a variety of meanings and it is possible to connect the term with different fields throughout a long period of world history. When Heraclitus established his famous expression 'panta rhei' (everything flows) over 2500 years ago, he created a particular

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philosophical understanding of life as being and passing away, and of the processuality of the world. In the age of modernity, the binary of solid and liquid was taken up again by Marx and Engels (2009 [1848]: 45), who formed with their famous statement, "all that is solid melts into air", the fundament of their critique of capitalism. The idea of 'fluidity' became a symbol for a dynamic process of exchange and circulation but was often interpreted as a threat and foreboding of the future.

In the twenty-first century the term 'flow' arose again, but in a different light and with a metamorphosed background. The idea of a 'liquid modernity' (Bauman 2000) became an influential concept within social science and the humanities, aiming to describe the particular face of contemporary society that could not be articulated anymore within 'solid' categories, attributes, and expressions. Contemporary society is seen in this sense as transformed to liquid modes with regards to time and space:

> While solids have clear spatial dimensions but neutralize the impact, and thus downgrade the significance of time (effectively resists flow or renders it irrelevant), fluids do not keep to any shape for long and are constantly ready (and prone) to change it; and so for them it is the flow of time that counts, more than the space they happen to occupy: that space, after all, they fill but 'for a moment'. (Bauman 2000: 2)

In regard to the public common sense of the world having changed significantly in the last decades, this transformation from solid to liquid has been interpreted in different ways. Hannerz describes the complex social changes witnessed as patterns of process in contemporary cultures, which – in the form of flow – concern economic, cultural, political, and so forth dimensions (Hannerz 1992). While Hannerz highlights the interrelated nature of flow, Castells sheds more light on the actors and contents of flow. The increased circulation of materials, cultural goods, information, ideas, images, and so forth, creates in his view a flow of *overlapping meanings* and characterises the so called 'information society':

> Our society is constructed around flows: flows of capital, flows of information [...], flows of organizational interaction, flows of images, sounds, and symbols. In turn, these flows are made possible by the social development of technologies such as 'microelectronics', 'telecommunications' and 'broadcasting systems'. (Castells 1996: 412, cited in Moores 2008: 184)

In short: the main purpose of flow is to describe a particular notion of contemporary society that cannot be understood within solid or fixed categories and, as such, is tightly

connected to patterns of movement, change and process. What flow-theory further shows is that *there is not such a thing as clear cut fields* in either academic or everyday life realms. The constant global transformation of contemporary clusters, such as culture, power, identity, nation, or states is embedded in a network of circulating people, goods, meanings, images, thoughts, and so forth and their interwoven nature.

Is structure disappearing?

This interrelatedness of particular fields in society encouraged some writers, particularly in the field of post-structuralism, to argue for the disappearance of structure while at the same time highlighting the constantly changing background of relations and the fragile processes of transformed 'common' clusters of meanings. There are a variety of interpretations of this argument, but the most repeated one seems to refer to the re-invention of structure within interdisciplinary formations, such as new networks of knowledge, non-determining terms, and de-constructivist methods – themes, I will return to in Section Three of this chapter.

Appadurai (2004 [1993]) distinguishes in his model of 'global cultural flow' between five dimensions: 'ethnoscapes', 'mediascapes', 'technoscapes', 'financescapes' and 'ideoscapes'. Appadurai clarifies that these 'scapes' are "deeply perspectival constructs" with the aim "to point to the fluid, irregular shapes of these landscapes, […] which characterize international capital as deeply as they do international clothing styles" (Appadurai 2004: 102). The 'perspectival constructs' point here to a *changed relation between centre and periphery.* As the 'virtual world' opens up new spaces for the articulation of the self-understanding of individuals, groups, or communities, processes of meaning-making can flow beyond physical borders, as mentioned previously (Appadurai 2004).

The 'Lotus Revolution', as Egyptians call it, is mainly organised by young Egyptians who are extensively using the internet and public media to support their goals. About sixty per cent of all Egyptians are under thirty years old and the unemployment rate is high. These young Egyptians are the main power of the demonstrations; what started with a simple invitation on *Facebook* became a whole social movement impacting the entire Middle East. The Egyptian government reacts quickly and cuts off the internet and the mobile connections. At the same time in Melbourne: we are following each single step in Egypt while reading the news online in three different languages and

watching the live streams of *Al Jazeera* and *BBC*. The sheer amount of (sometimes antithetic) news is almost overwhelming and we are having sleepless nights. My partner and friends are organising a demonstration in front of the Egyptian embassy in Melbourne, using the same virtual tools as the young people did in Cairo. After only one day, two hundred and fifty people accepted a *Facebook*-invitation and more than four hundred people turned up for the demonstration, waving flags and shouting "Out, Mubarak, out!" Some days later, and after the internet comes back in Egypt, an Egyptian friend calls, saying that the pictures from the demonstration in Melbourne and many other cities in the world encouraged him and many friends to keep demonstrating and not to give up.

I suggest within this chapter that structure is not disappearing, but rather reinventing itself within formations of flows, networks and mobilities. The concept of flow as an interdisciplinary model aims to grasp global transformations beyond binaries and dualisms, that is, beyond rigid categories. What the term 'flow' captures then are particular patterns of movements and circulations that rely on relationality and are characterised by the aim to "erode distinctions in kind" (Law 2008: 147):

> Human and non-human, meaning and materiality, big and small, macro and micro, social and technical, nature and culture – these are just some of the dualisms undone by this relationality. (ibid.)

Does flow have a direction?

The concept of 'flow' highlights the constant contradictions of static and dynamic movements; it is the interplay between progress and regress and "a system that is temporalized" (Lash & Lury 2007: 147). The terms 'progress' and 'regress' indicate an underlying idea of improvement – but where, in an image of circulating flows, does progression start and regression end? If flow is pointing towards a particular direction where is it pointing to? Hannerz states in this context:

> More precisely, the flow occurs in time and has directions. As a whole, it is endless; externalizations occurring now will bring about interpretations which in their turn lead to further externalizations in the future. Yet in details there are differences, as some of the externalizations are constantly present, some occur again and again, although in each instance they are short-lived phenomena; and some seldom or only once. In one way accessible to the senses of others, through physical co-presence or artefactual extensions, they render themselves interpretable. (Hannerz 1992: 4)

I agree with Hannerz that flows create and recreate meanings and interpretations in an ongoing cycle and may point in this turn in one or more directions, for shorter or longer periods. However, I argue that the more important question should be: does flow need a direction?

Let me think about this question within the theme of diversity and interculturality: as much as we try to push diversity in one direction, it disappears in another. The here illustrated notions of fluidity interpret intercultural practice as ever-changing and interrelational in meanings, place, and people. Already fixed understandings of how interculturality should appear do not leave space for this fluidity of cultural practice and can instead cause in their regulative forms conflicts and misunderstandings. Observing practices of diversity under the premise of flow, however, does not mean that there are no obstacles, no discontinuities stopping or rearranging the flow. *Flow-theory disturbs the idea of polarising those discontinuities into separate and disconnected elements of reason while letting practices and meaning appear as singular and hierarchical forms.* In this turn, flow, when used as a metaphor and 'tool' for understanding current societies, is not in need of one specific direction. It rather claims the constant need to highlight multi-directional perspectives and to concentrate on the 'sensed-sensing energy with multiple centres' which Thrift (2007) argues for.

Within language and culture learning the circulating webs of meaning do not only change the characteristics of the 'facts' we teach, but have an impact on the awareness of the tentative nature of knowledge in general. Language learners entering an unfamiliar environment do so as part of a quickly changing space in which knowledge of (antiquated) textbooks or public-media images might collide with the perception of reality. Teaching culture and language means in this regard to visualise the knowledge, information, and facts we teach as part of flow, and as 'identity' or 'culture' as fragmentary, transforming, and interrelational.

Finally, the term 'flow' is, in my view, fascinating because of three reasons: firstly, it is a creative rather than a technical term. Secondly, the metaphor of flow addresses the reader in a visual and sensual way while capturing transformation in an imaginative, though still conceptual form. And thirdly, the notion of a flowing movement symbolises current modernity in its quick pace and its often breath-taking speed – a thought which brings us to the next section concerning 'mobility'.

> While many choose to travel, others are forced to be 'on the move'. (Elliot
> & Urry 2010: ix)

The average global tour

The paradigm 'mobilities' both connects to the ideas limned in the section above while allowing us to focus a little while longer on the issues of movement and dynamic transformations within global times. It goes, however, beyond the argument of flow in its intrinsic essence of continuity, and sheds light on the discontinuities – namely borders and boundaries. But before heading towards these specific themes the term 'mobility' is in need of some clarification.

Being 'mobile'; being 'on the move' or simply 'moving' – phrases and expressions that circle around elements of movement are frequently used and suggest a revised perception and role for mobility in current societies. Thrift argues that

> human life is based on and in movement. [...] [w]e can think of the leitmotiv of movement as a desire for a presence which escapes a consciousness-centred core of self-reference; 'Rather than having to connect with a layer in our existence that simply wants the things of the world close to our skin' (Gumbrecht 2004: 106). (Thrift 2007: 5)

Elements of mobility relate to different types of description. What Papastergiadis (2006) would call 'criss-crossing', Bauman delineates as the "uppermost among coveted values" (Bauman 1988: 2, cited in Elliot & Urry 2010: 9), and Elliot and Urry identify as "the overarching narrative" of the twenty-first century (2010: 8). The 'mobilities' paradigm and the 'mobility turn' are central elements of spatial theory, and ask

> how all social entities, from a single household to large scale corporations, presuppose many different forms of actual and potential movement. The mobility turn connects the analysis of different forms of travel, transport and communications with the multiple ways in which economic and social life is performed and organized through time and across spaces. (Urry 2007: 6)

In one year, people travel about twenty-three billion kilometres and do so while travelling "further, faster and (for some at least) more frequently" (Elliot & Urry 2010: ix). Not only people travel more quickly: information, images, material and even life-worlds are all transported at a breath-taking speed and land directly in the (TV,- internet-) living rooms of our daily lives. John Urry, in his book, *Sociology Beyond Societies* (2000), calls for a re-

adjustment of the social to take account of the astonishing increase of physical travelling and the widened possibilities of joining mobilities 'at home' – through either the media or synchronising communication systems, such as the internet (Urry 2000).

Mobility itself has different dimensions, which Urry outlines with the help of four rubrics:

- something that moves or is capable of movement (mobile/handy, homes, persons, positive category);
- mobile as a mob, unruly crowd, not fully fixed within boundaries, needs to be tracked and socially regulated;
- social mobility, can you go up in the social ranking? (vertically); and
- longer sense of mobility: migration, semi-permanent geographical movement, in the sense of being on the move, in search of a better life, refugees (horizontally) (Urry 2003: 8-9).

In order to illustrate this range of mobilities, let us go on a small virtual journey and follow three examples of the 'mobile world' and of 'being on the move'. Off we go!

Journey One
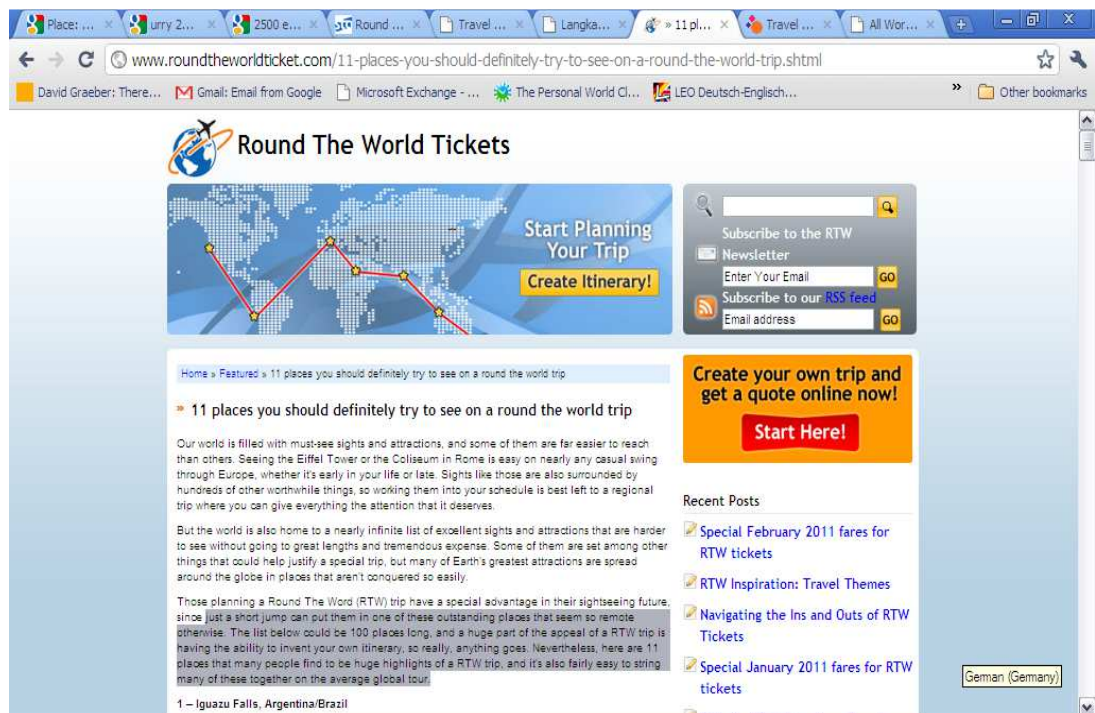
Figure 21: Journey one (http://www.roundtheworldticket.com, accessed February 5, 2011)
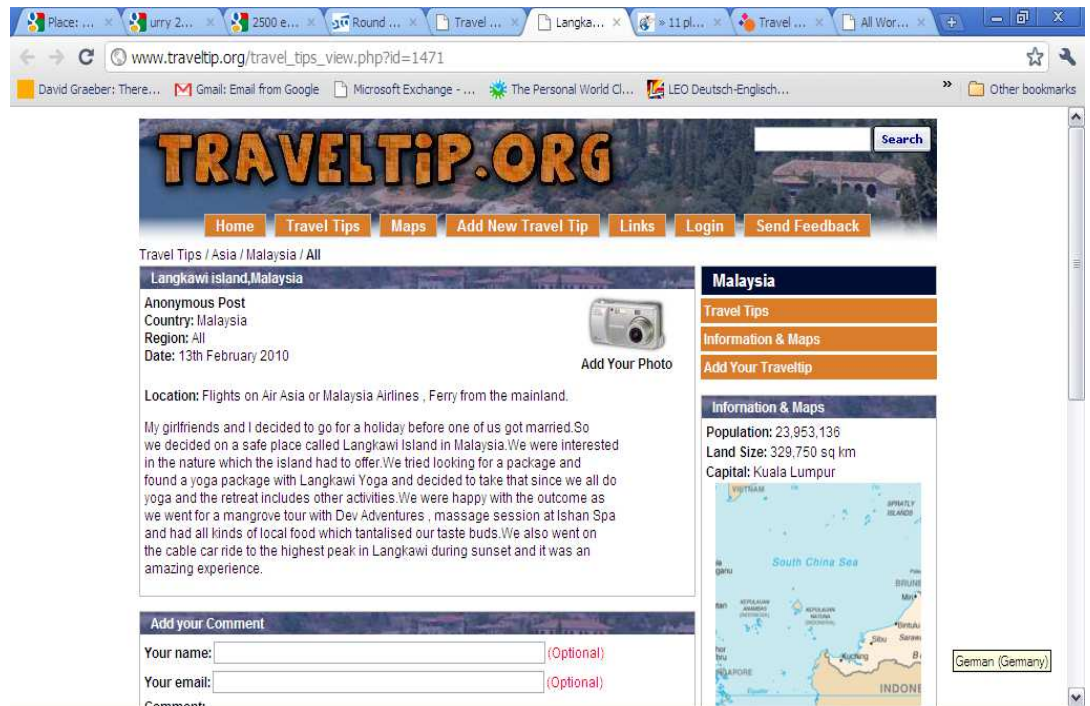
Journey two

Figure 22: Journey two (http://www.traveltip.org, accessed February 5, 2011)

Journey three

Figure 23: Journey three (http://www.worldtravelguide.net, accessed February 5, 2011)

Let me comment on some of the words and terms I picked up while looking through these three examples. Travelling is 'inspirational', travelling is 'hot'. Destinations are 'just a jump from home' and have an 'outcome' at the end. Travelling around the world makes you get 'inspired'. And if you want to go somewhere 'safe' you choose Indonesia, or follow the guide for the eleven most important sights in the world. The world. Not home, not the area we live in, our country of origin, or even the same continent. We reach further, aiming to create our own 'itinerary' through our chosen 'most popular' places in the world, hurrying to 'take control'. The world seems to be as close as the supermarket around the corner and we can go wherever we want, whenever we want. Almost.

'If I can stay I will. If I can find a job, I probably will stay. Just the Visa'

The websites above do create an image of the world as an open space for everybody; travelling around the whole continent appears as a form of natural, everyday experience. Whereas this impression might certainly be true for some people, Lilly's statement in the title of this section begs another perspective.

While physical borders are constantly becoming liquid in a virtual context, the actual political and geographical frontiers are getting narrower. The geo-political stretching of borders is followed by an increased awareness of the *inequality of movement*. Complex networks of borders and boundaries, visas and broader political restrictions form the framework of travelling, migration, tourism, business travels and so on. Whereas mobilities of leisure are mostly based on a certain freedom of decision, this does not account for the millions of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers who are forced to move and relocate in a world that is then not open at all. 'Dislocation' and 'displacement' are relatively new political terms, visualising the circulating and overlapping realities of mobility in often tragic and abstruse processes of migration. Additionally, an interconnected world creates as well a *need for movement and travelling* – be it the great job offer in another town, country or continent, a newfound (internet-) love far away, or the constant cycles of outsourcing employees and work forces. The important point here is: mobility concerns not only geographical movement, but is directly connected to social movement. Let me conclude this paragraph with a quote by Elliot and Urry:

> As the dream of open, fluid and free travel and movement becomes constrained by tightly regulated and locked-in systems of surveillance and securitization, in relationship to wars on terror and global warming, so increasingly that freedom of movement becomes unequally distributed.
> (Elliot & Urry 2010: 8-9)

A sense of belonging

Egypt is suddenly everywhere in the news. Friends I have not heard for ages send me small messages on *Facebook*, asking whether I am fine and still in Egypt. Politicians in the USA, Australia, Europe and many other places in the world have special meetings to speak about the happenings in Egypt. The currency of Australia has been sinking slightly in the last days because Egyptians demonstrate on 'Tahrir Square' in Cairo. Not only the importance of the Suez-Canal, but also the geographical closeness to Israel and the political relations to the USA are highlighted frequently. Not to forget the thousands of Egyptians who applied for emigration and want to leave the country.

Anthony Elliot and John Urry highlight in their book, *Mobile Lives* (2010), the "new possibilities and risks for embodied experiences of movement, as well as new ways for engaging with culture, taste and social contestation" (Elliot & Urry 2010: 10). Those 'new ways of engaging' have an important impact on intercultural language learning. Being mobile holds risks, not only physical but emotional risks as well. The pulling between place and space or between moving, resting, contesting and embodying carries an emotional cost in a way that reshuffles feelings of belonging. This process can come along with a critical awareness and engagement with elements of risk and security in mobile times (see Chapter Ten). Let us listen to Sarah, who, after her exchange year in Argentina, went on to study one year in Mexico.

> *I studied migration, and they were talking about, and seeing, migration from the perspective of a country that's an exporter of immigrants. And the teacher, he was fascinating, and he took us through all different types of factors, factors in people moving up the States. It was all Mexico border crossing. It's unbelievably sad and really confronting, but it changes your perspective. And coming back to Australia and hearing the political rhetoric about immigrants, and people are just so ignorant and don't understand anything about it, and I found it changed, broadened, my perspective so much. I saw what it was like for people who are immigrating, and they are illegal immigrants, and they are not doing it because they just, it's not the destination, it's the place they are coming from that's important, and they, it's, they sacrifice their whole lives and they go through these horrible ordeals just because they have nothing. It's so tragic, and it's like the people in the rich countries don't want to give it up, but that's exactly what it is. It's a problem if they can't just open the borders. But then again if they did maybe there would be a flux at the beginning and then it would calm down and even out, I don't know, there are that many Mexicans over there anyway.*

Papastergiadis reminds us that there is a "new challenge of how to deal with radical instability that comes with encountering cultures whose trajectories may intersect in a given city but whose propensity is guided by multiple and non-synchronous co-ordinates" (Papastergiadis 2006: 13). The transforming senses of place and space that are brought together with those instabilities based within intercultural encounter must be considered when conceptualising intercultural learning or teaching. Themes including the 'mobile backgrounds' (or 'multilocality', see Chapter Nine) of language learners, the contestation of space, and feelings of belonging give the learner a chance to relate to the balances and imbalances of the intercultural field, its borders and boundaries – even if blurred and at times inaccessible.

Networks

Figure 24: Networks

Whenever we look at life, we look at networks. (Capra 1996: 81)

In the previous section we have seen that what constitutes 'the' global is a flowing entanglement of interconnected and constantly emerging patterns of exchange and mobility. In this section I will highlight the centrality of 'actor-networks' and 'complexity theory', both of which further our understanding of the intercultural field and the transformation of relationships. It is the metaphor of a 'network' which indicates the development of a *non-Westernised* and *non-directional* concept. Observing intercultural exchange not from one centre, but from multiple locations, is an aspect I will also emphasise in this section.

The demonstrations have been going on for one week and things have changed since the first demonstrators were on Cairo's streets. Not only have the internet and mobile networks come back, Mubarak also announced he would not make himself a candidate for the upcoming elections in September this year. The opinions start to drift apart. Stop or continue the demonstrations? For one week nobody has gone to work, food is getting rare, thieves and thugs are making the town insecure, banks and cash machines stay closed. The whole country is on hold.

An influential theory that places networks at the centre of its premises is 'actor network theory' (ANT), an approach tracing back to Latour's work in the late 1980s and later developing perspectives (for example Law & Hassard 1999). As implied by the name, the key figures in this theoretical body are the actors and networks that deny in their ever-changing formations the subtle binaries of traditional social theory, such as nature-human or human-technology. ANT addresses such binaries within the framework of interrelated networks made of simultaneous flows of people, objects, ideas, images, money, and so forth. Van Loon explains:

> The primary focus of ANT is on understanding patterns of 'ordering' which we recognize as 'structures' or 'organizations' of ideas and matter without relying on an a priori (Kantian) dualism of subjects and objects. That is to say, ANT does not presuppose that order, or perhaps better continuity, is a reflection of some reality 'out there', but instead that it is the consequence of a (temporary) stabilization of a particular set of forces that can be conceptualized as a network. (van Loon 2006: 309)

It becomes obvious that a variety of thoughts already discussed in the previous two sections of this chapter are recurring themes in ANT. Ideas pertaining to the circularity and interrelated characteristics of networks, and to *instable systems* grounded through network-stabilising regularities, sound familiar to themes emphasised by ANT. The premises of circulation and transformation gesture toward the notion that "nothing is necessarily fixed" (Law 2008: 148) and create new challenges for researching the social in general. Law develops this thought as follows:

> What might replace the foundations that have been so cheerfully undone? Is it possible to say anything about network-stabilizing regularities, or are we simply left with describing cases, case by case? Actor Network Theory 1990 responded to this challenge in the only non-foundational way it could, by exploring the logics of network architecture and looking for configurations that might lead to relative stability. (ibid.)

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In order to find out what these stabilising forces and configurations look like, ANT, as an analytical instrument, focuses on the how instead of the why – working at odds with a majority of sociological research (ibid.). Van Loon identifies the focus of ANT-research in this vein as "network*ing* as a continuous practice of enrolment, translation and redefinition" (van Loon 2006: 310, original italics). In short: ANT, or network theory, aims to understand how social realities (as entanglements of ideas, objects, technologies, people, and so forth) are interdependent within a complex and dynamic global network and performed along and across borders. Doing so means to observe and approach phenomena *within* their networks and (material) practices in order to shed light on how such networks hold together or drift apart:

> Many sociologies have little sense of how the social is done or holds together. They ignore the material practices that generate the social: ships, sailors, currents. They simply move too quickly to a non-material version of the social. (Law 2008: 148)

ANT sheds light on an important element of space: the material. The aim of thinking objects differently highlights the "social connections within networks, and connections mediated by various material worlds, such as telephones, media, computer networks, etc." (Urry 2003: 52). Networks in this case are simultaneously material and semiotic. They order, disorder, or reorder meaning and visualise the emerging interfaces of space and the social. Virtual space, especially, and the impact of technology lie at the heart of ANT, which highlight the interdependencies of non-human and human agency. However, there has been a turn in ANT to overemphasise the role of objects and 'non-human-agency' that has created an impasse for considering matters of affectivity in research. Yael Navaro-Yashin explains this in her article, *Affective Spaces, Melancholic Objects: Ruination and the Production of Anthropological Knowledge* (2009), the following:

> As significant as its contribution is to social theory and ethnographic methodology, ANT by its rhetoric, makes it difficult to imagine reconciliation with other theoretical approaches that include a consideration of (non-essentialist) human capacities for imagination and affectivity. (Navaro-Yashin 2009: 10)

In this thesis I am building on this statement by Navaro-Yashin while aiming to investigate those interconnections of affect and space that are characterised by an emerging and relational nature and impact intercultural learning strategies of language learners so crucially. What I hoped to illustrate in this section is that networks are made of overlapping nodes (connections) within a range of dimensions (for example spatial, human or

technical), and are holding together or shifting apart within a complex array of material practices, affects, and circulating meanings. This combined form of an external and internal perspective redirects experience from the external world, and vice versa, as Tuan clarifies: "Seeing and thinking clearly reach out beyond the self" (Tuan 2001: 9). This perspective on experience in situ helps then to unfold emerging structures of *being* intercultural within the complex networks of the intercultural field.

New spatialities of feeling

I mentioned before how network theory focuses more on the how than on the why of interactions, and I follow this now with a focus on affect and its relationship to experience and space. Urry, while referring to the work of Capra, points out:

> There is a new 'structure of feeling' that complexity approaches both signify and enhance. Such an emergent structure of feeling involves a greater sense of contingent openness to people, corporations and societies, of the unpredictability of outcomes in time-space, of a charity towards objects and nature, of the diverse and non-linear changes in relationships, households and persons, and of the sheer increase in the hyper-complexity of products, technologies and socialities. (Urry 2006: 111)

What Urry describes here as a 'new structure of feeling' is described by Hannerz (1992: 9) in a similar way as "new modes of experiencing and thinking." What follows is a short overview of the 'affective turn' which positions the emergence of those new modes and structures of feeling, experiencing, and thinking right in the centre of its conceptual body.

Michael Hardt, in the book, *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (2007), argues that:

> A focus on affects certainly does draw attention to the body and emotions, but it also introduces an important shift. The challenge of the perspective of the affects resides primarily in the synthesis it requires. This is, in the first place, because affects refer equally to the body and the mind and, in the second, because they involve both reason and the passions. Affects require us, as the term suggests, to enter the realm of causality, but they offer a complex view of causality because the affects belong simultaneously to both sides of the causal relationship. They illuminate, in other words, both our power to affect the world around us and our power to be affected by it, along with the relationship between these two powers. (Hardt 2007: ix)

Going beyond the frame of subjectivity, the affective turn covers: a) the critique of academic-discursive strategies; and b) the pulling apart of supposedly opposite categories, as, for instance, 'body' and 'mind'. The first point, the critique of academic-discursive strategies, is closely linked to Nigel Thrift and his influential book, *Non-Representational*

Theory. Space. Politics. Affect (2007). Thrift critiques the focus on 'representation' within cultural theory of the past several decades by pointing to the dominance of interest in texts, semiotics, and discourse, and highlights the role of affect in his suggestions to open research toward more non-linguistic dimensions. His main object of inquiry is to discern "what is present in experience" (Thrift 2007: 2) – in relation to affect. Navaro-Yashin explains:

> Most theoretical work on affectivity, before this particular 'affective turn', has focused on the inner world or interiority of the human subject, coined 'subjectivity'. In the psychoanalytic tradition, for example, affect has been synonymous with subjectivity (in spite of the fact that subjectivity was studied as conflicted and split) (Borch-Jakobson 1992). Emergent theories of affect hijack the traditional subject matter of psychoanalysis and illustrate that affectivity can be studied in sites and spaces beyond the scope of the 'human subject', his or her 'subjectivity', or 'psyche'. (Navaro-Yashin 2009: 12)

The second argument, the pulling apart of supposedly opposite categories through paradigms, adds to the first argument that a subject-centred approach does not have to be opposed to an object-centred approach. The development of theory and understanding, with the help of paradigms, often uses *negation* as an epistemological tool, "as if one cancels the other and if one had to choose between camps of theoretical approaches" (Navaro-Yashin 2009: 14). Conceptualising affect within a spatial framework focuses instead on the relational aspects of body and mind, subject and object, space and affect.

In the field of language and culture education, research about affect has been focused solely on psychoanalytical approaches, on 'subjectivity' and the 'psyche'. In *Affect and Language Learning* (1999), Jane Arnold and Douglas Brown argue for the implementation of affect into language education research:

> Heron (1992) has developed a model he calls multi-modal learning, which refers to four modes of learning from experience: action, conceptual, imaginal, emotional. If we adapt this to language learning in particular, at the top of the pyramid would be the action mode, 'learning through doing', or developing the basic skills. Next, the conceptual mode would involve learning 'about' the language. The imaginal mode would take in the imagination and the intuitive understanding of the scheme of the language as a while. At the bottom, the emotional mode would deal with the awareness of the different ways our feelings influence our language learning. [...] We suggest that positive waves will spread in many directions from a greater commitment in language teaching to the growth of emotional competence. (Arnold & Brown 1999: 23-24)

While the main focus of the book lies with the impact of affect on learning and teaching within the classroom, the approach accumulates theoretical, empirical, humanistic and experiential aspects of affective language learning in order to guide the classroom practice. However, it rarely considers the role of space, or the 'outside world', and its impact on everyday learning experiences in an everyday environment. The role of the body and processes of embodiment (which are central elements of the affective turn) are crucial for the understanding of intercultural learning (Path Three and especially Chapter Ten will cover this point extensively). In short, the affective turn opens the gate for the observation of new 'spatialities of feeling' (Thrift 2007) and transformed modes of experiencing within the complex and networked arrangements of the intercultural field. Let me now turn towards complexity and its role within network-theory.

Networks as a trope for complexity

It is 8am in the morning in Melbourne and I am sitting in front of the TV, a camera in my hand, waiting for my partner to appear in the *ABC* breakfast programme to give an 'inner perspective' of the happenings in Egypt and to speak as well about his experiences as a member of the oppositional party in Egypt. When the talk starts the questions follow as expected: "Will Egypt become a second Iran?", "What will be the effect of the vacuum if Mubarak leaves?", or "Will the Muslim Brotherhood take over?" The interview is going fine but it is impossible to show the whole dimensionality of the current situation in only five minutes. There is no time to speak about the flourishing political discourses (which were dead for nearly thirty years), the volunteering doctors, the people who clean 'Tahrir Square', or the many Egyptians who spend their nights in self-organised committees on streets to protect their suburbs from thugs. Despite the still desperate situation, we are getting a bit euphoric: Egyptians seem to have found a new self-confidence and something even more important – hope.

Van Loon explains the relationship of networks and complexity as follows:

> Network is a device for organizing and conceptualizing non-linear complexity. Networks problematize boundaries and centrality but intensify our ability to think in terms of flows. The usage of the concept of network is in the first instance metaphorical. It is a trope. (van Loon 2006: 307)

This 'non-linear complexity', van Loon identifies as the key element of the network-trope, raises questions about the form and understanding of what we call 'complexity'. Urry gives details:

> Each hybrid system seems to exhibit similar non-linear, networked properties often moving unpredictably and irreversibly away from points of equilibrium, as Capra (2001) argues. And complexity itself is a global system, adapting and co-evolving to other powerful global hybrids that are also roaming the world and changing the very environment within which it operates. (Urry 2006: 115)

The turning away from the idea of a one-directional and linear movement of development is central to complexity theory. It does not only highlight the relativity of a centre (these can be political, religious, economic or cultural centres) but abandons the *privileging of centres at the expense of peripheries* (van Loon 2006). Networks, van Loon writes, "are marked by multiplicity" and a "holistic unity of diversity of connections" (ibid.). This 'diversity of connections' that reshuffles concepts and perceptions of order and hierarchy is at the core of this study as a grounding premise for concepts about intercultural learning. Often, common descriptions of diversity do not fit with the trope of networks. Our famous constellation of 'self' and 'other' seems to carry a notion of linearity and, in its incarnated binary, a movement away from connections and towards segregation.

Thinking in boundaries as such is more or less a product of already 'known' structures and understandings that are constantly reproduced by the media, mainstream education, and traditional academic research (as I will develop in Chapter Seven). To step outside these known structural and institutional frames means subsequently to focus more on the multiplicity of centres and an understanding of 'self' and 'other' as circling in a complex network of equal epistemologies of the essence of life. This, as Urry states, can have crucial effects: "Complexity thus investigates emergent, dynamic and self-organizing systems that coevolve and adapt in ways that heavily influence the probabilities of later events" (Urry 2006: 114). From this perspective, a focus on the emergence of dynamic patterns and their impact on the perception and creation of reality (see as well Massey 2005) challenges essentialist and positivist views of the world and highlights instead its complex and 'messy' character. Considering complexity as a crucial element of the intercultural field means then to be aware of the 'unavailability of absolute knowledge', as Graeber puts it: "One could also make the argument that it's this very unavailability of absolute knowledge which makes a commitment to optimism a moral imperative" (Graeber 2004: 10).

In the first path of this thesis, I have shown the difficulties in describing 'the' intercultural and also highlighted the tendency to perceive and display matters of being 'inter' or 'in between' cultures as problematic and conflict-based. It is at this stage that I would like to reconnect to these statements, claiming that the optimism Graeber describes as a 'moral imperative' needs to be implemented in theory and research about interculturality. One way of doing this lies in the theoretical alternatives we have presented: by focusing on connections outwith the realms of absolute knowledge and by uncovering 'heavy' oppositions (such as 'self' and 'other' or 'West' and 'Islam') as hierarchical and instrumental and as such highly unnecessary constructs. *This thesis is based on the understanding that oppositional terms are co-implicated and that the hierarchy of oppositional terms, in which language is structured, needs to be overturned* (Lather 2006).

PATH THREE

Where do we go from here?

Nagoya

I don't need to be careful
with saying where I am
coming from

(Wei)

I met Wei in an intensive Spanish class in Melbourne. We happened to take the same tram back to the downtown after finishing our language class, and discovered that we both just arrived in Melbourne and did not know a lot about the town at this stage. This connected us and we soon found similar patterns in our lives: We had both come to Melbourne to join our partners who had found jobs in Australia and we were both working on a PhD, although Wei already finished her degree the year before. We started to meet regularly for coffee, hot chocolate or crêpes – discovering the culinary world of Melbourne.

Wei comes from the Philippines, her partner is American, and both met when Wei was on an internship in the US. Wei studied in Japan and spent six years in Nagoya, a city she didn't know before, but, as Wei says, "I didn't care, I just wanted to go abroad." She explains her first impressions as follows:

> *It is a really advanced society in terms of efficiency and transportation. One moment I always remember is [that] the taxi drivers are wearing suits. Taxi drivers in the Philippines wear like... you know? But riding a taxi in Japan is something very expensive to do. And then, troops of men in black, in suits. You feel like they can drown you... what is the word? [...] I think it's a very busy, workaholic society.*

Wei has a strong feeling for her place in the world and critically reflects on, for instance, issues of visas and social mobility. Wei went to Japan to do her PhD but did not feel happy within the society and 'resisted' learning Japanese. Having done a six-month language class, "which [she] did not really embrace," she says "I think I resisted the language. I resisted because it is very difficult [laughs], and also there was no motivation because there is no incentive. There is no grading, no credit grading. If you learn the language or not, it's OK, it's up to you." Most of Wei's friends spoke English and she describes her daily life as "an environment with a lot of foreigners and the common language is always English and that's at school and in the university, it is all in English." Her resistance towards learning the language, Wei says, "is more of my resistance to the society. Because the society is very exclusive. [...] And I never really embraced the language because I feel, I don't want to be here for long." We move on with the following discussion:

> U   *But do you feel excluded because you don't speak the language in Japan?*
> W   *How should I say? Lots of foreigners who speak the language very well are still excluded. But in my case, in fact, I feel they respect you more when you speak English perfect. Other than I try to speak Japanese...*
> U   *You did not feel encouraged to speak Japanese?*
> W   *I don't know, it's a mix. It's a very tough question. Because a lot of my friends would say, for example, if you are driving and police is stopping you, never speak Japanese because you get in trouble. They will say, 'Oh you are stupid, you are like this, you don't know the system'. But if you pretend you don't know anything and just speak English, they will protect you.*
> U   *Really? Because you are a foreigner?*
> W   *Yes, like you have an excuse to commit mistakes. You don't understand anything. But if you try to speak the language, you are trying so hard to be like us, but you are not. You are just not. But [...] they are very exclusive so they always resist foreigners. [...]*
> U   *So you can live there for some years and you still feel not 'inside'?*
> W   *I've never been integrated to the society. No, never.*

Wei continues explaining that most of her "foreign friends" came to Japan "because you earn very good money in Japan" and "it is very easy to make a living." However, she explains further, "the collective concept of the Japanese is very strong and their national identity is very tight":

> W   *In fact, there are two words, which you need to understand. Foreigner in Japan has two words: 'gaikoukujin' – that is the formal word. 'Jin' is the person, so you are the person from outside the country – 'gaikoukujin'. And 'gaijin' is the informal word. But 'gaijin' has a different connotation, it means more 'an alien', you are an outsider.*
>
> U   *And which term do they use?*
>
> W   *The formal one, because Japan is very formal. But when they are upset with you, they say 'gaijin'.*

Wei is aware that being from the Philippines has a particular meaning in Japan and is connected to many stereotypes about Filipinos, which she contrasts with her status in Melbourne:

> *Because a lot of Filipinos are hiding, you know they go to Japan and stay and hide. [...] We call them 'japayuki'. 'Japayuki' are Filipino entertainers and dancers, and they are usually, you know, in the nightclubs, so they are hired to do that. So even in my country they are asking, 'What are you doing there? Because Japan is not associated as a place to study, it is a place to work, to dance. If I'm telling people I'm from the Philippines I always make sure [to tell people] I'm a student here, because then they respect you. In my case, I'm not really discriminated [against] the university where I'm from is sort-of respected in the society. So if you are student in that university, then you are OK.*

Wei moves on to reflect on her current situation in Melbourne:

> *But here, [in Melbourne, U.W.], if I'm saying, 'I'm from the Philippines', no, no, no stereotypes. So I don't need to be careful with saying where I'm coming from, because obviously I'm coloured. I met another Filipino who was born and raised here and he can barely speak my language because he is basically Australian and was born here. But people always ask him 'Where are you from?' – 'I'm from Australia'. 'No, no, where have you been from?' And those are the people who feel always discriminated, because, 'How can you be Australian, you are coloured?' A lot of people do that. And I have to admit that I do that myself: 'No, no, no, where are you from, what's your ethnicity?' [laughs].*

When first arriving in Melbourne, Wei felt much more immersed in the society, because she was not "visibly different" like in Japan. At the moment, Wei still only has a tourist visa for Australia, which makes her feel insecure and unable "to start the job hunt" and a new life. However, she says:

> *I don't really feel discriminated at all, I perfectly understand why they do not allow people to work without a working visa you know. So far I feel Australia is really flexible. There are a lot of stereotypes about the country, but in terms of the government policy I got the visa far easier than I got the visa for the UK and the US. If the country is open and welcomes foreign skills from other countries then it would not be difficult for other foreigners to co-exist, because they would not feel alienated or different. So if you are in a society and you see the diversity, I think that is a very good thing. Probably if you are in the outback and you are the only coloured person then it would feel excluded. I think this is one thing to invite people to stay.*

As we reach the end of our walk, I ask Wei about her ways of balancing learning and being intercultural. Wei tells me that she is Catholic and has a strong spirituality that she considers to be a "licence to talk to God," a form of "self-therapy" to make sense of experiences and "feel better." She mentions that her spirituality "is with her" and "not bound on society," and refers to the church as a sacred place for her, a "familiar place" that gives time and place for reflection.

For Filipinos the church is one way to meet other Filipinos, because it is so difficult to miss a church without a Filipino inside. If you want to have a community... many Filipinos always join churches because Filipinos are one of the most globalised people in the world. I know this because I read it in a ranking [...] one of the most globalised people are the Chinese and then Indians and then the Filipinos and maybe the Brazilians. We are everywhere. But the Filipinos survival mechanism is to find a church because we find our community there.

From the notebook: Wei's walk not only exemplifies the instrumental dimension of speaking a particular language, but illustrates the influential character of the learner's environment on the intercultural language learning process. The positive reaction in Japan towards foreigners who speak English fluently, the predominant usage of the English language amongst her friends and colleagues, and her resistance to Japanese society lead Wei to feel like an 'outsider' and to 'reject' the acquisition of the Japanese language. Another feature, which permeate Wei's walk is her journey of moving in between several kinds of borders. Not only the border of the language and her status as a 'gaikoukujin' (person from outside the country) in Japan but her very own nationality re-enforce borders of a political and social nature. Wei struggles with the common understanding of Filipinos as 'dancers', who come to Japan merely on the basis of 'earning good money'. Though there is an element of truth in this image, Wei's situation is different and she feels in need to 'make sure [that] I am a student here, then they respect you'. This almost invisible border of exclusion becomes more tangible, if it comes to the current configurations of geo-political space, which crucially impact Wei's possibilities for movement as dependent on the granting of visas and working permissions on a global scale.

Chapter Seven: The weaving of a methodology
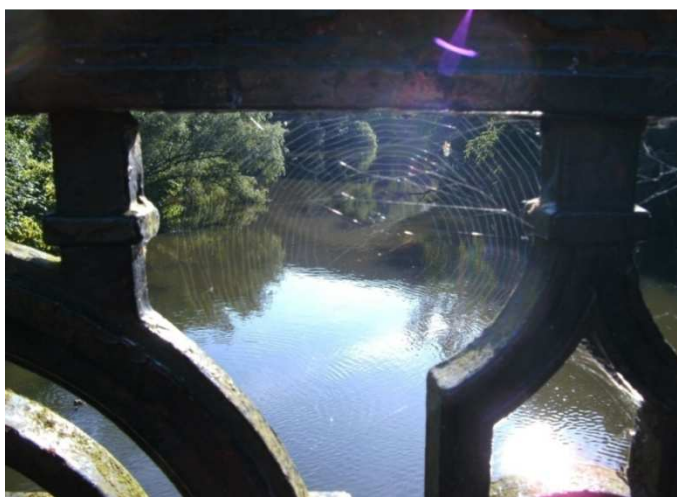
Figure 25: The weaving of a methodology

> Think of building, or of making more generally, as a modality of weaving. As building is to dwelling, so making is to weaving: to highlight the first term of each pair is to see the processes of production consumed by their final products, whose origination is attributed not to the improvisatory creativity of labour that works things out as it goes along, but to the novelty of determinate ends conceived in advance. (Ingold 2011: 10)

Where are we going from here? At the beginning of our journey I highlighted the methodological orientation underlying this thesis and raised the question of how spatial perspective impacts on research about intercultural language learning and its methodological frameworks? The current and following two chapters will answer this question by describing the processes and guiding premises for the creation of a spatial method for intercultural language learning. This method will be presented as a form of finding, and will 'weave' theory with practice to synchronise theoretical positions with research methods and visualise the processuality of the methodological practice. At this stage, what we are looking for is a methodology that is able to follow the multiple traces of intercultural learning, its flowing, mobile and networked aspects as well as its individuality of experience.

> My hope is that we can learn to live in a way that is less dependent on the automatic. To live more in and through slow method, or vulnerable method, or quiet method. Multiple method. Modest method. Uncertain method. Diverse method. Such are the senses of method that I hope to see grow in and beyond social science. (Law 2004: 11)

Let me start this methodology section with a small meditation on the term itself. The word 'methodology', as used in modern times, dates back to the fifteenth century and stems from the Latin word 'methodus', meaning "mode of proceeding." The identical Greek word 'methodus' originally stood for "pursuit of knowledge" before it was commonly understood as "systematic arrangement" and as a "special form of procedure or characteristic set of procedures [...] as a mode of investigation and inquiry, or of teaching and exposition" (OED online). With this denotation at the forefront, a methodology is a set of methods and philosophical principles that underlie a coherent piece of work. However, a closer look at the Greek word 'methodus' reveals another element of meaning. The term consists of two parts – 'meta' (after, behind, or with), and 'hodos' (way, path, or travel) (ibid.). Understood in this original and de-contextualised way, the term 'method' means to 'follow a journey, a way', as well as a 'seeking for', and a general way of moving that is not bound to one single form.

I am starting my methodology chapter with the origins of the word 'method' in order to indicate the general direction I am arguing for, namely the openness of method towards movement and transformation. Understanding method in this vein suggests an open method which furthermore argues for practices as a general focus of the research. What steps are required for research into practice, transformation and movement?

I have argued for an understanding of time and space as co-existent partners within global practices of diversity. In Chapter Five and Six I developed four major spatial-temporal processes: a) the stretching of social relations; b) an increasing intensity of exchanges; c) the speeding up of global flows; and d) the impact propensity of global interconnectedness. These transformations not only have an enormous impact on the way we live in this world, but engender a need to *recreate the methods we use* in order to understand the 'partial connections', as Strathern (2004) describes. This transformation of method is anything but a quick or straightforward process. It very much starts by raising questions about the purpose and focus of methods per se, and interrogating assumptions of normativity and the

understanding of reality. Law argues in this sense for "a way of thinking about method that is broader, looser, more generous, and in certain respects quite different to that of many of the conventional understandings" (Law 2004: 4).

To understand method as a 'seeking for' and type of research about different forms of movement is to take one step towards opening up methodology to networks, flows and mobilities. Underneath the call for a reconfiguration of method towards networks and mobilities is the attempt to overcome the idea of method as a tool to seek the "definite, the repeatable, the more or less stable" (Law 2004: 6). While simultaneously arguing that the world is much more *indefinite*, "vague, diffuse or unspecific, slippery, emotional, ephemeral, elusive or indistinct" (Law 2004: 2) social science research attempts nothing more than the capture of those same elements which are "complex, diffuse and messy" (ibid.). Let me describe this in more detail.

Researching mess

Figure 26: Researching mess

It might be confusing to read the word 'mess'; however, highlighting some central insights and effects of 'mess' and 'chaos' (which ties in with complexity theory, see Chapter Six), seems necessary to me in order to elude those forms of method that recreate images of stability, definite knowledge, and 'cleanliness'. As Law explains:

> I find that I am at odds with method as this is usually understood. This, it seems to me, is mostly about guarantees. Sometimes I think of it as a form of hygiene. Do your methods properly. Eat your epistemological greens. Wash your hands after mixing with the real world. Then you will lead the good research life. Your data will be clean. Your findings warrantable. The

product you will produce will be pure. It will come with the guarantee of a long shelf-life. (Law 2007: 595)

Those 'guarantees' Law highlights in his winking way are not just side effects of carefully organised steps for the researcher. Rather, they uncover a much deeper sense of method: the human desire for security and an understanding of reality as universal or true. It is in this sense that Law identifies the impact of 'mess' as a descriptor of the current state of the world, and derives from this statement a guideline for research that needs to be "messy and heterogeneous" (Law 2007: 595) on the one side, and characterised by a "disciplined *lack* of clarity" (Law 2007: 597, original italics) on the other side. What does that mean for social science methods in general and for intercultural language research in particular?

To begin with, it is a *critique of universalism* and of "the idea that true knowledge derives from universal criteria that can and should be applied in all relevant contexts" (Law 2004: 162). It is also a critique of a realism that assumes "that whatever is out there is substantially independent of our actions and especially of our perceptions" (Law 2007: 599). What is indicated in those two rejections is the impossibility of representing 'something' as definite. As outlined earlier, reality is not stable in its representative sense, but is instead characterised by fluidity and constant transformation. This argument comes in line with Law's statement about his research object as a "shape shifting reality" that is moving and following multiple trajectories with intrinsically inconsistent ways, making it impossible to define problems within a "single form" (Law 2007: 598). Law adds:

> If much of reality is ephemeral and elusive, then we cannot expect single answers. If the world is complex and messy, then at least some of the time we're going to have to give up on simplicities. But one thing is sure: if we want to think about the messes of reality at all then we're going to have to teach ourselves to think, to practice, to relate, and to know in new ways. We will need to teach ourselves to know some of the realities of the world using methods unusual to or unknown in social science. (Law 2004: 2)

Before exploring those dimensions of method, which in Law's words are unusual and unknown within social science, I would like to come back to the critique of the normativity of current social science methods. Law argues that the standard methods currently practiced are not adapted to research ephemeral and indefinite realities beyond representations (Law 2004). Alongside that, thinking of method as a set of fixed rules and procedural steps has an impact on the social world in the sense that knowledge does not evolve in a vacuum or produce a vacuum. Rather, *method impacts on reality, and different methods evoke different realities.*

Law argues that current research methods have been constructed in a specific historical context that leaves its current traces in "rather excessively general claims" (Law 2004: 5). He gives an example:

> If you want to understand reality properly then you need to follow the methodological rules. Reality imposes those rules on us. If we fail to follow them then we will end up with substandard knowledge that is distorted or does not represent what is purportedly describes. (ibid.)

Thinking in this manner has a huge effect on the circularity of method and the creation of knowledge. Research that does not critically reflect or question given methodological steps in the frame of each study can create knowledge that is valid mainly because of its methodological procedure, but not as a reflection of reality. Parker, while referring to Law, points out that this leads to nothing less than a collusion of method and paradigm:

> The epistemological objection is to the collusion of method and paradigm: the method is designed to collect the data that the paradigm distinguishes as valid. It is this circularity that is problematic: a circularity whereby knowledge is seen to be valid because it is produced by methods that are validated on the grounds that they produce instances of such 'reality'. (Parker 2008: 263)

I would like to highlight the importance of the last point while reformulating it as an argument: methods, traditionally understood and practiced, can reinforce fixed, rigid and stable imaginations of reality and directly contribute to circulating images of singularity (of for instance culture) as norms of knowledge and thinking. In this light, method needs to be understood as an exploration of the multiplicity of centres, ways, and journeys as well as their interdependencies in order to seek a "far wider range of possibilities" (Law 2004: 10). Such a method does not solely base its premises on the correspondent research paradigm, but rather values its capacity for an active participation in the making and weaving of realities.

However, this type of method is not easy to enact and needs both a very careful demonstration of methodological alternatives together with an almost radical change in the foci of the research processes. Let me start by suggesting an alternative understanding of method as an act of 'crafting' in the next section.

Please have a look on the following photograph of my preferred location when writing letters.

Figure 27: Crafting

The image of writing a letter is in many points related to the image of writing a thesis, in that both emphasise specific ways of working that imply notions of handicraft: the feeling of a good cup of coffee, working with the hands and mind, listening to music, and the wish to create something individual and meaningful within a particular time and for a particular audience. This process can be captured in the word 'crafting'. To craft something means to linger, to dwell on a specific notion and theme, within a specific period of time. Crafting means furthermore the usage of tools in order to create an opus, a putting together of different elements in an artistic and sensitive way. Crafting, finally, means to capture one state of reality and to hold it against the grain of the ever changing flux of the world (see Sennett 2009).

In order to craft a method, one weaves methodology with an open framework for the research design. What does 'open' in this sense mean? In a nutshell, it means that the *method emerges from the field* and leaves space for changes and adjustments 'on the way' in order to align the research tools as closely as possible with the aim and background of the study. Crafting in this sense means to go beyond the pure collection of data, and to work creatively with the research methodology while trying, dismissing, adjusting and readjusting methods in the flow of the process. Crafting a method corresponds in this way with what Law terms a 'method assemblage' (Law 2004), a creative dealing with absences and presences:

> (Social) science should also be trying to make and know realities that are vague and indefinite *because much of the world is enacted in that way.* In which case it is in need of a broader understanding of its methods. These, I suggest, may be understood as methods assemblages, that is as enactments of relations that make some things (representations, objects, apprehensions) present 'in-here', whilst making others absent 'out-there'. The 'out-there' comes in two forms: as manifest absence (for instance as what is represented); or, and more problematically, as a hinterland of indefinite, necessary, but hidden Otherness. (Law 2004: 14, original italics)

Finding out about the constellation of 'absences' and 'presences' not only gives insight into how the major themes of a research project emerge and move in their shapes, forms and connections, but also connects with our theoretical framework of networks, flows and mobilities. This focus on forms of movement points out method's ability to capture not only the dynamics of the research object, but to incorporate the dynamics of the research process itself (with both its fluxes or instabilities) into the research design. Yet how, specifically, can this be done?

Choosing an *explorative* research design is convenient in this situation, because it considers research objects that have "no clear, single set of outcomes" (Baxter & Jack 2008: 548). Although this refers again to the idea of an open research framework, the direction of argumentation points towards an *inductive* approach*, which means that the hypotheses emerges from the field and not vice versa. In intercultural learning, meaning emerges from the process of intercultural exchange, and happens gradually, with steps forward, steps backward, and a lot of lingering 'in between'. It is exactly those varied forms of learning that explorative research tries to capture while gradually building itself within an open research framework, with the researcher following the paths and ways of intercultural learning. This approach sheds light on the different ways in which methodology refers back to 'reality', and aims furthermore to present the research in a transparent way.

Creativity

What is central to a method assemblage is creativity. Crafting a method asks for creativity as a central element as well a step towards the process of re-creating methods for the ephemeral and the fluid. Including creativity in the research process means widening methods with regard to research foci and multiple dimensions. Anna Bagnoli, in her article, *Beyond the Standard Interview: The Use of Graphic Elicitation and Arts-Based Methods* (2009), explains:

In most qualitative research interviews are a standard method of data collection. The use of interviews relies on language as the privileged medium for the creation and communication of knowledge. However, our daily experience is made of a multiplicity of dimensions, which include the visual and the sensory, and which are worthy of investigation but cannot always be easily expressed in words, since not all knowledge is reducible to language. (Bagnoli 2009: 547)

Being creative in this sense means to include *non-linguistic* aspects of experiences by employing, for instance, visual methods, such as photographs or drawings, which can then be the basis of further research. At the core of creative research should be the aim to include the participants' "own preferred modalities of expression" (Bagnoli 2009: 549), as well as the creativity of the researcher. Including the expressive styles of both participants and researcher in the research process means to include creative and open tasks in the research which "may encourage thinking in non-standard ways, avoiding the clichés and 'ready-made' answers" (Bagnoli 2009: 566) during interviews and observations. Including creativity in the research process is also an expression for playing with the role of researcher and participant. Asking participants, for instance, to take pictures about the research object gives a part of the responsibility to the participant and leaves the ongoing process partially open. Bagnoli (2009: 566) describes this emphasis on shared participation as "allowing them [the participants, U.W.] to guide me in the interview by highlighting the important dimensions of experiences from their own perspective."

In doing so, the role of researcher and participant are almost interchangeable, with hierarchies ideally disabled. Giving the participant more creative space within the research is then tied up with a form of openness in both instructions and questions for the participants and the research process in general. Bagnoli writes:

One constant [...] has been the openness that I have tried to maintain when introducing these tasks. I kept the instructions as broad as possible, with the intent of enabling participants to structure the tasks in their own ways. This allowed me to collect a variety of patterns in the way in which people made sense of the same instructions. (Bagnoli 2009: 566)

Bagnoli reminds us that not everyone is comfortable with those open schemes and processes. A sensitive dealing with each participant and guidance of the research process from the side of the researcher is highly necessary, not only for moments of readjustment. The positive side of creative approaches lies, however, in the enhancement of *reflexivity* and *holistic approaches* during the research process, and the transformation of these two

aspects into central elements of observation. Having in mind the aim of capturing elements of non-linguistic nature, which are hard to express with words, Bagnoli states:

> The use of visual and creative methods can generally facilitate investigating layers of experience that cannot easily be put into words (Gauntlett, 2007). Images are evocative and can allow access to different parts of human consciousness (Prosser and Loxley, 2008): communicating more holistically, and through metaphors, they can enhance emphatic understanding, capture the ineffable, and help us pay attention to reality in different ways, making the ordinary become extraordinary. (Bagnoli 2009: 548)

Especially in the studies on language learning, where interviews are often conducted in second or third languages, there is a strong need for creative methods as these can help to deal playfully with words in other forms of visual crafting and drawing. Using creativity within research methods in this sense adapts and captures notions of creativity which are part of people's everyday life, as Hallam and Ingold point out: "There is no script for social and cultural life. People have to work it out as they go along. In a word, they have to *improvise*" (Hallam & Ingold 2007: 1, original italics).

I have hinted at a variety of methodological parts in this section, which emerge within the employment of creative research methods. The use of visual and sensory methods that exceed the realm of words is my focus in Chapter Eight. Before presenting my use of sensory methods, however, I will discuss in more detail the procedural and shifting nature of my emergent methodology.

A tale of methodology

Crafting a methodology is not a straightforward and one-dimensional process. Rather it can be compared with a jigsaw puzzle, aiming to merge research question(s), research paradigm(s), research field(s), and research method(s) into a method assemblage based on the intuition and understanding of the researcher. The field, the participants, the inner and outer circumstances of the study, and the relationships across the field are just some of the elements of the puzzle. *Intuition* is then a core notion of the following three moments, which shall illustrate the procedural character of the method-crafting as well as the major turning points and general methodological orientations of this thesis. The aim of these moments is to give an insight into some crafting details of this methodological journey as well as to tell the 'tale' of my methodology.

Although the illustration of the moments might let them look like linear movements, they are very much the product of a bundle of strings, pulled together in the form of a quasi-chronological text. The premises presented here are based on the ground of long term reflections and practices in and around the field of intercultural learning and subsume these thoughts in (partially autoethnographic) statements, which will be methodologically enriched in the following two chapters.

Moment one: Mixed methods or I don't want to compare

I am presenting my thesis in a research colloquium. The comments circle around my open research-framework and some scholars suggest working with a clear set of questions as well as 'well defined terms'. Others argue for the employment of methods from psychology. The method remains the theme of the talk, with issues like the validity of the data and my involvement as the researcher within the field added to the discussion. At the end of the session one scholar suggests I look into comparative methods, hinting that this would make the sampling of the data easier.

Comparative Studies are an essential element of a variety of disciplines, including literary studies, applied linguistics, anthropology, and foreign learning language studies. As a result of this central position of comparative studies, the focus on differences and similarities between two or more different countries or cultures lies at the heart of research about intercultural learning. Byram states:

> The pedagogical literature, both theoretical (for example Zarate, 1993; Kramsch 1993) and practical (for example Byram et.al.. 2001), focuses on making learners aware of the relationships between cultures, and promotes methods of comparative study to do so. (Byram 2008: 68)

While acknowledging the contribution of comparative studies to the field of intercultural education, I do not consider it as suitable for the aim and purpose of this study. This relates mainly to one central element of comparative studies: its basis in the premise of *difference*. Within a comparison, the central element of contrasting items suggests a linear movement and process of meaning-making that often remains at the borders of one discipline. Although the categories explored can imply notions of diversity and multiplicity, they are in danger of being dealt with in the form of entities and clear structures that dismiss elements of complexity and of being 'in between'.

As I have shown before, social realities do change constantly and are captured in this study within the framework of global and everyday transformations and practices. Within comparative studies there is a tendency to orient research towards already known structures and categories (such as identity, race, ethnicity, nationality, and so forth) and underestimate the interconnectivity of such categories along with emerging and constantly re-created forms of intercultural learning. In other words: comparative methods and approaches can close their eyes in front of hybrid and networked social realities as conceptual and methodological spaces, and often do not capture the fluidity and shifting nature of the research object itself.

Let me suggest another approach which builds on Law's method assemblage. It is most interesting that while trying to gather more information about method assemblages I kept coming back to writings about *mixed method* approaches. Not only do such approaches involve the "use of two or more different kinds of data gathering and analysis techniques" (Greene et al. 2005: 274), but their design of studies, with "several or multiple components" (Mason 2006: 6), seems to be convenient for the kind of research presented here and match with the idea of a method assemblage. Mason adds: "In this approach, different methods may be deployed because each is felt to be the best suited to its own specific part of the problem being researched" (ibid.).

However, there is a hitch. In its essence, mixed methods are designed to combine qualitative *and* quantitative research methods to combine the advantages of each approach in order to take into consideration the multidimensional and complex nature of the social world (Mason 2006: 9). Within this thesis, I am concentrating on the qualitative paradigm only and do not consider quantitative research possibilities (as they are not able to tell stories). It is in my concern to employ a mixed methods approach that is qualitatively driven and mixes different methods under the umbrella of *multiple methods*. When referring to mixed methods in the following components of this methodology section, I use the term under the premise of qualitative research and multiple methods.

Both method assemblages and mixed methods are driven by their focus on "social experiences and lived realities" (Mason 2006: 12), and the work of Mason in particular underlines the search for a *dialogue between methods* that is based on a 'creative tension'. She explains:

> Ideally, this involves a creative tension between the different methods and approaches, which depends upon a dialogue between them. It means that instead of ultimately producing one integrated account or explanation of whatever is being researched (integrative logic), or a series of parallel accounts (parallel logics), one images instead 'multi-nodal' and 'dialogic' explanations which are based on the dynamic relation of more than one way of seeing and researching. (Mason 2006: 10)

Basically, such a dialogue of methods can create what I called earlier an 'open research frame'. This open research frame takes into consideration the messy and multidimensional ways of making meaning and aims to give space for a method that is able to capture the circulation of diversity beyond single disciplines and academic fields. A mixed method within a method assemblage approach includes in this sense multiple disciplinary foci, making it more interdisciplinary.

Traditional methods and carefully separated (if not detached) academic subjects create very particular notions of difference which vary from context to context. Researching interdisciplinarily recognises the interconnectivity of ideas and understandings instead of 'ironing out' the distinctions. Mason states:

> The opportunities, for harnessing creative tensions and building on rather than ironing out the distinctive strengths of different approaches, are substantial. Such an approach, like no other, can facilitate the developing multi-dimensional ways of understanding, and deploying a creative range of methods in the process. (Mason 2006: 10)

It is still an open question and central debate as to which field intercultural learning and the study of culture within language education belong to. I would like to argue at this stage that there is not *one* discipline intercultural learning should be 'attached' to. Rather, it is the selection of disciplines close to the central elements of intercultural learning (such as the social sciences, cultural studies, and human geography, for the frame of this study) that should lead to an interdisciplinary approach. In this regard, mixing methods from different disciplines should become an imperative of interdisciplinary research about intercultural learning, and, indeed, has been in the history of language research. Studies which aim to research diversity and interculturality should overstep the methodological boundaries within applied linguistics, literary studies, or cultural studies (as, for instance, comparative studies), while searching for inspiring methods in nearby fields and disciplines.

Finally, Mason reminds us that a mixed methods approach is challenging and needs a large measure of creativity:

> This kind of approach is hugely challenging because by definition it pushes at the boundaries of social science philosophy, knowledge and practice. [...] It requires considerable skill and commitment from researchers and teams, who need to have the capacity and inclination to see beyond disciplinary, epistemological and ontological distinctions, without simply wishing to critique all other from the perspective of only one, or to subsume all other into one. (Mason 2006: 10)

<u>Moment two: Text, text, text... and text</u>

Another path of my methodological journey deals with the 'material' I am basing this research on and the terminology I use to describe methods.

In my studies of 'German as a foreign language' at the Herder-Institute in Leipzig in Germany, I was trained in using discourse analysis to research intercultural language learning and the instrumental dimensions of language. Most of us were fascinated by this approach and engaged for the first time with critical thinking, discourses, and the production of meaning. However, when it came to practical concerns and questions like "What do we teach?" the relation between discourse and the class content of 'German culture' was unclear. In my mind there was a vivid discussion between two voices: one was saying "This is really interesting theory" and the other one replied "But what we teach about German culture is geography, history, politics and culture. Teaching discourses is far beyond a beginner level." After coming to Glasgow I planned to do a discourse analysis about the representational diversity of religion as a part of culture and intercultural learning. I struggled. During the course of working on this thesis I realised that the initial experiences in Egypt, which led me to engage with this study, were beyond mere discourse- and text-based approaches. The learning experiences I shared were smelled, tasted, listened, seen, touched and felt through and through. And although the discourse approach helped me to reflect critically and think about the political circumstances of the Egyptian society, it did not involve this feeling of belonging and anticipation I shared with the students I taught.

Within this thesis, I argue that research about intercultural language learning tends to remain in the realm of texts only. Many degree programmes within higher education direct clusters of cultural studies within broader fields of language education towards literary studies and the understanding of historically developed contexts. Intercultural language learning exceeds the textual basis, as we have emphasised in Path One, and at this stage I argue that research about interculturality moves beyond the form of text as well.

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Law describes the feeling he had whilst working on a research project about liver diseases. He writes, "there was something important about the scene that *could not be put into words* and escaped the possibilities of language" (Law 2004: 87, original emphasis). In Chapter Two I outlined the concept of languaging (Phipps & Gonzalez 2004) and its emphasis on the ontological dimension of intercultural language learning. As stated, capturing ontological elements of intercultural language learning purely on the basis of texts is only partially adequate. By engaging with experienced dimensions of learning, research about intercultural language learning focuses then on the physical, embodied, and sensed sensations a different place shares with us. It is in this sense that I argue for an alternative methodology that acknowledges dimensions beyond words and (inter-) textuality. In this thesis, I pursue this aim while largely using ethnographic methods, as I will highlight in the coming two chapters. To enable a research of this kind, which is open and flexible enough to grasp the ephemeral and often intangible notions of interculturality, is an aim I follow when including additional visual, sensory, and moving elements in the method assemblage. I would like to underline that as much as I am stressing non-linguistic aspects of research, I do not aim to claim an approach that is at odds with text-based research. I rather consider non-linguistic elements of research as a contribution towards a multidimensional methodology which takes into consideration the diversity of individual experience.

As a matter of fact, language is the only mediating element academics have in order to communicate their ideas and stories. I do not and cannot change the presentation format of text; however, there is another notion of impact: the handling of *expressions, allegories, and metaphors*. The terminology research about intercultural learning employs in order to capture its diverse nuances is crucial for the understanding and mediation of interculturality itself. We need to choose a language that is able to inspire and to hold elements of inspiration in order to highlight notions of intercultural learning, which are of the ontological and ephemeral nature I mentioned a moment ago. We have a choice of choosing language that has the ability to break up the boundaries of representation. Let me illustrate this point with an example by Thrift, which resembles a key-quote of my methodological journey (and does as such appear, in part, as well in Chapters Five and Ten). Thrift writes:

> The paradox of space is that we all know that space is something lived in and through in the most mundane ways – from the bordering provided by the womb, through the location of the coffee cup on our desk that is just out of reach, through the memories of buildings and landscapes which intertwine with our bodies and provide a kind of poetics of space, through

the ways in which vast political and commercial empires – and the resultant wealth and misery – can be fashioned from the mundane comings and goings of ships and trains and now planes […], through to the invisible messages that inhabit the radio spectrum in their billions and etch another dimension of life. […] There is no need to reduce such complexity to a problematic of 'scale', a still too common move. Actors continually change size. A multiplicity of 'scales' is always present in interactions; the putatively large is of the same kind as the small, but amplified to generate a different order of effects (Strathern 1999; Tarde 2000). […] We now understand that the spaces and rhythms of the everyday, everydayness and everyday life (Seigworth 2000) are not just a filigree bolstering an underlying social machine but a series of pre-individual ethologies that incessantly rehearse a materialism in which matter turn into a sensed-sensing energy with multiple centres. (Thrift 2007: 17)

What I would like to focus on at the moment in Thrift's quote is his way of describing practices of the everyday as 'sensed-sensing energy with multiple centres'. What Thrift captures in this expression is not only a notion of transformation and multiplicity: the word 'energy' furthermore suggests an element of the social that is based on a 'seeking for' beyond scales and categories. Energies are possibilities that move across hierarchies and come to life through practice. In choosing this image, Thrift creates a far better starting point for research than the commonly used terms, 'identity', 'nation', or 'ethnicity' can do, especially when considering their overloaded connotations and over-analysed characters. Learning about alternative terminologies (such as metaphors) and the creative and sophisticated ways of making use of them (as Thrift does) was then another important step on my methodological journey towards the creation of a method for the ephemeral and the fluid beyond a purely text-based approach.

Moment three: Peripheries and centres or moving outside the classroom

In Path Two, I outlined the ways in which thinking about education under the umbrella of space gives some fascinating insights into underlying assumptions about the *location of learning* and the roles place and space play within learning experiences. On my methodological journey I dealt intensively with the thinking informing the location of this research and the methodological implication the chosen fieldsite evokes. The mobilities and lifestyles of the language learners I aimed to focus on in my study were located in a globally interconnected world, with intercultural experiences as part of the complex network of flows. Whereas those transnational and complex notions are increasingly addressed within theoretical writings about intercultural learning (see Risager 2006, 2007 or Fenoulhet & Rosi 2010), there has been a silence in addressing these transformations methodologically. Furthermore, and I stressed on this already, the practices and locations

of research remained closely connected to the classroom as the main site of learning, thereby treating the 'outside world' as distant – a movement based on a subtle understanding of periphery and centre. Let me outline this thought more in detail.

Dean Pierides illustrates this last argument in the context of the development of ethnographic research within education since the late 1960s in his article, *Multi-Sited Ethnography and the Field of Educational Research* (2010). In the field of education, he states, ethnography was transformed by the critique of those postcolonial binaries which understood the self as the centre and 'the other' as periphery (Pierides 2010: 182). When this constellation was radically criticised and transformed, the ethnographic centre of research had to be reconfigured as well. Pierides, while referring to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), explains:

> As a result, anthropologists either moved to focus their work on the concept of culture itself, slowly attempting to disentangle it from the colonial binaries so potently exposed by the postcolonial critique, or they moved the fieldwork home to the study of their own modern societies. This was accompanied by a proliferation of paradigms, methods and strategies in qualitative research. (Pierides 2010: 182)

At the core of these newly created paradigms for qualitative research was a critique of power, its misconceptions and impacts on education that was highly influenced by post-structuralism, especially Foucauldian thought. Focusing on post-colonial practices 'at home' became an essential practice of ethnographic research in the field of education that continues today. As a result, the classroom, as the major 'fieldsite' of education, was pushed to the centre of ethnographic observation, leaving trajectories of learning in transnational space behind (Pierides 2010). In the preface of his book, *Tangled up in School: Politics, Space, Bodies, and Signs in the Educational Process* (1997), Jan Nespor argues:

> Educational discourse usually treats the school as a bounded system, a container of classroom processes and curricular texts, an institutional shell waiting to be filled up by the actions of teachers, students and administrators. But looking at schools as somehow separate from cities, politics, neighbourhoods, businesses, and popular culture obscures how these are all inextricably connected to one another, how they jointly produce educational effects. (Nespor 1997: xi)

It is due to Pierides and Nespor's influence on my methodological journey that I decided to reconnect research on intercultural learning with the fieldsites of the everyday and the learning that happens outside the classroom. The reconnection of research with fieldsites is

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one of our main objectives described in Chapter Three. I continue these thoughts in Chapter Nine, where the location of this research will come up again in the section about multiple sites.

In sum: the methodology I am adapting for this thesis is inspired by Law's proposal of a method assemblage and formed by a mixed-methods research design that stands at odds with the philosophical grounds of realism and universalism. In order to translate networks, flows and mobilities into method, I highlighted the need for the recreation of method in and around movement and transformation, and on the basis of an open and creative research process. In this sense, I restricted the discussion to comments on the following issues:

- *moving beyond disciplines* (research about intercultural language learning needs to draw extensively on interdisciplinary studies that are based on the idea of diversity instead of difference);
- *moving beyond textuality* (research about intercultural language learning needs to engage with forms of learning as they are experienced); and
- *moving beyond the classroom* (research about intercultural language learning needs to transgress the field of the classroom and focus on intercultural experiences 'in situ').

This approach results in an almost radical change in the focus of the research processes *from singular to multiple centres, from fixity to movement, and from text to experience*. In this sense, another point becomes clear: a research object like intercultural language learning, which changes and shifts its form constantly, is in need of a research method that has the ability to follow up these often intangible and ephemeral movements and, more importantly, can hold all the flowing and moving elements together. It is a method, which has to create openness for elements of affect, space and movement. It is in this turn that I opened up my research method towards sensing, 'multilocality', and walking, as will be explored in detail in Chapters Eight and Nine.

Scandinavian Club

I didn't want to meet a lot of Asians from a similar culture I was from

(Chan)

Chan is from Singapore and although her native language is Chinese she considers her English as better than her Chinese, as the Singaporean government "tried to make us effectively bilingual." Chan wanted to change her environment after finishing High School and her mother suggested to study in Australia. When asked if she found it hard to leave Singapore she said, "I think it was pretty easy. My family has been here twice and some people of my family live here." I ask about her initial impressions of coming to Australia to study, and she says, "It was comfortable and there was a lot of freedom, not just because I was away from my parents, but I think in general the society is a lot freer."

Speaking about Australia, she says "Here you see the sky much more and the scenery. But the first time I went to Sydney I thought this is not Australia because it was just high-rise buildings, people were walking quickly; there was this sense of urgency. And I never felt that kind of urgency and that rush and so I think in my mind this is what Australia is like: totally open, relaxed and laid back, that's why I was so shocked in Sydney [laughs]. I just got lost, I couldn't see the sky." Our conversation goes on in the following way:

> U   I'm interested in time. Can you feel time differently here to time in Singapore?
> C   The pace of life here is slower. Time is not fluid. I enjoy time. Whereas in Singapore the pace of life is so much faster and time is something which has to be used. And also time in the city is different than time in the countryside. And also the space – it opens the time, it can be more endless, there can be more time for joy. The sense of space changes.
> U   What would that be if the sense of space changes?
> C   In my experience, space can become time. Every time is a form of space. Space can expand the sense of time.

Carousel in a theme park
This photo was taken in a theme park in Gold Coast. I've always loved playgrounds and theme parks because they remind me of the innocence and freedom of childhood. I love watching kids run around blissfully, without a care in a world. It's a reminder that life can be that simple, easy and enjoyable if you allow yourself to feel it.

Figure 28: Chan's virtual walk 1

A central element in Chan's story is the experience of connecting to the "locals." "In the beginning," Chan said, "I didn't want to meet a lot of Asians from a similar culture I was from." This hope of encountering 'difference' in the forms of Australians and people from cultural backgrounds other than her own proceeded in the following way: "I think in the first year it was difficult. I wasn't really on campus and I was quite isolated. One way I tried to change that was, I joined the Scandinavian Club. I have a friend from Taiwan and

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he also wanted to join the club." Chan tells me that "initially I thought it was hard to connect to the Australian society and to make friends with locals so I forced myself to understand their cultural background and to overstep my comfort zone and to make friends with them."

I am interested in Chan's expressions, 'forced myself' and 'overstep my comfort zone', and, while recalling her earlier statement of freedom, take our conversation towards the following route:

U   *You mentioned earlier the notion of freedom – how is this idea of being free connected to becoming open to people from other cultures?*

C   *I think the irony of that is that I wanted to embrace so much the Australian culture that I kind of suppressed my Asian culture, and in doing that I restricted myself and I wasn't really free. And I realised you are really expressing freedom in interacting with other people, because you are not ashamed of who you are and how you have brought up. At the same time I also learned to appreciate the differences between my culture and the Australian culture. Appreciating it and not to go: 'Oh the Australian culture is so much better than the Asian culture or Singaporean culture'. I'm happy to be who I am.*

Chinatown in Singapore
This is another one of my favourite pictures because it reminds me of my Chinese roots. When I go back to Singapore, my friends and I enjoy going to places like Chinatown to get cheap food and to wander through the stores like tourists in our home country. It helps us to appreciate our culture and it reminds us of how unique we are, especially in a country where it's hard to slow down and to be reminded of these bits of life.

Figure 29: Chan's virtual walk 2

Chan's journey in integrating herself in a society, which she perceived as and expected to be 'different', continues on in her second year of studying, when she became involved with a church community. She says that this was "a community of people from different cultures who shared the same values," and adds that being part of this Christian community became "a very important thing for me" She adds that this step gave her the feeling of belonging to a community where she could embrace her Singaporean background and still be in touch with people from other cultural origins. What combined both these aspects were the faith and the belief in universal values.

We reached the end of our walk and I ask Chan for a final statement regarding her understanding of the word 'intercultural':

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U   What would you describe as intercultural?

C   That's very interesting [laughs]. I think Australians are intercultural in a way that they welcome people from all over the place.

U   And how would you describe your life as intercultural

C   This is a very textbook answer, but it has to do with just being interconnected in a global world.

Figure 30: Chan's virtual walk 3

A beach along Great Ocean Road
I've always loved beaches because they remind me of how infinite and majestic God is. I enjoy looking into the horizon and the endless span of ocean and I like imagining what could lie beyond the expanse. The ocean is also always peaceful and I love strolling along the beach, smelling the sea breeze and being wrapped up in my thoughts. The beach always has this effect on me, no matter which part of the world I'm in. The sky and the sea make me feel comfortable because they are the part of the same sky and sea no matter where you go.

From the notebook: Chan seems from the outset of the interview, to create a separation between 'me' and the 'other'. At the same time she feels a strong wish to interact with Non-Asians, as she did, for instance, while joining the Scandinavian Club. For Chan, the Scandinavian Club represents the 'West', and was a point in her journey that enabled her to 'embrace' her 'cultural identity' and remain close to Asian circles without 'forcing' a connection to Australian society. From Chan's experience we can see that the challenge of each intercultural experience is the engagement with difference. Being able to express yourself freely while appreciating difference (or diversity), rather than re-establishing borders between the 'self' and the 'other', is a crucial element to avoid either forcing or neglecting intercultural experience. Chan's centring in her faith is illustrated in her mind map.
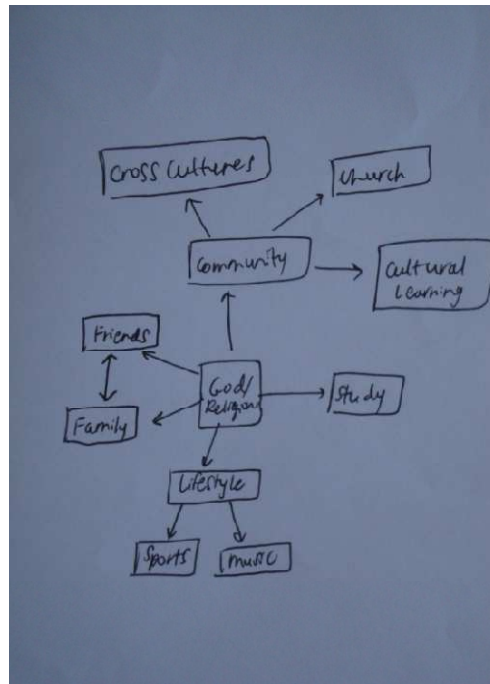
Figure 31: Chan's mind map

Chapter Eight: On the search for the ephemeral

Figure 32: On the search for the ephemeral

> To think being, Heidegger says, means to respond to the appeal of its presence, in a response that stems from and releases itself toward the appeal. But this means to exist as a human being in an authentic relationship as mortal to other mortals, to earth and sky, to the divinities present or absent, to things and plants and animals; it means, to let each of these be – to let it presence in openness, in the full appropriateness of its nature – and to hold oneself open to its being, recognizing it and responding to it appropriately in one's own being, the way in which one oneself goes on, lives; and then, perhaps, in this ongoing life one may hear the call of the language that speaks of the being of all these beings and respond to it in a mortal language that speaks of what it hears." (Heidegger 2001 [1971]: x; paraphrased by Hofstadter in the introduction)

The multi-dimensional mode of intercultural learning within a complex and messy world suggests a mixed methodology which recognises that "different ways of perceiving and interrogating the social world represented in different methods are themselves part of that multidimensionality" (Mason 2006: 9). To recall: what I am seeking is, in Mason's words, a creative tension and dialogue between my chosen methods and approaches. This means to concentrate and work towards multi-nodal perspectives and understandings (instead of definite notions) that "are based on the dynamic relation of more than one way of seeing and researching" (Mason 2006: 10). It is in this and the current chapter that I am concentrating on those aspects of the method assemblage that focus on intercultural practice as experienced and as 'sensed-sensing energy with multiple centres' (Thrift 2007). In short: which methods can we build on in order to follow our curiosity about ephemeral and often indefinite notions of interculturality and spaces 'in between'?

In Chapter Two we saw how ethnographic approaches are used in the language classroom as a tool for engaging language learners in intercultural learning. Above that, we saw that *intercultural learning is at its core an ethnographic process* that transforms language learners into ethnographers per se (Roberts et al. 2001). A method that takes into consideration the ethnographic practices of language learners should in this vein be as close as possible to the specific forms of experiencing interculturality. It seems likely that ethnography suggests itself in this sense as an umbrella method for this research. The two parts of the Greek word 'ethnography' – 'ethno' (nation) and 'graphy' (writing) – indicate a focus on both experience and the 'getting hold' of the latter in form of descriptions and stories (OED online). Taken together, both words point toward the centrality of stories and thereby characterise as such both the ethnographic process and intercultural experience. It is mainly for this reason – the closeness of ethnography to the intercultural experience itself – that I decided to use ethnography as the wider methodological frame for this research. With the phrase, 'a wider frame', I am referring to the form of method assemblage that shapes the methodology of this thesis.

To understand the character of ethnography as a methodology one has to go back to ethnography's roots in anthropology, its epistemological and ontological mother discipline. In this anthropological vein, ethnography locates its central understandings in humanism (Blommaert 2010: 6) and cannot be reduced to the practice of fieldwork alone (see Ingold 2011, final chapter). Pink defines ethnography as

> a process of creating and representing knowledge (about society, culture and individuals) that is based on ethnographers' own experiences. It does not claim to produce an objective or truthful account of reality, but should aim to offer versions of ethnographers' experiences of reality that are as loyal as possible to the context, negotiations and intersubjectivities through which the knowledge was produced. (Pink 2007a: 22)

Several points could be elaborated at this stage: the centrality of observation to ethnographic research; the aim of capturing those observations in so called 'thick description' (Geertz 1973); the immersion of the researcher in the fieldsite; the conducting of ethnographic interviews, and so forth. I am only mentioning key elements here, as these will be picked up and developed later.

Since ethnography is a largely spread-out field, I need to clarify how I use and understand its role within diverse disciplines of social sciences. Specifically, I concentrate on the elements of movement, senses and 'multilocality' as central to this ethnographic research and argue for the following three methodological positions:

- *intercultural language learning is multisensory* (ethnographic research has to consider and implement the role of the senses and sensory experience);
- *intercultural language learning is multi-sited* (ethnographic research has to consider and implement this multiplicity of locations and fieldsites); and
- *intercultural language learning is based on movement* (ethnographic research has to consider and implement patterns of mobility within contextualised situations).

Before engaging directly with the ethnographic practice it is necessary to point both towards the role of the researcher within the research process, and the implied ethical consequences. Let me therefore start by reflecting on the action of – reflecting.

The multiplicity of voices

Throughout this work there is a selection of autoethnographic writings. These have a significant role and purpose.

Recently, there has been an increase in focus on the joint production of ethnography from the side of researchers and field participants. Writing about "how we make sense of and reflect on our own experiences, interactions, and positions in the field" (Coffey 1999: 115) has become a central element of ethnographic writings, highlighting a shift in attention to the 'self' of the researcher and her or his entanglement in identity negotiations in the field. This shift towards the '*ethnographic self*' (Coffey 1999, own emphasis) has built upon the blurred boundaries between subjectivity and objectivity; a critical process already started in the early 1980s. Narrative ethnography relates in this sense to Pink's description of ethnography as "based on ethnographers' own experiences" (Pink 2007a: 22). Such experiences engage the identities of the researcher *in relation* to the participants, the fieldsite, and so forth, and this culminates in a process of 'writing identities' (Coffey 1999).

Including those elements of fieldnotes that are of a personal nature into the ethnographic piece of writing pays attention to the call for "texts with more complexity and focus on

relational aspects of fieldwork" (Berger 2001: 506). Working reflexively then, is to make the reader aware of the way meaning is constructed in 'nets', as Dewey already argued in 1938:

> To reflect back is to look back over what has been done so as to extract the net meanings which are the capital stock for intelligent dealing with further experiences. It is the heart of intellectual organization and of the disciplined mind. (Dewey 1938: 86-87, cited in Pillow 2003: 177)

Dealing with the 'heart of the disciplined mind', as Dewey describes it so aptly, is a central concern of methodological 'reflexivity'. Davies describes the latter as follows: "In the context of social research, reflexivity at its most immediately obvious level refers to the ways in which the products of research are affected by the personnel and process of doing research" (Davies 2008: 3). Pillow points out that reflexivity is first and foremost an "increased attention to researcher subjectivity in the research process – a focus on how does who I am, who I have been, who I think I am, and how I feel affect data collection and analysis" (Pillow 2003: 176). What is important at this stage is the awareness the researcher elaborates regarding such questions and her or his connection to the complex research situation:

> We cannot research something with which we have no contact, from which we are completely isolated. All researchers are to some degree connected to, or part of, the object of their research. And dependent on the extent and nature of these connections, questions arise as to whether the results of research are artefacts of the researcher's presence and inevitable influence on the research process. (Davies 2008: 3)

The influence of the researcher on the research process is a hotly debated topic and has to be seen under the light of my chosen research method. Within the field of ethnography, Davies (2008) argues that the theme of reflexivity is particularly important regarding its 'deep immersion' and 'close contact' during the fieldwork. Whereas in classical ethnography personal references were avoided in order to maintain this distance between researcher and 'object', the situation of fieldwork in the age of globalisation has changed significantly (see Faubion & Marcus 2009). Indeed, the characteristics of *immersion and contact* are transformed within the ethnographic fieldsite, and impact as such the relationship of researcher and participant (I will return to this point in Chapter Nine).

As a researcher I am well aware of the immersion of my 'ethnographic self' (Coffey 1999) within the research and within what can be called an 'intercultural life-world'. It is because of this personal entanglement with interculturality that I decided to include

autoethnographic writings in this thesis. They are added for the purpose of reflexivity, and aim to illustrate how I came to understand intercultural language learning as 'spatial-embodied practice', and how this understanding was mirrored in the configuration of an appropriate methodology. Furthermore I chose to write mainly in the first person and only occasionally in the third person. This decision was partially informed by the following argument of Savin-Baden & van Niekerk:

> Through writing in the first person it becomes possible to see one's own interpretations and personal stances. However, it is important to acknowledge and recognize that we use multiple voices and hold multiple perspectives and that we, and our stances, change and move over time. (Savin-Baden & van Niekerk 2007: 466)

The multiple perspectives of this thesis become visible through my own role within this research, which is threefold: I joined the field of intercultural language learning as a language learner, as a teacher of language, and as a person embedded in an intercultural life-world. With all three perspectives intertwined with each other it is difficult to distinguish which 'role' is speaking at which time. During the course of this thesis, I do not distinguish artificially between those three perspectives. I rather suggest that they are read as *one voice, which is made of a multiplicity of voices* and is, in this harmony, embedded in a complex field of interconnected meanings and environments. Pink reminds us that what is required in such a situation, is "a recognition of the constant shifting position of the fieldworker [...] as she or he experiences 'differences in levels of understanding as well as the shifts or mood and rapport characteristics of fieldwork'" (Pink 2006: 34).

To summarise: including autoethnographic writings in the process of this thesis aims to highlight the connections between the researcher and the intercultural field, and acknowledges the increasing complexities with which ethnographic research is faced. Including personal narratives into the methodological realm of observation and description recognises the crucial role of the 'ethnographic self' of the researcher as well as the language learner. Before continuing this reflection on ethnography I would like to add a note regarding the ethical dimension of this research.

Ethics for the highest good

I have to admit, a large part of this research was provoked by a fairly large degree of anger about what I perceive to be unethical representations of interculturality and essentialist claims of culture. Recalling our entry story of this thesis about failed multiculturality in

Germany illustrates one example for the relativity of statements on truth and moral judgements. What lies underneath such discourses as Merkel provoked in her speech, is: being intercultural in contested environments brings out certain *vulnerabilities and sensibilities.* By working on a conceptual framework that brings individual experiences 'in between' into the centre of intercultural research I aim to shed light on positions that dismiss and ignore the sensibilities of intercultural encounter and stabilise culture into fixed images of the 'self' and the 'other'. The focus on the body, affect, and sensing in this thesis illustrates the aim of making those sensibilities visible and argues that intercultural understanding is a complex, networked, and heterogeneous practice. This position taken herein aims to encourage critical thinking and exceed research about representation and polarising judgements (such as 'failed' or 'successful' interculturality). In other words, to create a method for the 'highest good' of intercultural learning: the encounter with humanity. In saying this, I am aware that my own position is a contested one; that the discourse in Europe on immigration represents a consensus that diversity is a problem in search of a technological and security fix, and that the gentler, slower, complexly, and messy work towards non-violent representations is simply seen as costly education by those who are not adherents of my own position.

The method assemblage presented here creates a space for ethics – while walking, while sharing experiences 'in situ', and interchanging the roles of researcher and participant. It is a method that rejects hierarchy as an element of interviews and difference as a basis of research methodology. Being uneasy with research centred on the practice of 'researcher asks questions and the interviewee answers', I aim to break up this mode while navigating the research through multiple and interdisciplinary fields, aiming to follow the idea of a method assemblage. Using creative tools and engaging with participants through a variety of collaborative practices creates a deep ethical relationship with the research. MacDonald and O'Regan (2007) have recently described this relationship (of the intercultural communication field with ethics) in their concept of 'aporias'. Adopting "an ethical stance towards difference," they define 'aporias' as "performative contradictions, where interculturalists are projected simultaneously into positions of cultural relativism on the one hand and ideological totalism on the other" (MacDonald & O'Regan 2007: 267). The authors base their thoughts largely on the writings of Levinas, and argue that a focus on 'responsibility' enables "intercultural communication to locate itself in opposition to practices of closure and intolerance, while simultaneously exercising reflexive support for more open alternatives" (MacDonald & O'Regan 2009: 2). They explain further:

In other words, it is through responsibility, rather than through the foundationalist presuppositions of presence, that the discursive terrain remains open, and that questions of 'non-normative' ethical judgment become possible, and indeed necessary. (MacDonald & O'Regan 2007: 275)

It is this responsibility I felt towards the wonderful people I met and the stories they shared with me which let me constantly rethink the research process and reflect critically on how to 'represent' the embodied moments of diversity and sensibility I shared in the intercultural field. Through the course of the research and writing process the central question of this thesis developed toward a *methodological theory for the ethics of language learning* and happened along the lines of what Graeber (2004: 10) terms "a commitment to optimism" or what MacDonald and O'Regan (2007: 275) call "responsibility to openness in opposition to closure." The focus on openness and optimism in this research was underlined by the consideration of 'possibilities' (Graeber 2007) instead of 'clashes' (Huntington 1997), and the inspiring potential of ethnography "to empower and improve the social conditions" of present societies (Goldring 2010: 127).

Sensing

Figure 33: Sensing

As we return to our senses, we gradually discover our sensory perceptions to be simply our part of a vast, interpenetrating webwork of perceptions and sensations borne by countless other bodies – supported, that is, not just by ourselves, but by icy streams tumbling down granitic slopes, by owl wings and lichens, and by the unseen, imperturbable wind. (Abram 1997: 65)

At the centre of the following methodological orientation are those parts of the research that concern the multisensory modes of intercultural language learning. The senses are here understood as mediators of relationships "between self and society, mind and body, idea

and object" (Bull 2007: 5-6, cited in Mason & Davies 2009: 589). I will elaborate the theme of the senses as well as sensing more detailed in Chapter Ten. At present, and in the background of a method assemblage and a mixed methods approach, I am enquiring into the nature of multisensory experiences under the lens of multisensory ethnography, visual methods, and a small sample of arts-based methods. Let me explain those steps in the following.

Engaging the whole body

Sarah Pink, in her book, *Doing Sensory Ethnography* (2009), describes ethnographic research with focus on the senses as "a process of doing ethnography that accounts for how [...] multisensoriality is integral both to the lives of people who participate in our research *and* how we ethnographers practice our craft" (Pink 2009: 1, original italics). Transforming the research into a multisensory process means asking the ethnographer to highlight more carefully how her or his understandings came into being – under the light of the senses. Pink reminds researchers to

> be more explicit about the ways of experiencing and knowing that become central to their ethnographies, to share with others the senses of place they felt as they sought to occupy similar places to those of their research participants, and to acknowledge the processes through which their sensory knowing has become academic knowledge. (Pink 2009: 2)

This new acknowledgment of the senses builds upon an established academic body of research about the sensuous, such as, for instance, the 'sensorial turn' (Howes 2003), 'sensuous geography' (Rodaway 1994), 'sociology of the senses' (Simmel 1997 [1907]), 'cultural history of the senses' (Classen 1993), Abram's writings on the 'spell of the sensuous' (1996), and in elements of 'complex ethnography' (Atkinson et al. 2007). What links these approaches is the search for new academic paths that combine the themes of *perception, knowing and sensory experiences*. Multisensory ethnography is in this regard an emerging and still developing field of practice (Pink 2009) which finds quickly growing interest across social sciences and humanities in recent years. Nevertheless, Mason and Davies (2009: 600) argue that

> social science research should become more sensorily aware than perhaps it has been, and [...] researchers should recognize that the sensory is part of 'involvement in the world'. Too often social science research and knowledge is oddly abstracted and distanced from the sensory, embodied and lived conditions of existence that it seeks to explain.

In the field of social anthropology, multisensory ethnography asks "how a sensory approach to ethnography might be situated as a *methodology*" (Pink 2009: 1, original italics) in order to enrich contemporary research forms. In moving towards this task, there are two key approaches in sensory studies:

- "the ethnographic study of other people's systems of sensory categorisation and classification, and the meanings related to these"; and
- the ethnographic thinking "about the senses from the starting point of the self-reflexive and experiencing body, [...] the ethnographer's own sensorial experiences as a means of apprehending and comprehending other people's experiences, ways of knowing and sensory categories, meanings and practices" (Pink 2009: 46).

Within this thesis, I have included both perspectives – while focusing on the senses as an integral part of embodied intercultural language learning that creates and re-creates different modes of experiencing diversity, place and belonging. I do not intend to research those different modes of sensory experience through the lens of categorisations and classifications; rather I aim to give an insight into the diversity of sensory experience as an important element of intercultural learning. Secondly, I have included 'self-reflexive' notions of the researcher (as in the autoethnographic parts) in the research. Both perspectives include the focus on *the sensory as impacting upon place-making experiences* as well as the interplay between the multisensoriality of the environment and the multisensory experience itself.

Doing multisensory ethnography...

In order to come to a closer understanding of how experience is perceived, acted, remembered, imagined and transformed into senses of belonging, the multisensory researcher can go through the following steps:

- focusing on sensory experience within a collaborative practice of participation (Pink 2009);
- transforming the ethnographic interview to a sensory experience in situ;
- concentrating on the transition of sensory experience towards 'sensing' and on tangible to intangible modes of experiencing; and
- including the senses and sensory observation as a theme in ethnographic interviews and investigating about the relational aspects of the senses.

In the following I will highlight those modes of multisensory research I employed for the specific method assemblage of this thesis. I approached multisensory ethnography...

... while challenging the mode of participant observation

First of all, observing means to perform. Vered Amit, in the book, *Constructing the Field. Ethnographic Fieldwork in the Contemporary World* (2000)*, describes this as follows:

> As much as fieldwork is the most commonly cited defining criteria of anthropology, intensive participant observation in turn is frequently treated as defining anthropological fieldwork (see Clifford, 1992). [...] Ethnographic fieldwork must be experienced as performed rather than just communicated in dialogue. (Amit 2000: 2)

While describing ethnographic fieldwork as a form of performance, the standard ethnographic tool of 'participant observation' experiences a process of rethinking the ethnographic mode of observation. As I have already highlighted in the earlier section about reflexivity, *ethnographic research is always a joint and collaborative practice.* What makes ethnographers go beyond the traditional form of 'simply observing' particular fields is the active attempt to invite new forms of expression that go beyond a 'conversation only' research style and focus. Pink describes this process as follows:

> Doing sensory ethnography entails taking a series of conceptual and practical steps that allow the researcher to rethink both established and new participatory and collaborative ethnographic research techniques in terms of sensory perception, categories, meanings and values, ways of knowing and practices. It involves the researcher self-consciously and reflexively attending to the senses throughout the research process, that is during the planning, reviewing, fieldwork, analysis and representational processes of a project. (Pink 2009: 10)

She adds:

> Innovative methods have been developed by ethnographers to provide routes into understanding other people's lives, experiences, values, social worlds and more that go beyond the classic observational approach. [...] They are alternative, and ultimately valid, ways of seeking to understand and engage with other people's worlds through sharing activities, practices and inviting new forms of expression. (Pink 2009: 9)

A major and significant form of understanding and engaging with other people's worlds is typically the interview. Using semi-structured interviews that aimed to include aspects of movement and sensing was at the heart of this research. The semi-structured interview is usually built around "questions that seek to discover the meaning individuals make of their

experiences" (Ortiz 2003: 36), and are formed as a "series of open-ended questions" that address "the research questions [...] and encourage the participant to respond with in-depth responses" (Ortiz 2003: 41). In order to rethink the semi-structured interview through a sensory paradigm, Pink suggests doing so through a theory of place, and by questioning the emphasis on talk and a communication-based approach (Pink 2009: 95) – this I have I realised within Path Two. Going beyond the idea of the interview as 'just about talking' is to bring space and place back on board and to understand an interview as a 'place-event', a coming together of different perspectives in one place at a specific time. The role of the narrative transforms itself into a "process through which verbal, experiential, emotional, sensory, material, social and other encounters are brought together" (ibid.). Pink specifies:

> Within this place-event ethnographers have opportunities to learn about both other's embodied ways of knowing and their verbal narratives and ways of defining sensations, emotions, beliefs, moralities and more. (Pink 2009: 96)

The researcher too is understood as *emplaced* to the field and is dealing at the same time with 'emplaced knowledge' (Pink 2009). This emplaced knowledge becomes a focus of attention when the researcher has to deal with the 'sensory bias' of her or his culture and the different sensory modes she or he experiences while researching (Howes & Classen 1991: 260). Participant observation is in this vein not only learning about 'something' but learning about how one learns – a perspective which lets the ethnographer play "a role of apprentice, who learns about another culture by engaging and learning first-hand the practices and routines of local people", as Pink (2009: 69) points out while referring to Downey (2005: 53). Based on this premise, the research process itself creates sensory knowledge and lets new dimensions of experiencing the everyday emerge. In the upcoming chapter about method and mobility, I will return to this 'place making'-element of ethnography.

A final note: Mason and Davies point out that sensory research does not have to happen via sensory experiencing and practicing per se. It can furthermore be described verbally and be captured in the descriptions of the participants. They argue:

> In fact we found that when it comes to resemblance, people are generally very good at expressing their sensory affinities verbally. Our data is full of talk about people's size, deportment, hair colour, eyesight, timbre of laugh and so on. [...] Talking about and describing sensory things is part of everyday parlance and there is much evocative vocabulary available. (Mason & Davies 2009: 595)

Building on this argument, I am including both the narrated form of sensory experience as well as elements of explorative and moving research practice in situ in the interview style of this research (see as well Chapter Nine).

… while aiming to capture the ephemeral

We have just seen that multisensory ethnography is open to multiple ways of knowing and aims to grasp ephemeral notions of experience. It is, in this sense, right at the heart of this research. Intercultural experience is often of an intangible nature and interrelates as such with the "most profound type of knowledge [which] is not spoken of at all and thus inaccessible to ethnographic observation or interview" (Bendix 2000: 41, cited in Pink 2009: 8). How does multisensory ethnography get access to those hard-to-research notions of knowledge that, as Bendix argues, are almost inaccessible to standard forms of ethnographic observation and interviews?

The sensory is located at the junction of imagining, experiencing and remembering (Pink 2009). All modes are closely intertwined, and imagined forms of the sensory (as, for instance, the thought of a good cup of coffee) fall together with remembered forms of sensory experiences. The question arises

> how methods emphasize the interplay between tangible and intangible sensory experience, including elements of the sensory that were visible, audible, touchable, etc. in the present as well as those which people conjured in their sensory imaginations and ethereal or mystical ways of resembling. We suggest that 'sensory intangibility' is vital to how we see resemblances and to the practice of sensory methodology. (Mason & Davies 2009: 587)

Focusing on this 'sensory intangibility' follows the aim to find out about the transitional forms of (in) tangibility. One way of pursuing this aim is to place research *in situ* – in the places of the everyday. This means sitting with a participant over a cup of tea, eating pizza together, walking through the neighbourhoods, or eventually – and indeed this happened to me – going shopping together on popular streets. Those 'natural' environments will eventually make it easier to gain an understanding of the individual ways of imagining, experiencing, and remembering the multisensory in relation to place, feelings of belonging, and practices of diversity. A shared experiencing of place enables the researcher to capture elements which are ephemeral or 'beyond words' and hard to track in common interviews. Another methodological element that aims to grasp the interplay of tangible and intangible is the usage of images and photographs.

... while including photographs

> The ultimate wisdom of the photographic image is to say: 'There is the surface. Now think – or rather feel, intuit – what is beyond it, what the reality must be like if it looks this way'. (Sontag 2008 [1977]: 23)

The role of photography within intercultural language learning is certainly crucial, and underlines the relevance of the visual perception for the learning process. In this section, I will outline the methodological function of photographs and their illustrative character within the textual form of this thesis. Let me start with some general ideas about visual methods.

Visual methods are themselves a method assemblage, as their foci are diverse and their applications to be found in a variety of research disciplines (for example sociology, geography, cultural studies and anthropology). Visual methodology is developing also as an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary field (Pink 2006: 29) within the wider frame of qualitative research methods. Pink explains:

> Although we often refer to visual research methods, in fact it would be difficult to define any research method as purely visual (or purely verbal for that matter). In fact, the new emphasis on visual methods really serves to bring the visual and visual media and technologies to the fore in the research process, and to recognize and analyse the role of images in qualitative enquiry. (Pink 2004: 395)

Although visual research did have a renaissance through the emergence of digital technologies and media in the late 1990s, they are in their actual sense not 'new' methods. In the field of anthropology, for example, using photography as part of the data collection process has long been an established custom even though it often lacked a critical awareness of the relationship between researcher, produced photograph, and the contextual circumstances of production (Pink 2006). Being criticised for its subjective nature, the visual has been abandoned for a long time in social research until its recent rediscovery. The resultant popularity of visual research was based on the critique of comparative studies as one creator of holistic images of culture and one-sided positions. Following this critique, experimental forms of research emerged and made way for research about embodied and visual aspects of culture (Pink 2006). With these developments of visual studies in mind, the question emerges as to how visual methods are performed in practice. There are several ways of using visual methodologies. Photographs and video are the most-used media, and I turn my attention in the following section towards photography as the medium I adapted

for the methodology put forward in this thesis. I will furthermore address the diverse ways in which photographs have been included in the textual form of this thesis.

Harper distinguishes between three ways and locations of using photography in research. Firstly, photographs can occur within an 'illustrated research article', in which the image aims to describe the researched situation and present a subjective view and argument. In this form of image use the visual data remains secondary and does not raise questions about 'truth' or validity. The second form of using visual methods is to let sociological thinking emerge directly from the images while "elaborating word-based thinking" (Harper 2005: 749). And finally the third form sets its focus on comparing images from different time frames to demonstrate social change (ibid.).

In this research, images and photographs are used in the first and second instance of Harper's developed forms. The idea that images are *illustrative* notions that express a described situation from a personal perspective informs the use of photographs in the chapters and sections of this thesis, and metaphorically underline their general statements. As stated earlier, the images do not aim to claim 'truth' and they are not part of a detailed analysis. They are used to enrich the textual form and to invite the reader to think imaginatively about the unfolded themes.

The second notion Harper mentions addresses the use of photographs taken by the participants of this research. These photographs emerged from two different methodological modes: firstly, the 'guided walks', where images were taken by the participants while 'walking and talking'; and, secondly, the 'virtual walks', where images were sent by the participants after the interview has taken place (see Chapter Nine). These photographs form a crucial element of the textual 'walks' criss-cross the thesis and intertwine narratives with images. They furthermore are practical examples of the collaborative thinking about the intercultural field through their focus on places and experiences of significance. The photographs were chosen by the participants themselves and illustrate a small sample of their understanding of intercultural learning and being. Taking a photograph resembles here the particular attention of a phenomenon and its sensation as a detailed particularity – things, objects, people, signs, and practices of diversity. Intercultural language learners are often distracted from a scene or an object, and holding these moments in the form of a photograph can become a reflective moment of searching for meaning. It is in this sense that the photographer might think about those

notions that remain invisible to the eye. A photograph can capture this *transition from seeing to sensing*, and also transforms as such into a "thin slice of space as well as time," as Susan Sontag (2008 [1977]: 22) explains so wonderfully in her book, *On Photography*. The analysis of these two forms of images focuses, as Harper describes it, on the 'elaboration of word-based thinking', as well as on the thoughts and reflections that the images call forth (Harper 2005). The images in this sense recreate the narratives of the interviews on a visual basis and furthermore allow meaning to emerge from the (metaphorical) messages they carry.

To conclude: the form of visual method chosen here is twofold in that it works with the photographs of both the researcher and the participants. The research acknowledges as such the growing role and availability of digital photography in general and within processes of intercultural learning. In using photographs I aim to go beyond merely textual or oral levels of researching to get a visual impression of what intercultural experience 'looks like'. Finally, the use of images is intended to give the participants the possibility of an active and creative involvement in this study.

... while drawing relational maps

An element of *arts-based research* is also included in this method assemblage. This additional moment happens in the form of so called 'relational maps' or 'mind maps', participant-driven exercises where the learners re-create their personal experience in the forms of maps. Not only does this exercise weave together the different elements of the interview into a visual form, but it creates the opportunity for the participants to *think* (either silent or aloud) *relationally* about intercultural experience. Bagnoli describes this process as

> the introduction of a simple task within the context of an interview, [which] may be very helpful for elicitation purposes. Focusing on the visual level allows people to go beyond a verbal mode of thinking, and this may help include wider dimensions of experience, which one would perhaps neglect otherwise. (Bagnoli 2009: 566)

In practice, the participants were given a pen, a blank sheet of paper, and "a set of felt tips" (Bagnoli 2009: 555), and were asked to draw a mind map about their intercultural experience. I asked them: "Could you draw a mind map about your intercultural experience?" and left it open as to whether the map would refer to experiences in a particular country or focus rather on the process of their intercultural learning on a more

abstract level. I thereby aimed to leave space for the participants to foreground their own thoughts about central themes and perspectives on thinking about interculturality. I did not specify any definite structure of the map either. I was curious which form of visualisation the participants would choose by themselves. Occasionally, one or more language learners did not know what a mind map was in general, which in that case made me scribble a small version of it at the side of the paper. This use of open instruction connects here with our initial aim of investigating intercultural language learning from a creative and crafting perspective, as outlined in Chapter Seven.

When I first included mind maps I placed them at the beginning of the interview and used them as points of reference to structure the following talk in accordance with the items on the language learners' map. However, it turned out to be hard for the participants to start with a complex task like this, which urged me to place the mind maps at the end of the interview. In this position, they often functioned as a form of *summary* of the themes we talked about and related those to 'the greater whole' of the experience, thereby limning connections between the different focal points of our conversation. This gave the participants a further chance to reflect about the most important themes for themselves, which they did in very diverse ways. I did not include all of the participants' mind maps collected during the research process into this thesis, as not every interview entered this thesis in form of a 'walk'. As well, I became aware of arts-based methods half way through my research, which is why several of the 'walks' are not accompanied by a mind map.

A final note: another element I initially planned and started to implement in the method, was the drawing of *timelines*. Each participant I included in this exercise was asked to draw a timeline of a 'normal day' in her or his life, adding activities on one side, and the places and times those activities took place on the other. Let us have a look on the following timeline, produced by Chan.
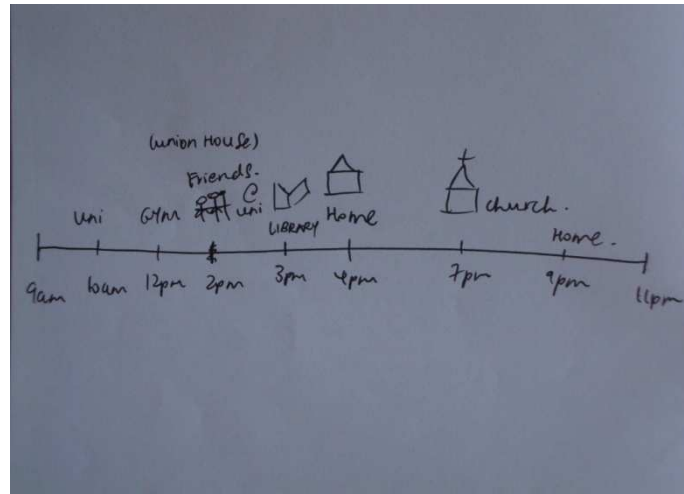
Figure 34: Chan's timeline

After I collected four or five timelines I honestly was not sure about their quality and their purpose, fearing them to be 'too simplifying'. I therefore decided to stop this exercise for the coming interviews. However, it would be good to return to this exercise in a moderated form in a different setting or different study.

Let me summarise the main arguments of this section on sensing: within the realm of multisensory ethnography I argue for the rethinking of the ethnographic process as a participatory process that includes the senses in observational research. This decision aims to address the multisensory and embodied aspects of intercultural learning, which are in between tangibility and intangibility. The ethnographer is understood as an emplaced researcher, who aims to break down hierarchies of conventional interview-structures while sharing (inter-) cultural practices in situ. In addition, visual as well as arts-based methods have been added to investigate the 'sensing' of a particular situation, place, or meaning and their interrelated modes (and to go beyond a merely textual mode of research). I would like to conclude with Mason and Davies, who describe sensory methodology as a "critical practice [...] that incorporates a critical appreciation of the complex roles of the sensory, the tangible and the intangible, in everyday lives" (Mason & Davies 2009: 588). Addressing research under this premise acknowledges language learners not only as ethnographers but as critical sensory learners too.

Melbourne

I came here without imagination. It always lives up to it

(Vasu)

I n the second Spanish class I joined in Melbourne I met Vasu, who came from India to do a Masters in 'Sustainable Energies' at Melbourne University. We meet on a Wednesday afternoon at Melbourne Railway Station and 'walk and talk' over the next couple of hours through the inner city of Melbourne, following the route Vasu's feet suggest. While we are walking, Vasu tells me that what impressed him the most during his first days in Melbourne "was the lack of people. I come from the second most populated country in the world. In India it would be impossible walking like this. I was like 'Yes, I have space'." I am curious and ask:

> U   So how did you imagine Australia?
> V   I came here without imagination. It always lives up to it.
> U   What do you mean with 'it lives up to it'?
> V   I came here without any expectation, I did not expect anything because I came here without knowing [---].
> U   But did you read a lot before you came?
> V   I did. Just the basic habits you know, food and sport and music and that...
> U   And did you find this resonating when being here?
> V   When I came here I never compared, I came here fresh, open.

I am surprised by Vasu's expression 'it always lives up to it', and it seems as if Vasu refuses to judge experience based on comparison, possibly in order to live in the moment, to 'come fresh and open'. As our walk continues the wind blows quite strongly and we stop to observe possums in a park close to the Melbourne Exhibition centre (see Vasu's picture).

Figure 35: Vasu's guided walk 1

We continue walking towards the margin of Melbourne's downtown and our walk-talk keeps circling around the element of movement and the diverse ways of orientating in an unfamiliar town:

> U   Did you find it easy to get an orientation in town?
> V   I miss the orientation here in town. Oh, you mean orientate in place or orientate in life?
> U   I meant in place.
> V   I'm used to travel by myself a lot. I'm walking.
> U   And orientation for life?
> V   Oh, it's OK. I really stick to myself, Spanish was another reason to meet some more people.
> U   OK.
> V   I don't really have many friends here. It's OK, I like to walk around and keep myself busy.

U	Are you in general happy here?
V	Actually I'm missing my social circle I'm used to.
U	You mean friends?
V	Yes.

The constant switching of the dimensions of orientating as a social mode as well as a geographical mode is at the heart of our walk, and moves along with the static rhythm of our feet. Vasu stops to make a picture from the former Parliament house, an impressive Victorian building which is now used for weddings and public events.

Figure 36: Vasu's guided walk 2

Our conversation goes on as follows:

U	Are they still having the Parliament here?
V	No, it is in Canberra.
U	Ah, OK!
V	It was the national Parliament before they moved it.
U	I remember that the houses in India look a bit the same, right? This monumental...
V	It's all the Victorian British influence.
U	So did you find things similar here in Melbourne?
V	No, no, not at all. It is very different.
U	How?
V	The architecture. Everything. It's more closed and conservative, competitive in India.
U	A more closed community?
V	Yes, most of us go out...

After a short break while crossing a busy junction, our talk continues in the following way:

V	In India, there are many small communities, all put together. The family is more important. Arranged marriages still take place.
U	How did you learn about these differences? Did you consciously realise them?
V	This is Lonsdale Street?
U	Yes, you are never really lost here [the city centre, U.W.].
V	Yes, it's little.
U	What do you mean again?
V	It is something that I noticed...
U	Do you feel comfortable with it?

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V	*Actually not. I'm a really detached person.*
U	*Detached from home or...?*
V	*Let me find words for you. I believe in making my own relationships other than preset my relationships. Like I told you, back home it is a very [---]. And family is a lot more as to migrant family. For me, I believe everyone should be left in his own life.*
U	*So more individual?*
V	*Yes, that is a better way of putting it actually. (…)*
U	*The idea of being home and on your way.*
V	*Yes, I want to travel like I said. Base myself in one place and keep travelling from there. I try to find a balance.*
U	*How do you find a balance here?*
V	*Here, I don't find a balance because it is like the first time I stayed away from home for such a long period. During my undergrad I stayed in a hostel, but it was away for two and a half hours and I used to go home and back. After coming here it is going to be a year that I haven't gone back home.*

While we attach and detach meaning to the surrounding places and routes, our talk circles around the same themes. Vasu's wish to be independent and 'on the move' correlates with the fact that he simultaneously misses his family and 'social circle'. Vasu's image of the world is characterised by the idea that it "becomes a smaller place," which he explains as "the fact that something happens thousands of miles away and that affects you anywhere in the world." We end our conversation wondering about the effect of mastering a language, and Vasu says, "Lots of people have this fascination, living in a different language. My fascination is living in many different countries. So I keep travelling."

From the notebook:

Vasu's walk can be read as a mini-performance of intercultural encounter and exploration 'on foot'. While we are walking, Vasu and I are tackling important issues of intercultural experience and connecting those to the space around us. Our talk is constantly interrupted by locating ourselves in Melbourne's downtown, and this physical orientation transforms to a metaphor for social orientation, with both themes seeming to be closely intertwined. As we share our first experiences in Melbourne, place is here not only 'around us' – it is very much a trigger for particular themes, which might not emerge and visualise itself otherwise. Vasu's aspiration for a mobile life, his refusal to compare different forms of space (while using the expression 'it always lives up to it'), and his balance between attaching and detaching to place, family, and friends are key moments of our walk in and around the element of movement. Finally a note to one disadvantage of 'moving interviews': as I figured out later, the strong wind caused many side noises on my recording. Some parts of the interview remained as such in only fragmented form.

Chapter Nine: Mobilising method
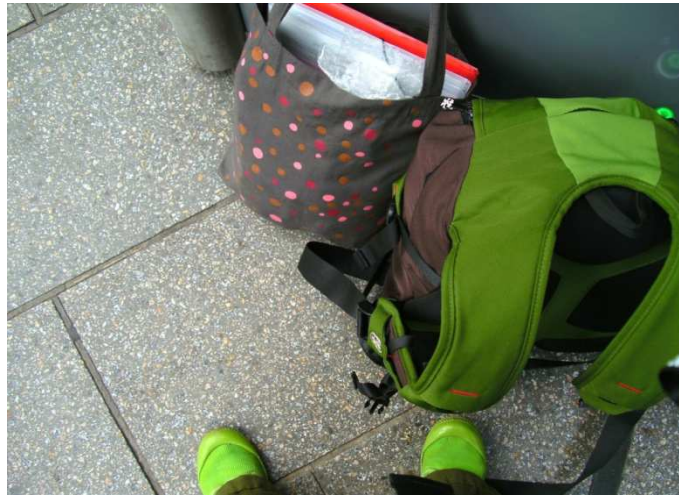
Figure 37: Multiple Sites

I mentioned earlier my focus on three methodological elements: the senses, movement, and 'multilocality'. Having clarified those modes and foci of this research that embrace the multisensory dimension of intercultural learning, this section aims to include the mobile elements of intercultural language learning, and situates the research in place and space. What characterises this chapter is the translation of mobility, networks, and flow into method while referring to the particular understanding of the intercultural field, which I outlined in Path Two.

Multiple sites

> In order to follow such an object that travels across multiple fieldsites, an ethnographic mode other than that, which is orientated towards the traditional, single-site is needed. (Pierides 2010: 181)

Julie Scott Jones, in the book, *Ethnography in Social Science Practice* (2010), recalls the following first impressions of studies on ethnography:

> My introduction to ethnography came as a first-year social anthropology undergraduate. My first week of lectures was on Bronislaw Malinowski's fieldwork in the Trobriand Islands (see Young 1979), given by a deeply charismatic lecturer who had spent years doing ethnographic field research in the Amazon. By the end of that week, I had learnt two basic 'truths': first that ethnographic field research was what social anthropologists 'did' and, second that Malinowski was the 'founding father' of all things ethnographic. Furthermore, ethnography entailed long-term participant observation in far-flung, 'exotic' places, where the researcher might even 'go native' (that is over-identity with the research participants and thus lose

all sense of objectivity), and that was not necessarily a bad thing. (Jones 2010: 3)

The field and practices of ethnography certainly have changed a lot, especially in the last thirty years. The elements of ethnographic research, Jones articulates, belong now to a 'romanticised' image of the ethnographer: the white man who sets out in order to get immersed in the society of 'natives', aiming to describe the 'exotic' nature of 'strange' cultures in a thick and compelling piece of writing – an ethnography. This description is certainly exaggerated, but indicates some of the core elements of the radical critique ethnography has faced since the early 1970s. The ethnography of forty years ago was a method circulating around 'participant observation' in a *single and clearly defined locality*, and which expected the ethnographer to analyse the social processes from a distance – to maintain the status of an external observer and avoid complete conversion (Burrell 2009: 182).

Transnational ethnography

Jenna Burrell, in her article, *The Fieldsite as a Network: A Strategy for Locating Ethnographic Research* (2009), explains the term 'fieldsite' as the following:

> The term fieldsite refers to the spatial characteristics of a field-based research project, the stage on which the social processes under study take place. For ethnographers, defining this space is an important activity that traditionally takes place before and in the early stages of fieldwork. It involves identifying where the researcher should ideally be located as a participant observer. Once fieldwork concludes, an ethnography can be written. (Burrell 2009: 182)

Gupta and Ferguson (1997) argue that the origin of anthropology as a discipline was centred around the idea of a well-defined physical site as the correct focus of ethnographic fieldwork. The practice of fieldwork was centred on one specific location, which the ethnographer chose according to the focus of his study or phenomenological interest. In this sense, *a fieldsite was and is not discovered but constructed*. Burrell describes this as follows:

> An ethnography cannot be written without at some point defining this spatial terrain where the social phenomenon under study took place. This is both an act of exclusion and inclusion, indicating what the research does and does not cover. A realization that the fieldsite is constructed rather than discovered is crucial to contemporary practice. (Burrell 2009: 182)

The emergence of transnational space, the increased global mobility, and the deterritorialisation of social realities outlined in Path Two urged ethnography to rethink and re-evaluate its methods and concepts of place and space. Transnational ethnography was a product of these processes and was characterised by 'rethinking the field' – a phrase, which became a central element of debates in anthropology until the present. Hall adds to this point:

> Rethinking the 'field' has become a significant, and productive, challenge for qualitative researchers (see, for example, Amit, 2000). This questioning of place and territory as settings for qualitative inquiry proceeds from a widening recognition of fluidity and movement, of a mobile world in which people and things, influences and effects, work across space and at a distance, breaching the boundaries of location. (Hall 2009: 571-572)

The changed global structures and relations made clear that the local fieldsite can no longer be understood except as a part of the global whole (Augé 1995). Within an ethnography as such, the notion of culture as "stationary" was transformed to an understanding of culture as "constituted by intersection and flow" (Burrel 2009: 183). The blurred borders between dimensions of macro and micro, or global and local made it difficult to find what was typically understood as a suitable fieldsite. Anthropologists and ethnographers moved on to new issues, relocating the centre of fieldwork from 'far away' to the 'own society', and to the interconnected spaces 'in between' those locations.

Multi-sited ethnography

One of the most influential writers in ethnography to address the matter of the fieldsite is George Marcus. In his article, *Ethnography in/of the World System: the Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography* (1995), he speaks about

> an emergent methodological trend in anthropological research that concerns the adaptation of long-standing modes of ethnographic practices to more complex objects of study. Ethnography moves from its conventional single-site location, contextualized by macro-constructions of a larger social order, such as the capitalist world system, to multiple sites of observation and participation that cross-cut dichotomies such as the 'local' and the 'global', the 'life-world' and the 'system'. Resulting ethnographies are therefore both in and out of the world system. (Marcus 1995: 95)

In Marcus's conception of a multi-sited ethnography, movement is understood as central to social practice, and culminates in a 'mobile ethnography', a theme we will return to in the following section. Beyond this, Marcus highlights the "unexpected trajectories in tracing a cultural formation across, and within, multiple sites of activity that destabilise the

distinction, for example, between life-world and system, by which much ethnography has been conceived" (Marcus 1995: 96). Within this reconfiguration, traditional elements of anthropological method, such as participant observation and the single-bounded location, were opened up for 'multilocality' and joined by a 'research imaginary', thereby considering "a sense of the changing presuppositions, or sensibilities ... that informs the way research ideas are formulated and actual fieldwork projects are conceived" (Marcus 1999: 10, cited in Candea 2007: 168).

Multi-sited ethnography takes place across, and within, multiple sites, and this is exactly where research about intercultural learning can both be traced and ethnographically located. Allowing the researcher to follow the circulation of persons, objects, meanings, and metaphors within their 'multilocality' means to highlight the important role of *journeys* and of the *paths* language learners take or are able to take while learning and being intercultural. Multi-sited ethnography indicates how intercultural learning and "coherent cultural processes may take place across great distances, linking up disparate entities. They may also take place on the move" (Burrell 2009: 183). Intercultural learning in this sense, links diverse social groups and places; research about intercultural learning has to follow the routes that show how these places are created and experienced 'on the move' and within multiple sites.

The fieldsites for this research

We just learned that both transnational and multi-sited ethnography are implemented in this research to include those elements of intercultural learning, which are characterised by movement and transformation. The following section focuses on the questions about the fieldsites of this research or in other words: can intercultural learning actually be located in one or more particular location? I have already pointed out that this research aims to go beyond the borders of the classroom and to better understand experienced forms of learning within locations of everyday life. Where and how can this be done?

I clearly remember sitting in a workshop about ethnographic research and being asked about my project. When coming to the details of my fieldsite, I struggled. Processes of intercultural language learning somehow take place 'everywhere' I said. I added that I just needed to find out where this 'everywhere' is located. But, in fact, this wasn't a good resolution for starting research and I felt confused. I decided to look for a particular fieldsite which indicates processes of intercultural language learning. After a

while, I was successful. A student I met on campus told me about a university club called 'Cross Cultures' which was especially open for students still learning the English language. The group met in a church very close to the university and was led by volunteers and a small group of permanent employees. Some weeks of participant observation passed and I managed to arrange several interviews and 'guided walks' outside the club and during week days. I kept writing my research diary, noting details of the meetings, and trying to understand their meanings within the frame of my research. I realised that the observations I needed for my research were not so much related to the happenings at 'Cross Cultures' itself, but rather to the particular life-worlds and journeys of the language learners I met there. The field I was looking for was incorporated into the individual fields the participants of my study moved in, and which they visualised for me during our walks. This one fieldsite of the 'Cross Cultures' club had transformed to a network of fieldsites with multiple locations, and I learned that, as the researcher, I needed to trace its manifold trajectories and intersections.

The multi-sited aspect to my fieldsite made it almost impossible to know beforehand where the fieldsites of this research would lie eventually. They were found as I progressed and traced the paths and went on new walks. During this study, the moment I met the participants was the first moment I started to learn about their fieldsites – which were narrated in a reverse direction (as experienced in the past), and can therefore be described as 'multiplex', a term Urry (2000) uses to highlight the interface of imaginative (in this case the researcher's imagination) and physical travel (the learner's experiences in situ). The intercultural experiences and sites of learning were *re-performed* in the form of narratives, and the fieldsites of this study were *re-created* as a "heterogeneous network" (Burrell 2009: 181).

The relational mode of my fieldsite formed a mirror for intercultural learning itself. Language learners are constantly weaving a net along the lines of their travels, experiences, and stories. In the case of this research it was not physical travel which made me follow the lines of the net; it was the stories of the participants which guided me and allowed me to follow their journeys to particular places, and to weave those together into one networked field of intercultural learning and experience. Ethnography in this sense performs as a 'place-making activity' (see Pink 2008, Ingold 2011) as the researcher follows the different strands and lines the participants follow. While recognising the fluidity, diversity, and interconnectivity of those trajectories, intercultural experience is

observed within a *multi-directional* research frame which might bring to light unexpected relationships that are not immediately obvious. Intercultural language learning is here a relational experience of movement across multiple locations, which I considered in the methodological orientation of this research.

Some additional comments are needed about the diverse fieldsites of this research. In the case of the 'guided walks', the fieldsites are physical places in actual time, guided by the participants within their own everyday locations. These sites included the university, benches in the park, coffee shops, malls, churches or other more specific places. The autoethnographic writings build as well on the fieldsites of the everyday and my own intercultural moments in a variety of places. Within this thesis there is a slight situational focus on Egypt based on the fact that my personal life was closely connected to this place during the time of my PhD and before. One part of the heterogeneous network of multiple fieldsites I was working in is therefore Egypt. The two other geographical focal points are Melbourne and Glasgow. Together with Egypt, these two sites form the triangle of places I was in, remembering and missing, during most of the last three years.

Let me summarise this section about multiple sites: research about intercultural learning transgresses the scope of *one* field, and focuses instead on multiple locations while emphasising the interconnectivity and fluidity of the intercultural field and the particular fieldsites. Following a research object around the world turns our attention towards the fragmented nature of the social within an interconnected world. In his wonderful book, *Lines. A Brief History* (2007), Tim Ingold writes about the lines, threads, borders, and traces in this world and how these are interlinked and perceived in diverse ways. The fieldsite of intercultural learning is, according to Ingold, made up of multiple lines which are crossing or cutting each other, creating meaning as threads, traces or cracks, creases or ghostly lines of borders, and constellations (ibid.).

Figure 38: Walking

Not only, then, do we walk because we are social beings, we are also social
beings because we walk. (Ingold & Vergunst 2008: 2)

Re-performing journeys

Movement in the course of intercultural encounter happens on both a physical level
(travelling by plane, car, bus, train, on foot, and so forth), and a social level, as outlined in
Chapter Six. Recalling those thoughts, a part of the conversation I had with Joshua about
his intercultural experiences in Spain, comes to my mind:

J   *I basically spent the whole time I was there, it was about nine months,
studying, walking around from, you know, between the different faculties.
So I definitely felt like the walking around and the exploring was kind of
really connecting me to the place a lot and much more so than when you
are in a car or a bus or something, you know, where you just fly past.*

U   *So it's something like a different way of moving?*

J   *Yes, definitely that movement around the city and the slow movement, you
know, walking, you really get to know the streets and that kind of thing and
also going out. There's a really big tapas culture in Granada and it's free,
when you buy a drink you get your tapas. That was a big thing, sort-of
meeting with people to go out for tapas. And that's again sort-of little bars
and you walk from one to the next one, and that was a big part of getting to
know a lot. I mean, I'd say, walking for me was kind of one of the most
important ways in sort-of establishing a connection.*

U   *Also a way of orientating maybe? And trying to get a mental map of what it
is like?*

J   *Definitely. I did have a feeling of sort-of… When I left, just to go to
Portugal a couple of times on the bus and with friends, [when] coming back
I had a feeling of coming home in a lot of ways, so I definitely, towards the*

end had a feeling of being really comfortable there.

U   *Did you have specific places which were like central places, like a coffee shop or something significant?*

J   *There was a tapas bar that was kind of really close to us, and there was also a spot I really liked to go, walking up the river and behind the castle and that kind of thing, which was really nice. And we had a dog so I'd often go up there with friends [...]. I had a lot of people, friends who were travelling around Europe and who sort-of came and stayed with me for a little while, and I'd often take people up there.*

What Joshua points out illustrates beautifully the relation between the two levels of mobility and social transformation. Walking, in Joshua's experience, is more than the simple action of getting from one place to another; it is much more a form of *orientating* and *getting a sense* for the environment he is moving in (see Chapter Ten). It is, however, not the movement alone which shapes his experience. It is Joshua himself who, within his particular location, becomes a centre of movement. That is to say Joshua becomes an access point for his friends who are visiting him as they join him at the places he finds to be significant. The question arises: in which way can method address this orientating form of intercultural experience or, in other words, 're-perform the journey'?

'Mobile methods' turn towards movement in interdisciplinary ways and are grounded on the relevance of movement in present (global) societies. Ross et al., in their research regarding *Moving Stories: Using Mobile Methods to Explore the Everyday Lives of Young People in Public Care* (2009), remind us that:

> The new mobilities paradigm in the social sciences has turned attention to the ways in which mobile research methods can be utilised to understand everyday experiences through embodied, multisensory research experiences. Journeys themselves are focused upon as dynamic, place-making practices foregrounding movement, interactivity and the multi-sensory, focusing attention on research relationships, contexts and engagements. (Ross et al. 200: 606)

Mobile methods are understood as a practical example of spatial theory which underlines most of the writings about mobility and mobile methods. There are three elements of mobile methods which I have employed for the scope of this research. These are:

- the idea of ethnographic research as a place-making process;
- the idea of walking as a form of the social; and
- the relation between modes of movement and narratives.

Let me explain those points in more detail.

Step by step

> The rhythm and practice of walking leads to a different understanding from a static one; you experience the world differently if you are walking, cycling, driving or sitting still. (Moles 2008: 1)

Placing movement in the centre of a study requires the use of a particular set of methods which allow the notion of mobility to enter the research on a practical level without disconnecting the researcher and the participant from the 'outside world'. In this research, I chose 'ethnography on foot' as a central element to incorporate movement, space, and place into the research design with both ethnographer and participants being 'ethnographers on foot'. Tim Ingold and Jo Lee Vergunst introduce the theme of mobility within research in their book, *Ways of Walking. Ethnography on Foot* (2008):

> To think and feel is not to set up a relation of external contact or correspondence between subjective states of mind and objectively given conditions of the material world, but rather to make one's way through a world-in-formation, in a movement that is both rhythmically resonant with the movements of others around us – whose journeys we share or whose paths we cross – and open-ended, having neither a point of origin nor any final destination. (Ingold & Vergunst 2008: 2)

The authors argue that ethnography is, at its essence, a method designed for being on foot and for walking. They write: "ethnographers are accustomed to carrying out much of their work on foot" (Ingold & Vergunst 2008: 3). Walking itself, however, has, according to these authors, not yet been carefully considered in ethnographic studies about place and the social: "But while living with a group of people usually means walking around with them, it is rare to find ethnography that reflects on walking itself" (ibid.). Instead they suggest placing walking at the heart of the ethnographic method and understanding the social in this vein as a form of movement and embodied experience:

> Careful, ethnographic analysis of walking […] can help us rethink what being social actually means. […] Amidst the clamour of calls to understand the body as an existential ground for the production of cultural form, rather than only as a source of physical and metaphorical means for its expression (Csordas 1990, 5), we tend to forget that the body itself is grounded in movement. (Ingold & Vergunst 2008: 2)

Central to Ingold and Vergunst's argument is the idea that social life is "walked" and rooted in "the actual ground of lived experience" (ibid., see also Ingold 2010). It is this

expression of 'the social as walked', which I adopt for this research. Giving walking a central role within this method underlines those moments of intercultural learning which are centred in orientation, be those the first strolls in an unknown town; walking with maps in search of specific places; or moments of getting lost and suddenly remembering the way. Such movements are crucial within intercultural experience and form, with their focus on place-making practices and sensing, the spine of ethnography on foot. Language learners are ethnographers on foot and the walks in this thesis give a practical example of this argument (see Chapter Ten). In order to investigate how language learners are orientating themselves, aspects of setting out, stumbling, and carrying on transform to a focal point of mobile research.

But how can a methodology like this be enacted in reality? Ingold and Vergunst suggest a focus on "*how* people go along on foot" and ask further: "How do they prepare and set out, and how do they carry on through places in which, for any number of reasons, it may be difficult to walk? How do they arrive?" (2008: 3, original italics). To find out about these forms of movement relies on another element related to the observation of walking: the narrative of the participant.

Walking and storytelling

While the ways people walk are an essential focus of ethnographies on foot, another centre of attention are the stories and narratives which are shared through, and while, walking. De Certeau explains this as follows:

> Every story is a travel story – a spatial practice. For this reason, spatial practices concern everyday tactics, are part of them, from the alphabet of spatial indication ("It's to the right", "Take a left"), the beginning of a story the rest of which is written by footsteps, to the daily "news" ("Guess who I met at the bakery?"), television news report ("Teheran: Khomeini is becoming increasingly isolated…"), legends (Cinderella is living in hovels), and stories that are told (memories and fiction of foreign lands or more or less distant times in the past). These narrated adventures, simultaneously producing geographies of actions and drifting into the commonplaces of an order, do not merely constitute a "supplement" to pedestrian enunciations and rhetorics. They are not satisfied with displacing the latter and transposing them into the field of language. In reality, they organize walks. They make the journey, before or during the time the feet perform it. (de Certeau 1984: 115-116)

The 'narrated adventures' de Certeau is writing about, help us to visualise the importance of narratives for practices of place-making. In de Certeau's view, narratives form nets,

which spread out before or during an actual walk. It is in this vein that language learners follow the lines of pre-existing narrated stories, be it by a textbook, the travel agency or by friends. Narratives are an integral part of intercultural language learning in a way that they are "written by footsteps" (de Certeau: 116).

Consequently, narratives have been given a central part in this research in accordance with the methodological field of 'narrative inquiry'*,* a method concerned with "understanding experience as told, through both research and literature" (Savin-Baden & van Niekerk 2007: 459). In locating this research in the field of narrative inquiry, I stress the importance of narratives as an integral part of educational experience and, more importantly, the human need for stories. As Savin-Baden and van Niekerk put it: "humans are storytelling organisms who lead storied lives" (ibid.). Furthermore, in connecting narratives with movement, the research *relocates stories back into place* and focuses on the relationship of place and narrative. Telling narratives, then, is not only a following of different stories walked and experienced before, it is the creation of new paths, routes, alleys, and trails, which form our network of intercultural experience. Let me conclude with a quote by Ingold and Vergunst, who write: "Just as word follows word along a line of text, however, so print follows print along a track" (Ingold & Vergunst 2008: 8).

Guided Walks

Figure 39: Megan's guided walk 1

Recently, 'talking whilst walking' (Anderson 2004), 'go alongs' (Kusenbach 2003; Carpiano 2009), 'guided walks' (Ross et al. 2009) or 'fieldwork on foot' (Lee & Ingold 2006) have been acknowledged as qualitative methods which give insight "into the way people and places combine" (Moles 2008: 1). These forms of walking interviews are

understood as an "ideal technique for exploring issues around people's relationships with space" (Jones et al. 2008: 2). This methodological 'technique' takes "the research process out of fixed (safe, controlled) environments" and back into more natural spaces. Jones et al. describe the roots of walking interviews as follows:

> Of course the idea of studying life in motion is nothing new. Anthropological fieldwork and techniques such as participant observation often ask the research to study the subject in motion, rather than taking a participant out of their everyday context to ask them questions about their life. (Jones et al. 2008: 2)

In this research, I chose 'guided walks' as a form of walking interviews which places the participant in the centre of the walk while letting her or him 'guide' the route. Guided walks involve a participant "leading the researcher through *locales of significance* [...] that formed part of their local geographies" (Ross et al. 2009: 605, own emphasis). The term 'guided' implies that the participants have a chance to "convey their movement throughout and site themselves in their everyday environments" (Ross et al. 2009: 608). The term is, however, a working term based on the insight that walking in a pair is not a simple action of following, but rather an exchange of different ways of orientating, in which a changed perception of place enables participant and researcher to create 'new' and emerging spaces.

This place-making activity is a process of mutual negotiation, and thinking about space and experience. Ross et al. report from their practice with guided walks:

> These interactions on the move and conversations that took place within them were interspersed with the mundane. Space for narratives to be shared was opened up, closed down, diverted, and revisited in response to the negotiation of these shared experiential journeys. (Ross et al. 2009: 608)

A walk in this sense is a "co-generated research encounter" (Ross et al. 2009: 609) which moves along through the participant's 'favourite spots' or places and typical events occurring along the way. In this sense, guided walks are *non-directional,* and the role of the researcher is only of an orientating nature. Jones et al. (2008: 2) exemplify this when pointing towards the changed power-relations between interviewer and interviewee and the "significant effect on the kinds of data that are generated." Repeatedly throughout this study, participants mentioned the feeling of 'ease' and 'relaxation' as soon as we started walking – a transformation from formal to informal, in other words. It happened as well that participants started to ask a lot of questions about myself as the researcher and the circumstances of my study. Those often personal questions were interwoven with daily life

features (reasons for coming to Australia; my job; do I like Melbourne; and so forth) and created a familiar atmosphere. The destination or the focal point of the walk became more or less irrelevant and walking itself was the modus, which allowed new questions to emerge. The routes taken were then not always expected and varied significantly. I would like to exemplify this through a short excursus of an experience during my guided walk with Megan.

I went on a walk with Megan. Megan decided to take me to shops only. She explained to me, in detail, which chocolate she likes and where to buy the best clothes according to their prices. On first reflection, this experience disappointed me and I was wondering what this walk should tell me. What I did not realise at this stage was that the non-directional form of the walking interview made Megan decide to highlight shopping as a part of her everyday life and her intercultural life-world. Whereas I would not have given shopping a central position in the complex entanglements of interculturality before that, I realised through this experience that it does in fact have a crucial impact. Shopping is relevant to interculturality, not only because of the basic need of shopping itself, and therefore its central role in everyday life, but also because of the manifold impressions that may stay with us after experiencing, for example, people's friendliness, the variety and difference of products, or the use of new language. I came to see the role of shopping in a new light. I began to see it as a way of exploring space which connects different places to experiences 'en route'.

Unconsciously, I expected the data generated to be different from what the walk with Megan created. This happened simply because Megan's life-world was different to my own life-world and made me unable to see the relevance of it, before Megan pointed it out to me simply by following her daily routes. This experience was of a very important nature for me and helped me to learn a lesson regarding the invisible and often unconscious relations between researcher, participant, and space. For me, shopping became an intercultural experience.

Let me return to our methodological theme of walking – as a form of a 'slow mobility' in correspondence to 'fast mobilities' (Urry & Elliot 2010). Walking allows one to give time and space to focus on sensory elements which are often overlooked in a quicker pace of movement. Walking creates a feeling of 'ease', of moving naturally and therefore

conversing naturally. It is in this vein that I included the taking of photographs during the walks (see Chapter Eight), which created moments of stopping, resting, and reflecting.

On a practical level, I asked the participants to show me their 'places of significance' in Melbourne and to take a photograph wherever and whenever they would like. This instruction fell together with the open research mode and followed from my intention to let the participants become actively involved in the research process. The pictures taken by the participants can be interpreted under the premise of a *metaphor* – the objectives chosen depicted the participants' individual ways of perceiving and experiencing place and were connected to the narratives. Sarah Pink mentioned in her article, *Walking with Video* (2007b), that the use of walking created "a sense of closeness to their [the participants, U.W.] experience" (Pink 2007b: 247). The images can give a deeper understanding of the interrelatedness of self and place in each individual context, and the ways of making sense of intercultural experience.

A final note: it is clear that photographs mainly capture visual elements of multisensory experience. Initially, I was planning to include *soundscapes* in the research by asking the participants to record 'daily sounds' during their intercultural experience. However, this confronted me with strategic problems (such as the handling of large audio files) so that eventually those plans did not become reality. However, where possible (dependent on the quality of the recording), I included the auditory background of the guided walks in the analysis of the data.

In conclusion: guided walks combine multisensory, visual, and mobile research methods and take the intercultural experiences of the participants in non-directional and non-hierarchical ways. Although mobile interviewing is still at an "experimental stage" (Jones et al. 2008: 7), it is widely acknowledged that it has great potential as a new creative methodology as it can "move the collection of the interview data in productive and sometimes entirely unexpected directions" (ibid.). The walks in this research were in two distinct forms: namely guided walks and 'virtual walks'. Let me explain the latter in more detail.

Virtual Walks

In contrast to the guided walks, the 'virtual walks' took the form of an interview which was held in a conventional form (while sitting and chatting over a cup of coffee). The

participants were asked to send me pictures after our talk. I decided to transform the guided walks into virtual walks at one particular point during the research process when I had the chance to interview Australian students who had just returned from studying or being on an exchange abroad (for literature on the theme of 'studying abroad' see Byram & Feng 2006 or Coleman 2005). Since those students already walked their intercultural journey, the form of the virtual walk has been created in order to get (visual) access to their experience of places of significance. With the virtual walks, I aimed to capture intercultural experience and the entanglement of place and self in a *retrospective* visual form along the lines of the interview.

The instruction given to the participants followed the same open scheme as in the guided walks. I asked for three to five images which captured significant intercultural experiences during their journeys abroad. I did not specify the contents the images should contain but highlighted again my interest in significant places and situations of their intercultural experiences. The virtual walks allowed me in this way to join intercultural language learners for a walk not physically, but virtually – through the stories told within the photographs. Additionally, I asked for a short description of the images in one to three sentences indicating the role and meaning of the situation shown within the photograph. In asking the participants to do so, I aimed to capture those aspects of their experiences which lie at the intersection of sensing and remembering. The images and short descriptions I received often built upon the contents of the interviews, and helped to visualise them. For example, Joshua sent the following image to me after our talk and it reconnects with the part of our conversation which I recorded at the beginning of this section on 'walking'.

Climbing up the hill behind the Alhambra with friends from Granada and Melbourne. It was great to show friends from Melbourne some of the special spots I had found in Granada.

Figure 40: Joshua's guided walk 1

In summary, walking became a key research method for this thesis – both practically and metaphorically. Building on my use of mobile methods and ethnography on foot, the experience of movement was integrated into this study through the form of guided walks as well as virtual walks. I pointed out earlier that guided walks aim to level out feelings of hierarchy within interviews and take place in everyday environments. Narratives form a counterpart to photographs and follow, in this sense, de Certeau's argument about narratives organising walks (de Certeau 1984: 116).

A word on the analysis

Let me add some remarks about the chosen form of analysis. I am doing so in order to conclude the last three chapters as well as to lead over to the final part on the findings and the conclusion of the undertaken research. The question guiding this section is then: what kind of analysis fits with an exploratory research design? In posing this question, I emphasise that I wish to keep the research steps as flexible and open as possible while having in mind the central elements of movement and transformation.

The basis for the analysis is 'grounded theory' (Glaser & Strauss 1967). For this research, I have been most interested in the inductive orientation of 'grounded theory', namely the movement *towards* a hypothesis instead of a movement *from* an already established hypothesis. This inductive way of analysing starts with the formulation of tentative questions and interests and follows the transformation of those into an emerging hypothesis

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or conclusion. It is not a linear, but rather a more circular process. The particular 'tools' employed for the analysis of this research (NVivo, metaphors, and storylines) do then exceed the pure form of grounded theory in the following ways.

NVivo

Some of my analysis of the qualitative data took place while using NVivo software. NVivo, a software developed for the analysis of qualitative research, helped me during the first stage of the analysis process with the storage and ordering of the large amount of input arising from twenty-six in depth-interviews as well as from the additional material of mind maps, photographs and fieldnotes collected. Organised around the essential form of a 'node', NVivo helps in locating quotes, and in linking quotes to the particular themes which are evolving from the coding-process. However, at one point of the research, I had about twelve pages of listed nodes and codes which exceeded the amount of information I was able to cope with. Whereas NVivo is a very useful tool for storing data and getting an overall view of the themes emerging, it did not help me with going into depth with the material or with understanding the relationships and notions 'in between'. A simple listing of the codes did indeed visualise the multiplicity of intercultural learning but did, in its form of *segregated elements,* not match with the notions of networks and transformation so crucial for this research. It was mainly through the second stage of the research (and as such mainly through the process of writing itself) that it became clear how these terms interacted with each other and which leading themes were emerging from them. Whereas the established codes were a helpful 'tool for remembering', they needed to be coupled with more poetic and creative forms of interpretation in order to capture the intangible and ephemeral aspects of intercultural encounter which this research is addressing.

Metaphors

The word 'metaphor' came up quite frequently during the course of this research and, in this sense, signifies its central role in the second stage of the analysis. Based on the work of Law (2004) who instead uses the term 'allegory' I understand metaphors as being at odds with codes and their underlying notions of representation. Law (2004: 88) writes that "we have lost the craft of saying or representing things indirectly" and yet adds that allegory has not been lost, but "rather that it is covertly practiced" (Law 2004: 89). In Law's opinion, reading between the lines is a core of allegorical analysis. He explains:

> [w]e are all steeped in the art of allegory. Natural scientists, social
> scientists, politicians, journalists, workers by hand and by brain, all of us are

expert allegorists. All of us are skilled in reading between the lines being fed to us. All of us are consummately skilled at saying what we mean rather than what we are saying. Politicians, advertisers, liars, diplomats, conciliators, priests, parents, partners, general practitioners – all of us trade in allegory, and all of us are skilled in the practices of decoding it. (ibid.)

Within this thesis, I highlight allegories in the form of metaphors which emerged from the intercultural field itself. Speaking about 'walking' as a metaphor for constant transformation and orientation, or including 'sensing' and the 'search for the ephemeral' into a field which is made up of quite stable and determined terminology, is one example of this metaphorical approach. Savin-Baden and van Niekerk explain the employment of metaphors then in the following manner:

> Using metaphor at an early stage of writing and formulating the data is often a way of beginning to see what is being said through metaphor that at first was not obvious. Thus examining metonymy and metaphor can promote insight into researchers' and participants tacit assumptions by exploring how such figurative terms are used. (Savin-Baden & van Niekerk 2007: 465)

Writing about the emerging metaphors helped me increasingly to understand not only the deeper impact of the narratives of the walks and interviews, but it also contributed to sorting out core-elements in less central themes.

It was through working with metaphors that an analytical framework was woven throughout the whole course of the research. Asking the participants, for instance, about moments of 'magic' in their intercultural learning experience allowed them to understand and explain in diverse ways what they thought about how the metaphor matched their experiences. I also tried as often as possible to encourage participants to join in the creation of new terms, engaging them in discussions about the phrases I was using, which were in some cases not familiar to the participants (such as 'intercultural learning' itself in the case of Thomas). One 'bonus question' of the interviews and walks was: "What is your favourite word in the language you are learning?" Normally an element of my classroom teaching, this practice, if transferred into the realm of an interview, encouraged a way of thinking about language in a creative, exploratory, and non-determining way. As such, the practice of metaphors contributed directly to the analysis for this research and re-created the latter as a process of 'sensing language'.

<u>Storylines</u>

In order to deal with the richness of the interviews without segregating their contents into categories and themes straight away, I created what I called a 'storyline' during the second phase of analysing my data. A storyline developed while going through each interview at a slow pace, extracting the most significant quotes, and trying to find out which story and themes the walks and interviews held. In bundling those extracts within one document, I connected the narratives as well with my voice – as a form of moderating and reflecting about its meanings for this research at the very same time. In this way, I embraced the data in an all-engaging way so that I was able to see connections, and to weave together the intersecting trajectories of the diverse journeys of the language learners participating in the study. Those (at first very large) documents were the foundation of the 'walks' which now crisscross this thesis and which are basically a shorter and revised version of the storylines. This process of elaborating the findings of the research with the theoretical work undertaken helped me to take the time to develop thoughts as well as to work on a further understanding of those moments 'in between'. Finally, the storylines were able to include the aspect of place into the 'walks' in reconnecting the diverse locations of learning with the narratives and their visualisations in one form. They did in this sense perform as a *networking tool* for the deeper understanding of the configuration of the intercultural experience in situ.

Let me conclude the last three chapters with an illustration of the method assemblage I have developed for this particular research project which is in the form of a summarising diagram:

Multisensory ethnography/ Visual methods

* Participants take photographs to visualise their intercultural encounter and places of significance as well as to illustrate the diverse ways of sensing place and experience
* Focus on multisensoriality as a theme during interviews and guided/virtual walks

Method assemblage

Transnational/ Multi-sited ethnography

* Researcher approaches the fieldsite from a transnational perspective
* Fieldsite consists of multiple locations, depending on the places, the participants had their intercultural experience in

Ethnography on foot/Guided walks/Virtual walks

* Participants show the researcher their places of significance during guided walks or virtual walks
* Both researcher and language learners are understood as ethnographers on foot

Arts-based method

* Participants compose a relational map about their intercultural experience
* Participants paint a timeline of a 'normal day' including the places of significance (not completed)

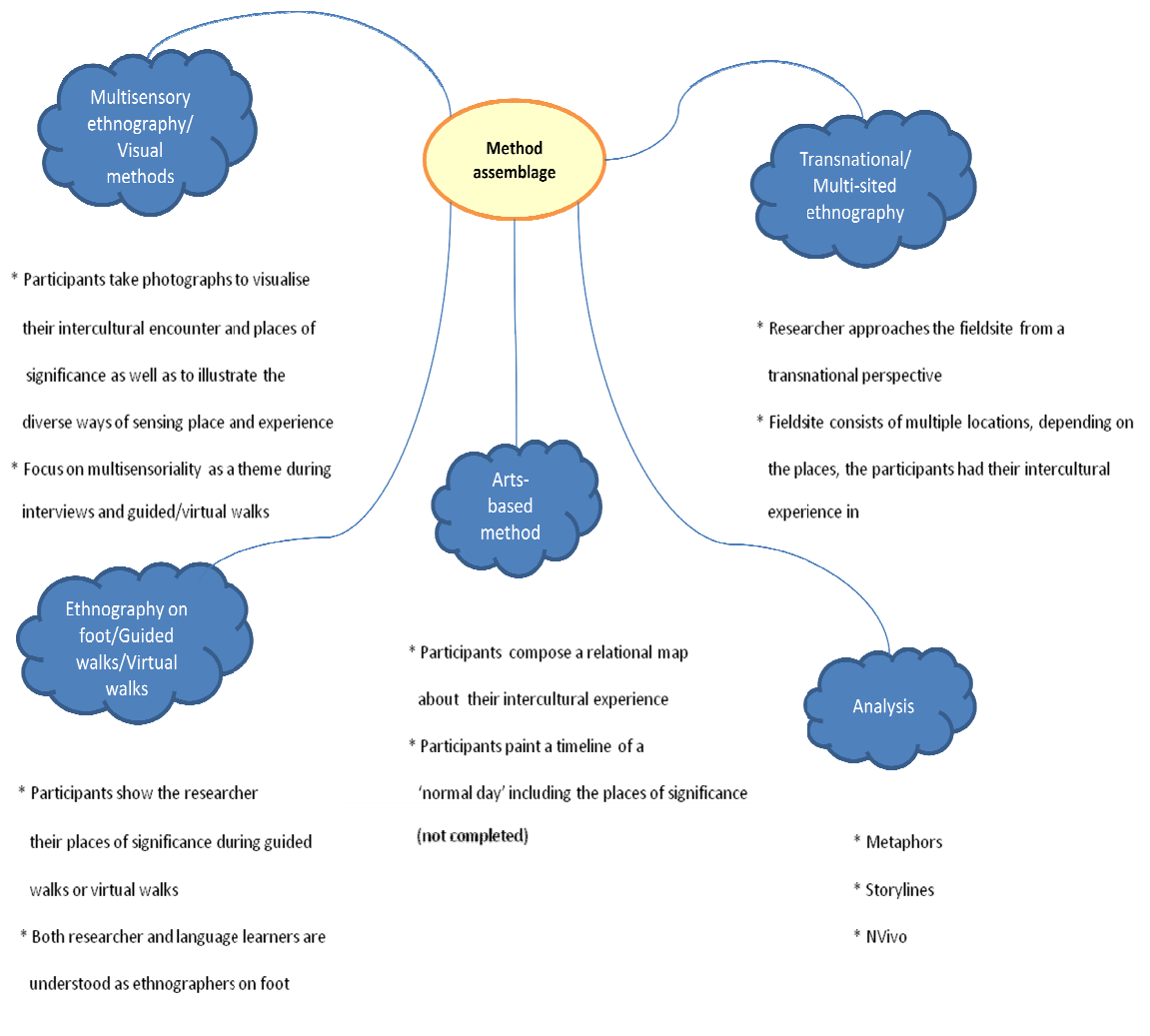**Analysis**

* Metaphors
* Storylines
* NVivo

Figure 41: The method assemblage of this research

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Granada

There is a certain magic in uncovering the mystery of language

(Joshua)

When I meet Joshua, he arrives late but walks slowly with a smile towards me and greets me with a kiss on the cheek. He emanates calmness and an easy going manner which Australians are stereotypically famous for. We sit down for a cup of coffee and I learn that Joshua is studying Politics, Portuguese, Spanish and French and is in the final year of his studies. While speaking about his journeys of studying three languages, he says that "connections" were the trigger to encourage him learning languages, such as the friendship of his mother with a French woman or his brother's journey to Spain. Furthermore, movies play an important role in Joshua's decision to go abroad and to engage interculturally:

> I had seen 'The Spanish Apartment' which is, I will explain it because you haven't seen it, […] basically a movie about what I did. It's quite a sort-of, cult movie among students, especially students who study languages and that kind of thing. And there are about five languages in the movie that get thrown around. It's about a French guy who goes on exchange in Barcelona and lives in a house of, I think there's a German, an Italian, an English girl and obviously him, and another French girl maybe; just like a mixed house, an international house. They have this exchange experience there and they have problems with the bureaucracy of the university, discussions about Europe, and sort-of, Catalonian dependence and that kind of thing. It's quite a realist movie in a lot of ways. It doesn't particularly romanticise the idea of going overseas, doing that sort-of exchange, but at the same time shows both sides of it, you know? But it definitely makes you want to experience the same thing.

Figure 42: Joshua's virtual walk 2

> A Spaniard, an Australian (me), a Pole and an Austrian talking Spanish and having a beer in Krokow, Andalucian flags on wrists and University of Granada jumper proudly displayed.

Joshua just recently returned from two years studying and travelling overseas. He spent one year as an exchange student in Granada, Spain and one year travelling in Europe and North- and South America. Regarding his choice of studying in Granada, he tells me:

> I chose to study in Granada because my brother, my oldest brother had previously studied in Holland and he didn't speak any Dutch. He did his exchange in English but had travelled around a bit, and had travelled around Spain and had told me that Granada was one of his favourite cities. So I, sort-of, had an idea that it was, you know, a good place to go out and a fun town and that kind of thing. I suppose I had an idea that Spanish people were kind of pretty big on going out and social

and yes, I suppose those were the kind of things that fed into my ideas of what it was going to be like.

During his first weeks, Joshua was walking a lot to "really get to know the streets" and says:

I felt the university campus was spread right throughout. Granada is a city of about 250,000 and the university campus is about similar size to Melbourne University; it's 60 or 70,000 students. And the campus: the different faculties are spread right throughout the city so I basically spent the whole time I was there, it was about nine months, studying, walking around from, you know, between the different faculties. So I definitely felt like the walking around and the exploring was kind of really connecting me to the place a lot and much more so than when you are in a car or a bus or something, you know, where you just fly past.
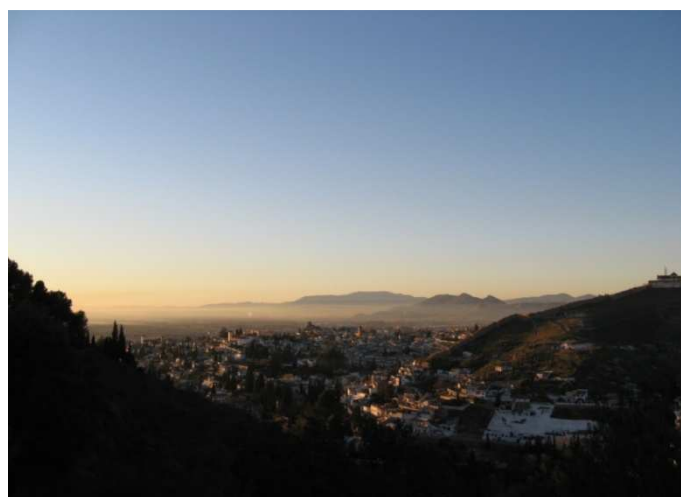
View over Granada.

Figure 43: Joshua's virtual walk 3

After a while staying in Granada, Joshua says: "When I left, just to go to Portugal a couple of times on the bus […], coming back I had a feeling of, sort-of, coming home in a lot of ways. So I definitely, towards the end, had a feeling of being really comfortable there." To feel in this way, Joshua took a particular effort in overstepping the boundaries of stereotypical perception: "I made an effort to talk to people and […] show them that I spoke Spanish, and I wasn't from the US, and I was from another place. Like, you know, you can have an interaction that maybe challenges a few of those stereotypes." The response happened in the following way: "A lot of people were sort-of impressed or unused to the idea that someone who was foreign would speak Spanish or whatever." Although people were often surprised seeing the 'Gringo' speaking Spanish, his appearance as a 'stranger' made him tired sometimes:

I mean, obviously, I don't look South American and a lot of people just assume that […] you are either European or American and you definitely get a lot of stereotypes about that. […] The most common is that you are really rich, and you have money just to burn and people will get quite upset sometimes if you don't want to buy something from them, something you just don't need. Because they think you've got so much money why doesn't it matter to you? 'Buy this from me, I'm poor'. And they don't really understand that, you know, maybe you don't have the capacity to just buy everything all the time.

Travelling to a place like New York made him then "just feel completely anonymous." During his journeys, Joshua met people "who I felt were kind of travelling in a really positive way, that they were forcing

themselves to experience the places and interact with the people and, kind of, connect with the places they went to." Joshua compares this to "the other extreme":

> [T]he people that fly in for two weeks and go on and see the tourist site and stay in an expensive hotel. Who [...] have their lonely planet and that kind of thing and who, for the vast majority of the time don't speak the language there and don't really interact with anyone there besides maybe the guide. Who are, sort-of, denied that access to the culture that you get with the language, and also with time. So I think that's definitely one of the advantages of learning a language that you then have access to the culture and that kind of thing, and you can learn in that respect.

Joshua adds that in his experience this "language barrier" often ended up in "really negative interaction which can feed prejudice and stereotype, [...] because you know there's very little interaction between people."
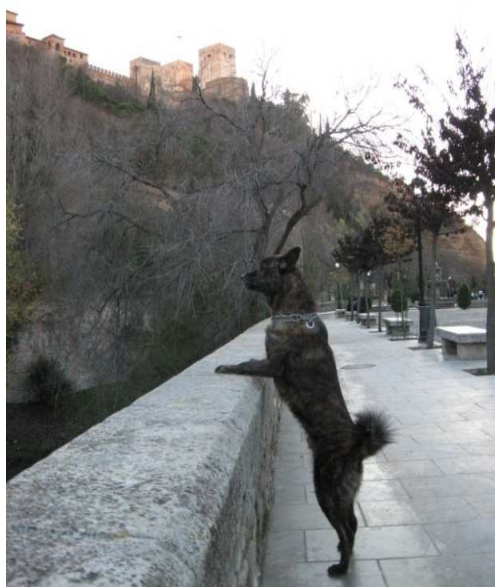
Exploring Granada with my flat mate's dog. Walking around with the dog made me feel at home and less like a sightseeing tourist.

Figure 44: Joshua's virtual walk 4

Joshua moves on mentioning that in "those moments [...] I was thinking, you know, this is an amazing experience. I couldn't have it if I didn't speak the language." "To be able to stay in someone's home and fit in, and to understand, and to be able to communicate with people was, is really special." In switching to another topic, we speak about the 'magic' of language learning. Joshua says:

> There is kind of a lot of mystery in language, you know? You listen to a foreign language, and thinking back, now, I can remember listening to people talking Spanish, and not understanding what they were saying. And there's definitely, sort-of, a certain magic in uncovering that mystery. It's like a secret code that suddenly you have access to, you know? There are definitely moments like that.

Thinking about the meaning of the term 'intercultural learning', Joshua understands this as "trying to work out that things don't translate that easily" and explains further:

> It's not important to learn, like, how do you say that in Spanish? [It is] more like what would you say in that same situation, which is really linking the culture in with the language. Because the

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language isn't just enough to explain what you say in a certain situation.

Joshua speaks about the changing perceptions of himself and his own personality while switching between languages. He tells me about a situation when a friend heard him speaking with his family on *Skype*: "and she said 'Wow, you sound so different in English'". Joshua comments that "it's almost like you are a different person" and goes on to say "so you definitely get a sense that your personality almost changes a bit, kind-of, moulds around your experience in the country, and with all the people. Like, I think my housemates were a big influence [...] on learning the language. I probably picked up a bit of their personality in actually learning the language."

Figure 45: Joshua's virtual walk 5

Lost with my flat mates in the Sierra Nevada (the mountains overlooking Granada). I went to the mountains with my flat mates to do a hike the second weekend in Granada. It was really difficult for me at the time to understand what they were saying and I assumed they knew what they were doing - they didn't! We got a bit lost and I was cursing my stupidity for having trusted them.

): the view we woke up to in the morning. After getting lost and camping in a spot, with no idea where we were. Next to the rock you can see that the tent we were sleeping in had collapsed - a pretty uncomfortable night's sleep. It's hard to be unhappy when you wake up to such a beautiful view though. Sometimes the best places are discovered when you have no idea where you are.

Figure 46: Joshua's virtual walk 6

In coming to the end of our talk and I ask Joshua how he balances his intercultural experiences. Joshua tells me that he tried to get the balance while distinguishing between "the really superficial interaction you might have with someone in the street, a restaurant or bar or whatever" and "being with someone, […] who you could form a bit more of a sort-of relationship with, and that helps to kind of balance the other side of it." In

general he says "I had really positive exchanges with people that for me were really valuable and I was learning a lot going there and having those interactions."

From the notebook: Joshua's intensive travelling has brought him to a variety of critical understandings. The importance of interaction is a key theme in Joshua's experience which centres on the insight that not being able to communicate in another language means to be 'denied the access to the culture that you get with the language and also with time'. To connect to people in a different language is then dependent on 'experiencing the places' with time. 'Flying in for two weeks' can, in Joshua's example, create a form of a border while causing 'really negative interaction which can feed prejudices and stereotypes'. The 'positive way of travelling' he refers to then is based on the understanding that 'things don't translate easily' and that 'language isn't just enough to explain what you say in a certain situation'. The 'sense that your personality almost changes a bit, kind of moulds around your experience' comes then together with Joshua's holistic understanding of encountering interculturality.
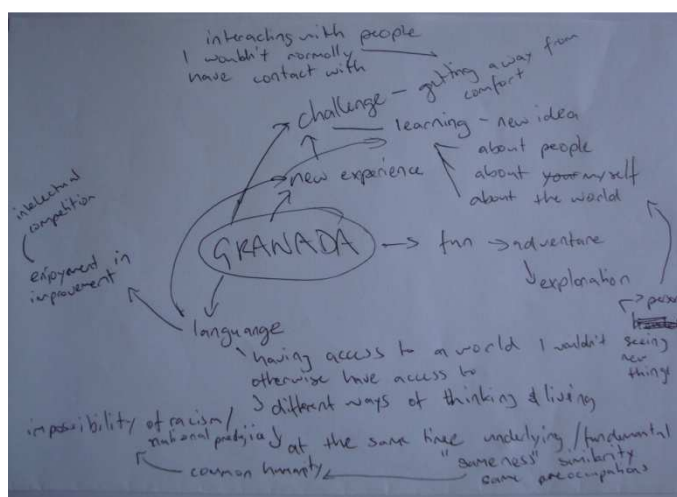

Figure 47: Joshua's mind map

Chapter Ten: Intercultural language learning as a spatial-embodied practice

Our journey continues and guides us toward a central element of any thesis: a section on 'findings'. Whereas this thesis followed the track of doing research in order to 'find' answers to particular questions, the form of what was 'found' differed in this thesis. This methodological thesis presents the data in the form of 'walks' without filtering their diverse elements from the beginning into categories and presenting them as such in more or less disconnected chapters. The premises I developed throughout this thesis arose in collaboration with language learners who within their individual environments developed their own understandings of what intercultural being is about. In fact, the whole thesis itself can be understood as a 'finding', as its central premises emerged from the intercultural field and enabled as such an understanding of intercultural language learning based on elements of the body, place, and space. It is in this sense that I prefer a form of presentation that is able to capture the process of intercultural encounter, including its networked and holistic nature.

What then are those interlinked and emerging understandings from the walks, which might enable an understanding of 'intercultural language learning as a spatial-embodied practice'? In concentrating in this section on three themes – 'the intercultural body', 'a sense of space' and 'practices of diversity' – I tie together the strings of walks, theory, and method. The thoughts and themes presented here live as such through their gaps and their non-definite nature, and provide stepping stones for handling the variety of complex meanings arising from the intercultural field.

Figure 48: Megan's guided walk 2

> *In China, sometimes when you go to the bus, somebody pushes you and then you say something really unfriendly to them. Many people don't like this. So when I came to Australia I felt that it is very different apart from China.*

This section draws together themes from the walks, which circle around the body, and describe intercultural language learning as an embodied form of learning. The general premise is that intercultural language learning includes the whole body, and engages not only cognitive, but also spatial and affective dimensions. It furthermore highlights an 'emplaced' learning process and the multiple symbolic ways the body acts and is acted upon.

Embodying

The walks clearly suggest the centrality of one particular element: the body. Experiencing a language does not only engage cognitive reactions while learning to communicate effectively, *it is a practice which involves the whole body*. Intercultural learning is a physical act that leaves its marks on, for instance, "exhaustive" and "really energy consuming" processes, as Adam points out. In a similar vein, Sarah says about her experiences in Mexico:

> *I felt like I had a longer day, almost. Because I'd get up pretty early, then by like nine o'clock I'd still be like oh, OK, we'll meet at ten o'clock. Ten pm. To go out and get the night started. Whereas here by like nine o'clock, I'm like OK, time to*

settle down to do some reading [...]. I will often be in bed by nine thirty, which just wouldn't happen in Mexico. I was always up till, like, twelve. That's probably why I was sick the whole time, I was tired. Definitely healthier here, for sure.

Different forms of living and organising the everyday are not only acted through the body, they are *felt and processed* through the body, which in Sarah's case resulted in being sick and tired. Basic human needs, such as food and an everyday rhythm, are ultimately connected to the body and nourish the intercultural experience. Engaging bodily with the intercultural field is then interlinked with the mastering of a language, which Andrew describes as follows:

If I speak English for [a] long time, I will feel head pain. Yes. Headache. I will have a headache because, you know, [while] speaking English I have to think, think grammar, think vocabulary. Vocabulary. But if I speak Mandarin, I don't have to think. I just speak out. Without any thinking.

Central to the narratives of the participants in this study is the setting free of both negative and positive energies through the engagement of the body with the intercultural field. Challenges and tensions emerging from intercultural encounter can be worked through in very different ways. So does Stephen, when asked about his feelings about moving to Melbourne, use the expression "tuo tai huan gu," which he translates as "change foetus, change bones." He adds: "I think something within me has been awakened. I feel right at home here in Melbourne." This creative expression of 'changing bones' can be joined with other moments in the walks that highlight those feelings of independence, freedom, or raised self-confidence that learning about "being able to cope with a completely new place" (as Thomas explains) evokes. This orientating-with-the-body element of intercultural learning is then one moment from the intercultural field which urges an engagement with the theme of embodiment to address intercultural learning as an embodied practice.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists the following entries for the term 'embody': a) "to put into a body" (represent in bodily form); b) to personify or "to be an embodiment or expression of an idea, principle, etc."; and c) "to give a concrete form to what is abstract or ideal" (OED online). The process of embodying – 'embodiment' – characterises the shift of a concept from the abstract to the concrete; in other words: *it is a tangible form of knowing, which is sensed through the body (sensing), stored as experience (learning, acquisition) and derived from our sensed experience (reasoning)* (Martin 2005). These

denotations of embodiment shed light on how the body learns and the way it is perceived, and support the argument that learning emerges from our ways of being in the world and relation to it. Martin argues that where language and communication capture a majority of conscious elements of knowing, embodied forms of learning possess much more of an unconscious nature (ibid.).

Intercultural language learning seen under the above premises is understood as a process of *transitioning from knowledge to practice* with and through the body, and of exceeding the cognitive levels that learning is so often equated with. After all, Gibson reminds us: "One sees the environment not just with the eyes but with the eyes on the head on the shoulders of the body that gets about" (Gibson 1979: 222, cited in Martin 2005: 22). The questions arising from this change of perspective are then: how do language learners experience this transition from knowledge to practice? And what implications does an embodied form of learning have for our understanding of intercultural language learning?

Being emplaced

In order to follow the traces of embodied learning, it is important to remember the starting point of each intercultural experience: the process of emplacement. While travelling and learning languages in unfamiliar environments, the intercultural learner finds her- or himself emplaced in complex networks of meanings which interlink with the body and its specific forms of expression. The process of being emplaced foregrounds multiple ways of living the everyday and embodying diverse realities. The forms of learning that a stance of emplacement creates confront the language learner not only with her or his own expectations and imaginings of a particular place and its practices, but also with one's perception of the self in the eyes of others. With this idea of emplacement in the forefront, let us recall Joshua's walk and journey through South America:

> *I mean, obviously, I don't look South American and a lot of people just assume that [...] you are either European or American, and you definitely get a lot of stereotypes about that. [...] The most common is that you are really rich, and you have money just to burn and people will get quite upset sometimes if you don't want to buy something from them, something you just don't need. Because they think you've got so much money why doesn't it matter to you? 'Buy this from me, I'm poor' and they don't really understand that, you know, maybe you don't have the capacity to just buy everything all the time.*

Joshua's experience illustrates how emplacement is not only an act of physical relocation; it is an act that brings the *body as a transporter of meaning* to the focus of attention. Ward explains:

> How we are understood is partly dependent on how we appear. What we put on, how we do our hair, what gestures we make, all make us appear to be certain types of person. Whatever outfit we wear lends us one particular identity, which excludes others. […] Each way of appearing can define you as you occupy particular social spaces [...]. (Ward 1997: 174)

Hashim's experience while wearing shirts of a dark colour, or Sarah's feeling of 'getting sick of standing out', are two further examples of the various messages our body communicates and how crucial physical appearance is for the perception of our environment and interculturality in particular. Tim Ingold highlights in his book, *The Perception of the Environment. Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (2000), the "differences of embodied knowledge that stem from the diversity of local developmental context," and reminds us that this diversity is "far from being superimposed upon a substrate of evolved human universals, such variation must be part and parcel of the variation of all living things, which has its source in an enmeshment within an all-encompassing field of relations" (Ingold 2000: 187). The often superficial ways in which elements of appearance are treated and acted upon within intercultural learning do not only illustrate the importance of embodied knowledge, but hold the possibility for language learners to increase their awareness of how their bodies carry symbolical and relational potencies.

In*corp*orating symbols

In her recent book, *The Multilingual Subject* (2009a), Claire Kramsch investigates 'subjective aspects' of second language acquisition that emphasise how "[L]earning a foreign language makes [...] students more conscious of their bodies (emotions, feelings, appearance, memories, fantasies) and of the language's body (its sounds, tastes, shapes, and forms)" (Kramsch 2009a: 66). This "physicality of the experience" Kramsch highlights corresponds closely with our perspective on the 'intercultural body', and points towards the role of symbols and the so called 'symbolic competence' of language learners (Kramsch 2009a). Kramsch argues that the words we use "shape the meaning we give to ourselves, as makers and users of signs" (Kramsch 2009a: 40). She explains further:

> When we say that 'language is a symbolic system', we mean that it is made of linguistic signs that are related to one another in systematic and conventional ways. Non-linguistic signs include, for example, a flag as a

national symbol, or a green light as a symbol for 'go ahead'. Even though for monolingual speakers linguistic signs have become so attached to their referents that they seem to be part of the object itself, for multilinguals or newcomers to a language, Baum or arbre in another, makes it evident that the linguistic sign as symbolic form is quite arbitrary, even though it is used in non-arbitrary ways. (Kramsch 2009a: 6)

In Kramsch's understanding, learning a foreign language or culture is 'symbolic', not only because it "mediates our existence through symbolic forms that are conventional and represent objective realities," but because "symbolic forms construct subjective realities such as perceptions, emotions, attitudes, and values" (Kramsch 2009a: 7). Language learners then "make meaning by choosing to interpret signs in three different ways:" a) as symbols of reality; b) as icons of reality (for example an analogy); and c) as indices of reality (diffuse associations) (ibid.). Kramsch highlights here the traces of affect and cognition arising from these forms of dealing with symbols. She writes:

> Language as symbolic form is not an object that, except for the scientific purpose of linguistic analysis, can be separated from its user. Since it cannot be spoken or written without engaging the body of the speaker/writer, its use leaves cognitive and affective traces in the user's perceptual make-up and in his or her sense of self. (Kramsch 2009a: 41)

Although Kramsch's focus on the 'symbolic self' of language learners enriches the theoretical corpus of second language acquisition in a crucial way, her argumentation is still based on a segregation of the language learner and the spaces and places she or he moves in. Not only the consistent focus on the term 'subject' indicates, in part, the separation of language learning as a cognitive process from the language learning 'out there'. But also the symbolic framework she chooses continues to understand space as segregated from the body and remains as such a merely cognitive-based approach.

In this thesis I use the phrase, 'the intercultural body', as an attempt *not* to separate the body of the language learner from the places and spaces the body moves in and is shaped by. In so doing, I would like to take Kramsch's thoughts on embodied and symbolic language learning a step further by arguing that the learner's relation to her or his learning environment exceeds significantly Kramsch's understanding of it as external stimuli (Kramsch 2009a). It is rather the interwoveness of symbols, space and the body, which creates highly affective and emotional learning experiences and their grounding in the symbolic dimension of language and culture per se.

<u>Vulnerabilities</u>

In the course of the walks we encountered a variety of situations when the 'intercultural body' was the object of a vast range of emotions and feelings. We heard about moments when the body is understood in symbolic and misleading ways and when one's lack of ability to express oneself in a foreign language effects one's own wellbeing in crucial ways. Veronica points out that "during the hard times," "it was difficult to have my normal personality without being able to express myself, like, successfully" and "especially in terms of humour and things like that it is really difficult." Although humour has an essential role in overcoming moments of awkwardness and emotion, what arises from the intercultural field in so many instances is the theme of vulnerability. Veronica, in this context, said that intercultural language learning made her vulnerable, especially in moments of tiredness or when feeling 'up and down'.

Within academic discourses, the theme of vulnerability is normally integrated into research on affect. Zembylas points out that affect works relationally and should be understood as assemblage (Zembylas 2007). According to Thrift, affects are principally non-representational and often not captured by words (Thrift 2007: 176). What Thrift refers to here is the *inability to explain and represent the intercultural experience in its full dimensionality on the basis of text and (verbal) communication only*. Karin, when exploring Cairo realised "that you have to do the first step with a smile," and Marian adds in a similar way that intercultural encounter "may need just observing people, it does not need what you spark in them rather than both of you, it's always interactive, right?" The various vulnerabilities emerging from the intercultural field are often silenced or understood as mere cognitive issues. But being vulnerable is a form of embodied practice in situ, which is also part of Thrift's argument that "very often, the source of emotions seem to come from somewhere outside the body, from the setting itself, but this setting is cancelled out by methods like questionnaires and other such instruments" (Thrift 2007: 176). Thrift adds that "emotions form a rich array through which and with which the world is thought and which can sense different things even though they cannot always be named" (ibid.). This 'sensing' of experience and understanding comes to light in a variety of narratives collected in the walks and shall be developed in the second section of this chapter called 'a sense of space'.

<u>The 'body multiple'</u>

I would like to return to our leading question: how do language learners experience the transition from knowledge to practice and how does 'learning with the body' refer to the process of intercultural learning? We have seen that the processes of emplacement, which intercultural learning deals with, are brought together with practices of symbolic perception and a changed awareness of the body. Now, a variety of authors have argued that this changed 'awareness of the self' results in a formation of *multiple selves*, such as the learner's interpersonal, extended, reflexive and conceptual self, which Kramsch (2009a: 70-71) argues for when referring to the work of Neisser (1988) and the field of psychology. However, it is a different approach to multiplicity and the body I am tackling here.

In Annemarie Mol's book, *The Body Multiple. Ontology in Medical Practice* (2002), we find the following statement: "*The body multiple* is not fragmented. Even if it is multiple, it also hangs together" (Mol 2002: 55, original italics). What Mol clarifies in her writings is that although there are many roles and forms of the body, this does not mean that there are as well many diffused 'selves'. In Mol's terms, the self as situated within the body is a rather "complex state of being" and an "intricately coordinated crowd" (Mol 2002: viii), which is multiple but not disconnected. Mol summarises this by saying that "to be is to be related" (Mol 2002: 55), and Law continues her line of thought, stating "that the world, its knowledges, and the various senses of what is right and just, overlap and shade off into one another" (Law 2004: 63).

Mol and Law's argument on overlapping and related elements of the 'self' resonates with a situation recounted during Joshua's walk, in which a friend heard him speaking on *Skype* with his family and said "Wow, you sound so different in English." Joshua's explanation of this incident was: "it's almost like you are a different person," and he went on to say:

> So you definitely get a sense that your personality almost changes a bit, kind-of, moulds around your experience in the country, and with all the people. Like, I think my housemates were a big influence [...] on learning the language. I probably picked up a bit of their personality in actually learning the language.

Joshua's observation illustrates how the intercultural body is multiple, not in a diffuse or disconnected way, but rather in a complex, interwoven, and overlapping way, which is witnessed by those moments in the walks where diverse feelings exist simultaneously.

Sarah, in this vein, speaks about her intercultural experience as 'strange' and 'fascinating' at the same time, and connects those emotions to a birthday dinner and the unfamiliar food provided on this occasion, which triggered in her both feelings of homesickness and excitement at the same time: "I remember going home in the car, and I actually got really homesick. So it kind of goes hand in hand. When you feel like you are really there, it makes you go, 'I'm really not at home' [...]. It was really, it was different, it was amazing the whole time."

In short: intercultural experience is an activity that engages all possible dimensions of human endeavour and negotiates the feelings emerging from this endeavour in complex, highly individual, and often messy ways. To separate intercultural experience then into neat dimensions such as affective, linguistic, socio-material, cultural, and so forth, neglects their interrelated status and the networks language learners are embedded in. The realisation of those overlapping and interlinking realities can eventually lead to what Sarah described when she said, "I really found that you would meet the same kind of people in every culture," and when Hashim learned to be "Hashim, the person" and not "Hashim, the Muslim." Thinking in Mol's term of the 'body multiple' vis-à-vis intercultural language learners allows us to overcome the famous distinctions of self and other, language and culture, mind and body, or space and place.

Figure 49: Sasha's virtual walk 1

The dome of the Berliner Dom

Before I went to Germany earlier this year, I did not feel any connection to this building (heightened by my feelings about the Leipzig churches). However, when I arrived in the Berliner Dom, I felt a wonderful sense of the magnificence of sacred art - both architecture and music. What struck me most were the personifications of the Beatitudes, perhaps my favourite biblical passage. The Beatitudes (Blessed are the...) from Jesus' sermon on the mount as recorded in Matthew's gospel encapsulate for me one of the crucial parts of the Christian faith to which I subscribe and belong. They speak of the transience of this world, the limit of human knowledge and power, and the difference between the seen and the unseen. To see this passage of scripture rendered in art and also in another language (Selig sind...) that was instantly recognizable, was a very memorable experience.

This section illustrates the ways in which intercultural language learners structure their experiences through the senses and furthermore introduces 'sensing' as a mode of orientating within, and relating to, space and place. The 'sense of space' discussed here underlines those elements of intercultural language learning that are of a 'grasping' form, and which question absolute knowledge within reflexive modes of learning.

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A mode of orientation

Let me recall my conversation with Vasu and our misunderstanding of the word 'orientating'. Vasu missed his "social circle," and when I asked him if he found it easy to orientate in town, he firstly thought about orientating as a personal and social modus:

> U   *Did you find it easy to get an orientation in the town?*
> V   *Oh I missed the orientation here in town. Oh you mean orientate in place or orientate in life?*
> U   *I meant in place.*
> V   *I'm used to travel by myself a lot. I'm walking.*
> U   *And orientation for life?*
> V   *Oh, it's OK. I really stick to myself. Spanish was another reason to meet some more people.*

The conversation with Vasu shows how walking as a physical mode was interlinked with the evocation of particular themes during the interview. In addition, it illustrates the different meanings 'orientating' can be understood as. As a form of movement, orientating in a new environment took place through walking and exploring the city or neighbourhood on foot, by bus or by bicycle. Veronica points out that "understanding" Lyon meant to engage with the way it is "set up" and "to grasp its geography" – over a longer period of time while "watching how things change." Kirsten mentions that being in a new environment raises questions for which she asks for answers. When recalling her experiences in Vienna she speaks about the "huge difference" between being a tourist and being a student staying for a longer period of time. She describes the 'touristy' ways of engaging with new places as follows: "You feel like they are just skimming the surface, looking on buildings [...]. But you won't appreciate it after a while. And you don't really get an insight into anything." What remains after the first impressions of unfamiliar environments was often described as a wish for 'connecting' and trying to look 'under the surface' of a place.

From the senses to sensing

'It was stinky in front of the Goethe-Institute'. Hashim's surprising impression of Germany is one example that limns the theme of this section – a theme which emerged out of reflection during the walks. Intercultural learning is multi-sensory in the way that it is perceived and experienced through the senses, and is as such related to sensing as a mode of orientating in the intercultural field. Paul Rodaway, in his book, *Sensuous Geographies: Body, Sense and Place* (1994), offers an integrated view and understands the senses as "*a*

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relationship to a world," with the senses themselves serving as "*a kind of structuring of space and defining of place*" (Rodaway 1994: 4, original italics). The senses indeed structure our everyday experiences, and the ears, nose, eyes, hands, and heart help to orientate and distinguish between known and unknown places, practices, people, and so forth. Sensing is therefore a highly complex act in between attachment and detachment, as described earlier in Path Two. It is important to note that in focusing on the senses as part of intercultural learning, I do not intend to research about the sensoriality of *one* specific culture or nation, and so forth. It is rather the role of the senses in relation to sensing diversity, place and feelings of belonging that interest me.

A consultation of the *Oxford English Dictionary* tells us the term 'sensing' can be understood in two ways: a) "the action of sense" (to become aware of or to perceive something via the senses); or b) a form of "natural understanding" or "bearing on action or behaviour; practical soundness of judgement" (the capacity to grasp feelings or meanings) (OED online). As I have already discussed the first notion of multi-sensory experiencing, let me now turn towards the second notion and its more intangible dimensions of 'grasping'. The thoughts developed in Chapter Eight have shown that the senses do not only engage experiencing per se, but are located at the junction of remembering and imagining (Pink 2009). To 'grasp' therefore means to include those levels of experience that are sensed rather than known and intersect with former experiences or intangible elements of a possible future reality. The 'sensed-sensing energies' Thrift (2007) writes about often lie beyond the possibilities of verbal expressions, and are influenced by both space and individual experience – a theme often negotiated under the broad term 'perception'. Ingold describes this as follows:

> Experience […] amounts to a kind of sensory participation, a coupling of the movement of one's own awareness to the movement of aspects of the world. […] Experience, therefore, cannot mediate between mind and nature, since these are not separated in the first place. It is rather intrinsic to the ongoing process of *being alive to the world,* of the person's total sensory involvement in an environment. (Ingold 2000: 99, original italics)

I would like to propose the following: *sensing matters of interculturality represents an alternative mode in the walks to 'knowing' and is, in its reliance on experience, more likely to move beyond fixed understandings of culture*. The reproduction of fixed knowledge about culture, as in, for example, Hashim's imagination of Germans as "contained" and "cool" or Chan's aim of finding Western people in the 'Scandinavian Club', is transformed through actual encounters into a mode of sensing the multiplicity of culture and its

practices 'in between' stable-solid categories. Thrift argues here: "Between oneself and the world there is a new term, a holistically sensed, new texture in the social moment, and one relates to others in and through that emergent and transforming experience" (Thrift 2007: 176).

Making a change

That language learners do engage with interculturality within complex networks, and in between manifold borders and boundaries, has been pointed out in detail in Chapter Six. The current state of the world demands not only physical mobility and flexibility from language learners, it also asks for a fair amount of openness towards diversity and (personal) transformation. The networks and flows in which intercultural language learners move create a different awareness of space. As well, they embed language learners within the most arbitrary debates of the twenty-first century: refugees, immigration, the polarisation of 'West' and 'Islam', global social inequality, and so forth. Looking into the walks, we find them full of stories about these themes. Wei's challenge to find her place in the world with a nationality, which is perceived as 'risky' (considering people from Indonesia going into hiding), or Hashim's challenge to explain and represent Islam after September 11th – these elements of the walks ask us to rearrange our understanding of intercultural language learning. The various imbalances the intercultural field consists of thereby affect learning experiences by creating what can be called '*a sense of space*'.

The phrase 'sense of space' appears in academic literature in a variety of ways and encapsulates under its umbrella the similar sounding phrase 'sense of place' (see, for example, Feld & Basso 1999). The 'sense of space' Thrift is writing about addresses the fragile essences of security and risk that form and create our being in the world in such a crucial way. Thrift states: "If we train this 'sense of space' in the right way, the space itself can feel again like something, which is at the same time caring and in need for care" (Thrift 2009: 406, translated from German by U.W.). I have stated earlier that intercultural learning, if seen from a spatial perspective, points towards elements of inequality as well as critical and reflexive moments during intercultural encounter. It is this latter component of critical reflexivity which is indicated by a 'sense of space', and which, if falling together with the aim of 'connecting' or 'making a change', gives a very different understanding of what we call intercultural learning. The following is a short extract from my conversation with Kirsten:

> U   *So what happens if you connect to people?*
>
> K   *You share lots of similar views on politics or art or philosophy. […] I was talking to this Austrian guy […] and we share lots of same views. Like what if the world is not run by economics? Like what if the trading is actually trading of ideas and stuff, people are paid because of their ideas? Something really silly.*
>
> U   *No, it sounds great.*
>
> K   *Like you might work but you get paid for what you think, and...*
>
> U   *And not what money you bring in?*
>
> K   *Yes. Because we are, most of my friends are artists, and we all think that the world is too commercial. Probably that's one of the reasons why we connect.*

Joshua tells me about his experience with 'connecting' and 'making a change':

> J   *We actually started volunteering at a place that was sort-of like, I mean, in English we would say a soup kitchen, but there it was called a 'social food hall', that might be the best translation. Where people just came and they had a three course meal basically, you know, soup, then a main course, and then some kind of dessert. So I volunteered there for probably about seven months […] and I got a lot of friends. A lot of international students that I had made friends with came along […]. And for me that really helped in kind of connecting with the place and also being comfortable with the poverty of it, because you sort-of […] feel like, maybe doing [it] because people obviously always ask you for money. But I was on a pretty tight student budget so didn't feel like that was the best way for me to help, so that made me feel comfortable living there, and I got to know a lot of the people who lived on the street, and there was a lot of homelessness there.*
>
> U   *So you had the feeling, in a way, that you can make a change in doing something…*
>
> J   *Yes. I didn't know if I was making a change, but it definitely made me feel comfortable.*

One major advantage of the phrase a 'sense of space' is its openness to the individuality of experience – what a 'sense of space' looks like is after all dependent on what personal life-worlds look like, and in which networks they are embedded. Tuan reminds us that "the experience of space […] is largely subconscious," and adds that "we have a sense of space because we can move" (Tuan 2001: 118). Keeping in mind the thoughts on mobility I developed in Chapter Six, these two statements recall the boundaries and borders based in and around movement which language learners move in between. A 'sense of space' captures those dimensions of intercultural learning that in their essence centre on space as an element of freedom:

Spaciousness is closely associated with the sense of being free. Freedom implies space; it means having the power and enough room in which to act. [...] In the act of moving, space and its attributes are directly experienced. An immobile person will have difficulty mastering even primitive ideas of abstract space, for such ideas develop out of movement – out of the direct experiencing of space through movement. (Tuan 2001: 52)

The attachment or detachment language learners feel toward space is grounded in the possibility of movement and feelings of freedom (Chan pointed out in her walk that "there was a lot of freedom"). An important element of the walks was as well the uncovering of a certain relativity of global-political centres which we have seen in Ismail's statement "a place is at the end of a day always a place." These notions of freedom or relativity are not of a static condition. Rather, they are the product of multiplicity and, as Hastrup reminds us, "entering the field means incorporating a particular sense of place, which is experientially inseparable from the social space, and becoming captured within it – often unawares" (Hastrup 2010: 192-193).

Let me summarise: sensing – as a form of grasping rather than knowing – involves an element of reflexivity. It also encapsulates modes of translating fixed understandings of culture into relational forms of meaning making, as mentioned in Path Two. A sense of space falls together with both a critical stance towards the state of the world and an active involvement of language learners in 'making a change'. It furthermore describes those modes of intercultural learning that are centred in 'orientating' within unfamiliar environments, and is based in the senses as well as one's memorised or imagined relationships to particular places and locations.

State Library
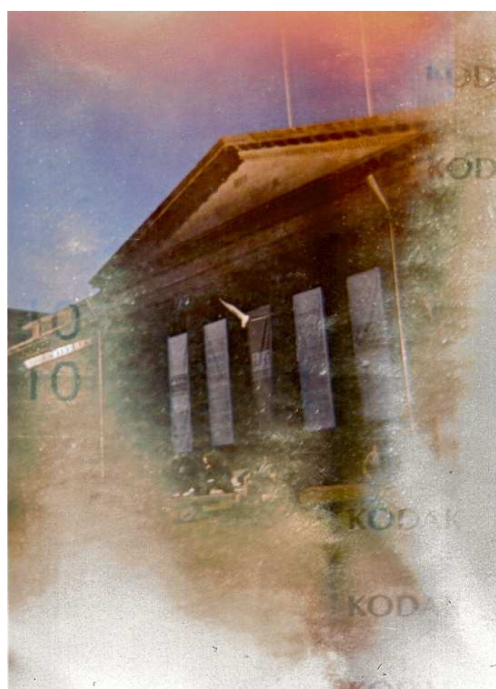*I've always loved going to the state library,*
because it's peaceful, and I enjoy staring at
the rows and rows of books and watching
people as they are curled up on the sofa
reading a book. Since taking this picture,
I've also learned to enjoy looking at the
exterior of the state library. Perhaps it's
because of the unexpected effects that my
film camera produced when I took this
photo. It reminds me of the beauty that there
is in ordinary life and makes me appreciate
the everyday scenery, in this case, the
building, the sunset, the birds and the grass,
in the city that I often take for granted.

Figure 50: Chan's virtual walk 4

This section captures those moments from the intercultural field which give an understanding of how diversity is encountered, and how the realisation of multiplicity is enacted through practices of diversity associated with emplaced learning. I argue that intercultural learning relies on experience ,and that the meaning of diversity shifts towards an interrelational mode with the transgression of fixed understandings of nation or culture. Furthermore I point towards the roles of magic and beauty within the intercultural encounters witnessed in the walks.

'What you are really looking for is difference'

Let me start this section with a quote by Ingold, who writes that

> it is continually to *open up* the world, rather than to seek closure. The endeavour is essentially comparative, but what it compares are not bounded objects or entities but ways of being. It is the constant awareness of alternative ways of being, and of the ever-present possibility of 'flipping' from one to another, that defies the anthropological attitude. It lies in what I would call the 'sideways glance'. Wherever we are, and whatever we may be doing, we are always aware that things might be done differently. It is as though there were a stranger at our heels, who turns out to be none other than ourselves. (Ingold 2011: 239, original italics)

The images and expectations we have about a particular place, people, culture, and so forth, shape our actual experience, our understanding, and the ways we learn about difference or multiplicity. Chan's walk and her enrolment in the Scandinavian Club at Melbourne University come to mind. "In the beginning," she says, "I didn't want to meet a lot of Asians from a similar culture I was from." Chan's expectation of Melbourne was that of a 'different' place where people of her own Asian background were not different enough and interfered with her expectations. We can see that the wish to encounter diversity is a driving force for intercultural exchange and the learning of a foreign language. Often, the expectations we have when we enter a new country are enriched by notions of mystery and the wish for a transformed quality of life. The actual learning about diversity transforms itself as such into a search for 'something different', as Joshua points out in the following extract of our talk:

> J *I have this horrible feeling that the world is kind of merging towards one thing, which is supermarkets and fast food restaurants and Starbucks, and you know… Also a certain kind of education and a certain kind of idea and political and economic structure, just basically a sameness. And when you travel, what you are really looking for is difference, you want to see something different, you want to experience something different.*
>
> U *So have you been disappointed sometimes, when the place wasn't like you expected it?*
>
> J *Yes, definitely. Especially like, I went overland through the States to Mexico, and when I got into Mexico there are a lot of parts of Mexico that seem exactly the same as a lot of parts of the States. You know, big shopping centres and fast food restaurants and that kind of thing. But there's also a lot of difference, you know, […] there's both in one.*

We see that the notion of 'difference' is central to intercultural experience and can fall together with a critical reflection of it. When talking with Daniel about his perception of Germany, he explains: "I don't think there is, particularly now with globalisation, there's less difference. But I still think at the same time that confronting those differences when they clash is really important, because that's what I think promotes thinking." Indeed, the experience of difference promotes thinking. However, during the walks we witnessed reactions of fear, resistance, and the feeling of risk as well. For instance, in her first days in Cairo Karin felt stressed by the significantly different environment she found herself in and therefore was afraid of going outside. Wei, who experienced forms of exclusion in her daily life in Japan, resisted learning Japanese and left the country soon after finishing her degree. And Dalia and Sheima, two Egyptian students coming to Germany with the expectation of exclusion because of their headscarves, experienced Germany in a positive

and more relaxed way. The experience of 'difference' is as diverse as the many individual circumstances, and as such they have to be constantly reconnected to the particular constellations of the intercultural field. In short: the challenge of each intercultural experience is the balance of aspirations and imaginations that influence feelings of inclusion, exclusion, and of being somewhere 'in between'. Often, the notion of 'difference' has to be translated into the notion of 'diversity' in order to allow prejudices and fixed representations to reform themselves as part of the intercultural learning process.

Transitioning

Building upon these thoughts, the argument of this section is as follows: *when understanding diversity on the grounds of a transnational paradigm, it becomes harder to read diversity against categories and fixed representations.* To better understand this argument, let us listen to Veronica, who was born in Australia but has a Greek background. She says, referring to the general attitude towards diversity in Australia:

> *Even though the society is very intercultural, there are still little pockets that are very homogenous, like certain areas in Melbourne [...]. Like, I went to a Primary School... we had ten girls in my grade and every single one of us was from a different, like our parents were all from different countries. So everybody was like that when I was growing up, do you know what I mean? But then going to High School and having a lot more... you grown up more against an idea of what Australia is like, which I never experienced before. So having people tell me stuff like, 'You are not a typical Australian', and things like that. And I had a couple of boyfriends from the country, and I never felt immigrant in my life apart from when I'd have dinner with their families. And I wouldn't know how you use knife and fork properly because we have never eaten the typical English kind of meals, and they would all act like I was so exotic because I was half Greek, and I just found that so ridiculous. So I think there are still heaps of pockets where people aren't exposed to other cultures a lot. But I think people who do grow up half-in-half out of cultures tend to understand each other. Like, I have friends from the Vietnamese background or the Ukrainian background and we were like to each other on the level of having to negotiate these things. Like, one of my Vietnamese friends is getting married, and she is going to have the day where they are putting on the traditional Vietnamese dress, and take photos even though they are not having a Vietnamese wedding. So like having to deal with relatives, which are still in a different culture and who are living here. I think the more that happens the better [it] will get.*

For Veronica, diversity is already the 'normal' state, but she experiences situations where 'being half-and-half' is interpreted based on an understanding of 'Australia as a nation',

which comes with a clear set of behaviours and historical representations of 'being Australian'. That these sets no longer match with the current transformed life-worlds in Australia is one characteristic of transnationalism I discussed in Chapter Five. An understanding of multiplicity arises when traditional borders of thinking in categories of nation-states, religion, ethnicity, or race are transgressed, such as in Hashim's experience, who says: "I have learned in Germany something very important, which I would have never learned in Egypt: I am surrounded by people who are simply human beings, whatever they believe." The notions of transitioning underlying Hashim's experience ideally let diversity emerge from a non-polarising and non-representational position. Law, while referring to the work of Serres, points out that "the most interesting places lie on the boundaries between order and disorder, or where different orders rub up against one another" (Law 2008: 144). Intercultural learning exists because of the boundaries of culture and nation; it is their interplay, however, that engenders their recreation within a relational view. In other words: intercultural learning needs to engage with diversity on the grounds of *interlinking seemingly disconnected areas, practices and understandings.* This form of 'translating' fixed meanings into relational meanings is described by Law as follows:

> To translate is to make two words equivalent. But since no two words are equivalent, translation also implies betrayal: traduction, trahison. So translation is both about making equivalent, and about shifting. It is about moving terms around, about linking and changing them. (ibid.)

Language learners find their own ways of translating and are, as such, creators of their own method assemblages (Law 2004), such as we saw in the chapters above.

'You could call it magic'

During the walks, the experiences of diversity were often combined with experiences of magic and beauty – of landscapes, people, moments, buildings, language, and so forth. Recalling Joshua's walk, his words were "there's definitely […] a lot of mystery in language," and "there's definitely, sort-of, a certain magic in uncovering that mystery", adding that "just to be able to stay in someone's home and fit in, and to understand, and to be able to communicate with people was, is really special. I mean, you could call it magic." In Joshua's case, getting lost in the mountains around Granada led him to discover a place of beauty. The experience of beauty when coming together with unexpected situations can indeed convert a situation of diversity into a transformative experience, and 'it touches the heart' so to speak.

It has to be noted that the role of place in sensing beauty and magic is an important one. Sasha tells us about his experience in the Thomaskirche (St. Thomas Church) in Leipzig (Germany): "You know when you got a shiver up your spine in an amazing building or, I mean, you do not even need to have a physical reaction, you just stand or you walk in the door and 'Wow'". He goes on, "a sense of wonder, as sense of awe and also a sense, 'I wish I could have lived at another point of history, I wish I could have been here in sixteenth or seventeenth century'". For Veronica, a notion of magic arose when a stereotype of France met a real life-time experience. Asked whether she experienced magical moments she says:

> *Yes, I'd say that there were a lot of them. Especially when you come against the clichés of a country and then you get those clichéd moments that are just so ridiculous. Like… I saw a robin in the snow. I even didn't believe you exist, really, like Christmas cards. I never thought you actually existed, and, like, I'd say I had lots of experience that were like that.*

The experience of beauty can linger in many different corners and is certainly a major reason for travelling and for learning a foreign language – for example while being better able to understand the beauty in, and through the native words, as Deidre points out: "I'd love to be able to read Spanish well so that I would be able to really look at another culture, other than seeing it second hand, or translated." The theme of nature is also significant in the context of experiencing beauty: Andrew, who is from China and loves the beaches in Melbourne, says, "The circumstances in Australia are very peaceful. And there's the climate, the environment, very clean. No pollution. And if you are really tired of your studying, you can go to the countryside around Melbourne. And just, just lay on the ground, [...] so relaxed." Marian says that her Australian son and Japanese daughter-in-law "believe in the gardens, in the flowers, the forests, and the beaches." And Daniel, who took his exchange partner from Germany on a trip through one of Australia's National Parks, explains his friend's reaction as follows:

> *He was like 'That's one of the most amazing things I've ever seen'. It was just a beautiful day, amazing blue ocean [...]. I'd describe it as this really beautiful place that is like, you know, so natural and pristine, and just like a space away from, kind-of, people. Like, where you can think and have headspace. And that's what it is for me, a place where I can just go and like… I don't know, it just calms me.*

In summary, the experience of a certain quality of magic and beauty often enchants moments of intercultural encounter and may have as many shapes as there are imaginations

and experiences of magic and beauty in this world. As an element of intercultural learning, beauty is a trigger for engaging with a foreign language, discovery, travel, and a way to balance the intercultural learning process itself.

Final remarks

The ideas and concepts presented above form themselves into a network. What holds the multiple strands of the network together are the essences of movement and transformation, along with their often unpredictable natures. When we tie these strands to the de-constructivist argument that seemingly oppositional terms are always co-implicated (Lather 2006) we arrive at the 'destination' of our walk. The paths we followed and the steps we took in order to understand the intercultural field and its manifold relations to intercultural language learning processes brought us to this moment of resting and lingering. In arguing for the relevance of space, the body, and sensing for the intercultural experience of diversity, we engaged with those dimensions of intercultural language learning that are at the heart of languaging (Phipps & Gonzalez 2004) and of *being* intercultural. Instead of placing those modes into context and in forms of already known stabilities of knowledge, we focused on the production of a networked intercultural field of flows and mobilities, and visualised the constantly shifting and unstable form of meanings. This experience of instability, I argued, involves a vast range of (often simultaneously proceeding) affects and vulnerabilities that are part of feeling 'in between' and of learning reflexively in the form of 'sensing'. Walking became in this turn a central element of this thesis and established a method that is able to capture those elements of being 'in between', of sensing, and of transformation. This argumentation led us towards a critical stance of what being intercultural is about in its deep and holistic sense.

In understanding intercultural learning as a 'spatial-embodied practice' I am arguing not only for a revised concept of context as an intercultural field, but for taking into consideration the complexity and the impossibility of presenting the intercultural field as based on separate entities and clear cut meanings. Cultural habits, social practices and individual beliefs – all need to be understood as parts of, and as situated within, networks, and as grounded in movement and transformation. This understanding relates to research about intercultural language learning as well. Learning has to be observed in authentic surroundings (and not with the limited view of 'inside' and 'outside' the classroom), which are assemblages of visible and invisible elements; and it has to combine subject- *and* spatial/object-based approaches in their intertwined forms. The ideas and concepts

presented in this thesis therefore act both as a conceptual background for research about intercultural language learning, and as a stimulus for the constant rethinking of our understanding of intercultural language learning in a complex and ever-changing world.

A classroom

Culture is not a product. It is
a process

(Daniel)

D̲aniel spent three months as an exchange pupil in Germany as part of his German language education at High School. Besides German, Daniel studied Japanese and describes the process of engaging with the latter two languages in High School in the following:

> D   *I found particularly with Japanese, they don't have an Arabic kind of alphabet, that was really difficult. I suppose for German, my first impressions were that it was a fun language. I don't know [why]. I think potentially the types of books we were using to learn with presented it in a kind-of fun way.*
>
> U   *Oh, that's good.*
>
> D   *Yes, kind of a bit dorky, but the main book had a, you know, a group of students, who were about our age, who were doing everyday things. I think I really enjoyed learning more practical things. With Japanese I didn't really understand how I could use it. But German I felt like I could say stuff to my friends and use it. [...] I think I romanticized Germany and the language, and I saw it as, I don't know, really special and cool.*

Later on, at university, Daniel continued to study German. As he mentions, "I knew I wanted to keep doing it." He adds, "My goal for learning German isn't necessarily to, kind-of, do a lot German writing, to understand the grammar, because I'm not particularly good at that. But I love speaking it. And I love communicating with peoplem so I want to get to a point where I can speak fluently and understand fluently."

I am interested about the structure in his German classes at university and Daniel explains his studies as follows:

> D   *So we had two streams. I suppose throughout the first semester, one was learning more about German culture and history and background, so we would have a lecture on a particular topic that might be, you know, linguistics or literature. And then we would have a tutorial that followed on from the lecture, and we would talk about a reading, we would have to do a reading. I didn't particularly find that useful at all. I felt it was quite distant. I felt there wasn't much... I missed the interaction, part of it. I just felt like we were being told all this stuff, and then expected to read all this stuff, and then talk about it. But there wasn't much, I don't know, engagement with it. I didn't feel that was very strong. And even relevant. I didn't see how it was relevant to at least my goals of learning German.*
>
> U   *OK.*
>
> D   *And the other stream was the classroom session. Well, that was grammar and conversation, so just learning about different grammar things and conversation. But the big issue there, and this is the same within High School, is that people are afraid to talk. People are afraid to speak a second language. And also people find it challenging to ask the teacher questions. For fear of feeling stupid, or being wrong, or looking bad to their peers. So I think that was a huge problem. And even this year, in second year, the class was kind of twenty-five people, and I just felt like it wasn't enough focus on the individual. Or enough promotion of speaking, because, and almost everyone I talked to has said that, I found I learnt the most through speaking. [...] And I think it's easier to measure if someone can, you know, put the right adjective ending on a word, or if they can have the right sentence structure. But it's harder, I think, to measure someone's speaking ability. So there's potentially something in the system that says, because it's easily measurable, focus more on that. And I'm not sure that this is particularly useful.*

At this point of the interview we get deeper into the discussion about intercultural learning. I ask Daniel the following question:

> U   *In those culture classes, did you speak about issues which symbolises current German culture?*

> D   *No, not really. Not in first year at least. I think more so in second year. […] But in first year it was very much about, you know, learning about German playwrights, or German history. Which is important, I think it really is important, but it wasn't particularly relevant to getting a sense of what culturally Germany is really like. Yes. And that's what I'm most interested in. Like, I want to know the background. I think that's really important to find out how Germany came to be like it is today. But I really want to know also, you know, what it is.*

I ask him what comes to his mind, just at this moment, when thinking about German culture. He says:

> *I just have this image in my head of Germany. It's almost like Germany was stuck in the eighties when I was learning about it, because lots of the photos we looked at were from the eighties or the nineties. […] We watched all these [movies], you know, 'Run Lola Run', which are kind of older. But I think when we were learning about it, which was even in about 2002, I still felt like it was this older country that was a bit… because of the visuals that we were presented. Does that make sense?*

It does, in my view. We are coming towards the end of our talk and Daniel speaks about a form of culture, which is, in his words 'fabricated'. He explains this as follows:

> D   *There's an image that say, for example, the government, or the nation wants to present itself as. And I think that's what other people learn about when they learn about Australia, or about Germany. It's just a presentation of what they think the culture is, or some kind of prediction. But for me, culture is constantly moving and changing and shifting, it's not one thing. So when you try and hold on to it, it's almost, like, futile. So that's why I'm into, like you said, the more intercultural stuff. Stuff that you can't see, stuff that you can't really learn about until you immerse yourself in it.*
>
> U   *Exactly. The idea that culture's not a product.*
>
> D   *Yes. It's a process.*

From the notebook: The theme of Daniel's walk is his journey with the German language, which, in the beginning, was 'special and cool' for him, and continued to be taught from 'a distance' during his German studies at university. Daniel's love for speaking and communication, which he felt not adequately addressed during his studies, raises a variety of questions: how can teaching about culture go beyond a 'fabricated' culture which is not 'stuck' in the 1980s? How can teaching about culture feel 'relevant' and correspond with 'the stuff you can't see until you immerse yourself in it'? Above all, how can we pay tribute to an understanding of culture, which focuses rather on its process and its 'futile' and 'constantly changing' aspects?

Epilogue: Thinking space pedagogically

> Multicultural education should aim to engage every student at every level of his or her existence and it should provide students many ways to communicate about their different ways of being, seeing and doing in the world. (Mayes 2007: 3)

We started our walk with the aim of re-enchanting intercultural language learning while simultaneously focusing on the perspective of the language learner and intercultural experience per se. As a final thought I would like to take a short pedagogical walk to the classrooms and educational institutions where language education takes place. We, as language teachers, are all trained in teaching 'culture as content', and many of us are aware of the difficulties this reduction of lived experiences into curricula and possible modes of assessment creates.

> We have our problem: How to teach culture as content. We have our convictions: The way we do this now and have done this in the past does not suffice for the particular challenges of the present. We have our histories and our hopes: This is what I've done before and I'm never trying it again. It was disastrous. Our most valuable resource in teaching anything, but especially in teaching something as rich in narrative potential as 'culture', are our stories. (Phipps 2008: 2)

Teaching what we understand as culture is and stays a challenging aspect of language pedagogy, and although concepts on intercultural learning are not rare, explicit suggestions for teachers and their practical day-to-day realities in the language classroom either remain marginal or do not engage with educational practice. Phipps and Levine remind us that there is a spiral of theory and practice, arguing that

> the present state of theory in language education is one of an *excess*; an excess of positivist, functional rational modernist theory. And such an argument presupposed, also somewhat arrogantly, that somehow those who are versed in theory have answers for practitioners and that practitioners don't know what they are doing. And so we go around and around a perennial circle of complaint that classroom practitioners bring to theorists, which is one of countering the questioning of their legitimacy with a counter-questioning of the legitimacy of theory. (Phipps & Levine 2011: 5, original italics)

After all, what we teach about culture is mostly dependent on the individual teaching styles of language teachers, the text books we use, and the time-frames designed by educational institutions and policies. We can see that the need for clear and practical guidelines is urgent. However, *the only thing that cannot be provided is exactly this clarity, for instance,*

in the form of guidelines. The multiplicity of intercultural experience, as well as the interwoven and often arbitrary nature of the intercultural field, suggests quite a contrary approach: to understand processes of intercultural learning first and foremost on the basis of their multiplicity and their complex ever-changing faces of intercultural life (Papastergiadis 2006). The understanding presented here of intercultural language learning as a 'spatial-embodied practice' implies a pedagogical change in perspective, and suggests a reflective way of thinking about culture *within* the intercultural field. This epilogue sheds light on the impact of this change in perspective on language pedagogy, but is, as such, condensed in a short and very tentative form to illustrate at the same time a possible route for further research in this emergent field.

Implementing the intercultural field

I am substituting in a third grade class in cultural studies of a university level German course. It is the first class after the winter break and the teaching material given to me is centred on the topic of Wolf Biermann and the theme of West- and East-Germany. We start the class with a language game and introduce ourselves briefly. Some students recently returned from Germany, full of impressions and apparently having an urgent need to share their experiences. While the class is engaged in a lively discussion of their stories, a glance at the watch urges me to return to the topic of the class. The text is difficult, I have to explain a lot and after a while I find myself the only person speaking, all the sparkle, conversation, and excitement from the beginning of the class has gone.

Language learners are ethnographers and explorers. They seek to discover hidden worlds and prove themselves in unfamiliar environments of both language and culture. Our teaching has to acknowledge these forms of *explorative learning outside the classroom,* even if this means to distance our pedagogy from text-based-only-approaches and direct our teaching towards the everyday knowledge of language learners and their inspiring input. The 'world outside the classroom' is not an isolated or disconnected area, it is right at the interface of experience in the intercultural field and the educational support our language classes provide. Not letting the two dimensions interact with each other would mean to lose those elements of intercultural learning which relate to an authentic and present way of being intercultural. The language classroom is an interrelated element of the intercultural field and should in this sense include the various forms of orientating, embodying, and sensing encountered during our long walk. Those elements can eventually

transform the classroom to a place of shared experience or imagination. In directing the curiosity of language learners about 'difference' towards their own living environments and diversity is then part of a 'decentring' process (Roberts et al. 2001). I have stated before that in a globalised world diversity can increasingly be found on the doorstep and that possibilities for enquiring into multiple realities are growing. Edwards and Usher argue in this sense for

> the need to move from a focus on teaching and learning as bounded practices to an examination of new and complex patterns of interconnectedness, and the pedagogic spaces and the socio-cognitive, socio-practical and socio-affective possibilities that are both opened up and excluded by the interconnectedness of globalisation. (Edwards & Usher 2000: 72)

We have seen that the intercultural field is located in everyday environments and practices of diversity, which are driven by a fair amount of mobility, the senses and the body. Transferring these elements within intercultural learning into the classroom can happen while taking the language classroom for a walk, encouraging language learners to explore their environments as ethnographers, or while joining someone else for a small part of her or his (everyday) journeys. Experiences of this kind can crucially transform learning and shed light on the embodied and sensed elements of interculturality, as concepts about 'experiential learning' have shown (see Silberman 2007 or Moon 2004). Furthermore, this focus on movement can lead to the breaking up of binaries, as, for example, 'us' and 'them'. Encouraging language learners to take photographs and describe their personal understanding of its contents is then another step towards implementing mobile and visual-sensory elements of the intercultural field in the language classroom.

Placing life-worlds centre-stage

I am flipping through a textbook of German language for beginners level. Most of the communicative dialogues are directed towards everyday practices, such as shopping, having a phone call, giving details about your personality, speaking about the weather, and so forth. The textbook at this stage of proficiency is full of everyday life (in its condensed form). Putting the A1-level textbook aside, I reach for a B2-level textbook we use for teaching at the university: the contents get more abstract and the communicative dialogues about everyday topics are replaced with literary texts by German writers: Kafka, Goethe, Mann. The re-enchanting of the ordinary almost

disappears through a focus on the extra-ordinary: how do Germans deal with their history, what is the message of 'Tonio Kröger', and so forth.

Based on the aim of re-enchanting intercultural language learning while giving voice to language learners and their experiences in the intercultural field, the language classroom should motivate language learners to engage as much as possible with the life-worlds of people they encounter every day or on their travels abroad. The aim of this focus is to avoid circling around disconnected elements of German (high) culture – which might create distanced knowledge or fixed interpretations – but to focus rather on *the multiplicity and richness of individual 'Lebenswelten'*. We have seen that the wish of language learners to 'connect' and look 'under the surface' was central in their experiences of intercultural encounter and often included the insight that life-worlds are fragmented and embedded in a variety of networks; in other words: that identity is not fixed. An inclusion of those themes and patterns into the classroom could provide a platform to discuss those diverse processes.

Furthermore, placing the experiences of the learner in situ means to include and consciously work with those forms of *embodied knowledge language learners bring into the classroom*. The manifold epistemologies and understandings of life they enter the classroom with are at the very core of both our classroom 'contents', and the exchange of already pre-constituted knowledge and imaginations of 'a' culture. There is a deeper significance to the ways language and culture learners choose to engage with the world, and we need to engage more with what seems important to language learners themselves. bell hooks describes this process as

> actively inviting all students to think passionately and to share ideas in a passionate, open manner. When everyone in the classroom, teacher and students, recognises that they are responsible for creating a learning community together, learning is at its most meaningful and useful. In such a community of learning there is not failure. Everyone is participating and sharing whatever resource is needed at a given moment in time to ensure that we leave the classroom knowing that critical thinking empowers us. (hooks 2010: 11)

To make space for intercultural learners themselves and to value their everyday experiences can mean providing potential for encounter in the most possible ways – having the world as a guest in the classroom is, as such, based on the life-worlds of the students themselves. Phipps and Gonzalez remind us:

There is no learner who comes without knowledge of languaging; there is no learner who does not already live in and through language, though the ubiquity of that process may not have been made conscious yet. (Phipps & Gonzalez 2004: 76)

Let me, in a final step, visualise this point with Megan's mind map of her life in Melbourne. The form she chose for this mind map illustrates the networked and complex form of life-worlds and can as such be implemented in the language classroom.
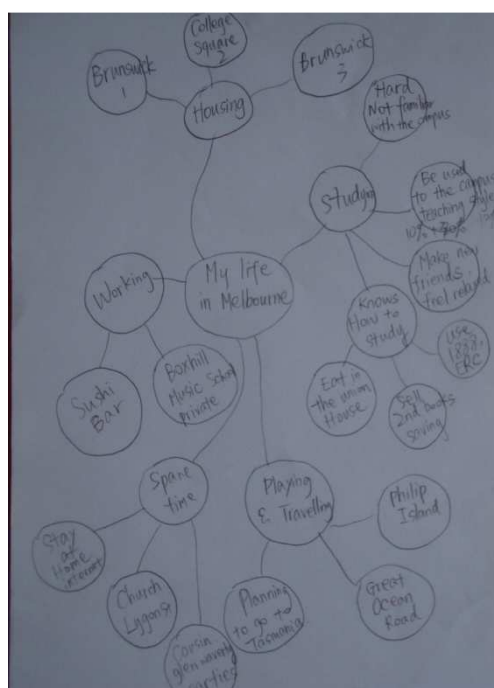

Figure 51: Megan's mind map

Focusing on 'interculture'

Three friends from Leipzig are visiting me in Egypt while I teach German at the German Department of Al-Azhar University. On their third day in Cairo they join me in class, which buzzes with excitement. I am asking the students to briefly capture what they know about Germans and German culture and transform it into questions. After some minutes of preparation we divide the class into three big groups and as soon as Silke, Angela and Nicole are sitting, the questions flow and I hear recurring laughter. The atmosphere is inspiring and we all – teacher, friends, and students leave the classroom with the feeling of having sensed (at least a little bit) what it must be like to be Egyptian or German.

As language teachers, we are at the core of emerging and shifting meanings – working with this challenging task means to create openness and to understand the classroom as a

multiple space where different knowledges meet (Kramsch 2009a). In the course of this thesis we have seen that there is nothing like 'the' German or 'the' Egyptian, but many feelings and reflective thoughts coming out of being understood as such. Teaching about culture should help the student on her or his way to understand that intercultural learning happens in the being and in the actual encounter and not through knowledge alone. A focus on 'interculture' (Papastergiadis 2006) is then followed by a focus on practices – in an attempt *not just of recognising the 'other', but understanding it on the grounds of co-implicated being and becoming* (Zembylas 2006). When our teaching practice is focused on questioning how it feels to be of 'a' culture, then we can also teach the transformation from knowing to sensing.

Ideally, what should arise during a learning experience as such is the reflexive and critical engagement with seemingly stable certainties about culture, which then comes hand in hand with critical pedagogy. Highlighting and visualising the *interdependencies of body, place and experience* can happen on the basis of language learners' stories corresponding to the little possibilities we have to express elements of culture within short words and fixed terms. As meaning constantly changes and transforms itself, holding onto it in the form of a single word such as 'culture' is problematic:

> Culture is no longer a helpful discursive construct. It creates more problems than it solves. It would benefit our thinking greatly if we put it in the attic, and brought it down again as a word to think with, once we've given it a serious rest. This is a serious point. When words get overburdened with carrying solutions they break, they become deadened. (Phipps 2008: 14)

Concentrating our contents of the classroom on relational views of social realities reconnects as well to Rizvi's concept on 'cosmopolitan learning' (Rizvi 2007b) and its focus on those structures of the nation-states language learners increasingly have to translate into transnational and interrelated notions.

Choosing inspiring terminology

The language and terms we choose in order to describe (inter-) cultural elements, is essential when it comes to the general direction, aims, and purposes of language education. Buzz words like *outcome, success* or *competence* guide the understanding of what intercultural learning should be in a particular direction, and are as such highly influenced by policy agendas and political terminology. Certainly, there has to be a way to capture learning abilities and processes in words; however, a term such as 'measuring' rarely

focuses on the people, places, and magical moments encountered 'on the way'. To break out of one-sided and institutionalised terminologies of language learning means to avoid technical terms as much as possible and to draw extensively on the creative aspects language learning involves and evolves. This concerns both the methods of teaching as well as the potential of language learners themselves to change our perception of the world through the creation of 'new' language.

"Wir bauen Wörter!" (Let's build words!). We are doing an exercise about compound words – a competition about the 'best and one-of-a-kind compound word ever'. There are having three types of points the students could gain for each attempt: 'wunderbar' (wonderful), 'furchtbar' (awful), and – 'kreativ' (creative). Each creative 'mistake' is written on the left side of the blackboard, added to with the 'correct' form – but written in orange, green or purple, in order to celebrate its effort and originality.

The creative discovery and play with meanings and words is not about competences, or about failing and succeeding. It is about living the meanings and the words and about re-creating them all the time. Terms, which can capture this evolving and playful approach of engaging with language and its aspects 'in between', are able to reconstitute the very deep core of language education: to create the 'ability' to inspire and to be inspired. Questioning 'competence' is in this vein an act of teaching against the grain of controlling education, which does not allow enough free space for creative discovery. Kramsch reminds us in this instance that teachers are border crossers (see as well Giroux 1992):

> As representatives of an institution, we are expected to be in control of the syllabus, the lesson plan, the activities, and the rules of behavior of the students in our classes. But as multilingual subjects, we know the pleasure that comes from transgressing the rules, from discovering unexpected meanings in a text, from testing how much the language will allow us to get away with. (Kramsch 2009a: 207)

Transgressing seemingly fixed terms and word-boundaries is at the heart of language education and asks for an understanding of terminology based on multiplicity and flexibility. The suggestion of Alison Phipps and Glenn Levine, in their book, *Critical and Intercultural Theory and Language Pedagogy* (2011), to speak about 'capacity' instead of 'competence', about 'complexity' and 'context' instead of 'culture' or 'content', and 'compassion' and 'conflict' instead of 'motivation' or solely 'communication', is, in this regards, one promising suggestion and a way ahead.

Evoking a sense of magic, awe and wonder

While teaching in Egypt, I found myself in front of a class of seventy young women who were more or less used to chatting all the time, especially in the back rows. The acoustics of the room were bad as well, and so, after almost losing my voice, I looked for other strategies. Suddenly I disappeared. Once I was hiding behind the front desk, I heard whisperings: "What happened?" One more minute and the murmur is replaced with "Ah" and "Oh", laughing and giggling. The classroom is full of soap bubbles. I step out from behind the desk and we watch the bubbles, smiling, trying to find out which colours they have and how they make us feel. I write on the blackboard, "die Seifenblase (zauberhaft)" – the soap bubble (magical). Two years later, on holiday back in Egypt, I meet students from this class, and they tell me the story of when the classroom was suddenly full of bubbles.

Engaging with the senses in the classroom can have a variety of facets. Letting artefacts and funny objects, music and food, or elements from nature join the classroom does not only welcome in a bit of magic, it also creates a learning atmosphere that breathes, smells, listens, dances, giggles, astonishes, and so much more. Learning inside the classroom should be connected to learning outside the classroom as much as possible, and it might do so with the aim of re-enchanting. The transforming processes learning and teaching languages implies are located in, and directed to, the sensory modes of learning, as we witnessed during the walks. Re-inventing the classroom to become a big 'laboratory' of those dimensions is then a good alternative to highlighting cultural difference or simplifying content. Engaging with culture in this way gives way to inspiration and the possibility of embracing more consciously the embodied and often unseen worlds language learners bring into the classroom.

In short: *language pedagogy needs emotions, wonder*, *awe, and magic.* These elements are the essence of why people travel and move towards unfamiliar worlds with the help of unfamiliar languages, when their travel is freely chosen and not under duress. Language pedagogy too often leaves this colourful mixture of discovery and learning behind and creates an understanding of language learning as something technical and instrumental, disconnected from 'the world out there'. This thesis set off to reconnect the two dimensions of space and learning, and what I have attempted here is simple: there is more about intercultural language learning than competences, functionalities and outcomes. Instead we may find narratives and experiences in between failure and success with

magical as well as highly unsettling touches, which, I argue, are the very essence of what is needed to re-enchant the understanding of intercultural language learning. We have given room to the voices of language learners and their understandings of being intercultural in this world and to tackling certainties and uncertainties. The multiplicity of experience we have encountered asks us to think ahead to a 'multiple classroom' (Kramsch 2009a), and recognise the manifold routes and ways across the intercultural field by which intercultural language learners walk, and where we as teachers offer a certain kind of company.

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