Art of transition: A Deleuzoguattarian framework

Emma Rose
Lancaster Institute for Contemporary Arts, Lancaster University, Lancaster, UK

Amanda Bingley
Division of Health Research, Furness College, Lancaster University, Lancaster, UK

Macarena Rioseco
Académica Departamento Artes Visuales, Facultad de Artes y Educación Fisca, Universidad Metropolitana de Ciencias de la Educación, Ñuñoa, Chile

Abstract
This article reflects on a funded participatory artmaking project that engaged displaced people whose traumatic experiences prior to exile in the UK necessitated referral for psychological support. Reflections are informed by action research method involving a cyclical reflective feedback loop, augmented by intra-action and deterritorialisation. Within this context, the Deleuzoguattarian framework is used to add insights into artmaking as a deterritorialising vector of destabilization to identify beneficial shifts in participants’ narratives of self in transition between the original homeland and the new environment. Artworks understood through the clients’ voices over the course of ten weeks, suggest transition from a repetition of original trauma to artworks focused on present lives, and more positive agency. The article explores how witnessing and being witnessed, in the context of emerging intra-actions and transitions, integrate the authors within those processes, authors and clients becoming part of each other’s new self-narratives.

Corresponding author:
Emma Rose, Lancaster Institute for Contemporary Arts, LICA Building, Lancaster University, Lancaster LA1 4YW, UK.
Email: e.rose@lancs.ac.uk
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Introduction
This article reflects on a funded participatory action research artmaking project that investigated the experience of displacement for people forced by persecution and torture to flee their homeland. The research took place during 2017–2019 within an overarching aim to improve the wellbeing of the group. We use a Deleuzoguattarian framework to reflect on the programme in order to discover insights into how the generation of new thoughts associated with past experiences, potentially enabled their reframing. Specifically, we examine the program’s potential to facilitate change for displaced people in their relationship to self and identity, and capacity to contribute to their healing.

As art and health researchers we have a specific interest in the mental health problems of migrants and refugees. We developed the project Art of Recovery in response to an increasing recognition that refugees appear to benefit from engagement in creative arts (Andemicael, 2011; Dutton, 2017), and participatory arts in particular (Rose & Bingley, 2017; Rose et al., 2018). We welcomed the opportunity to collaborate with Freedom from Torture (FfT) in research exploring the benefits of participatory arts for this group, and how these approaches support the work of health professionals in the field and inform policy makers. FfT is a major UK nonprofit organisation, with centres in five UK cities over seven different regions. The charity provides treatment for survivors of torture and offers a broad range of support for clients who attend weekly sessions, including psychological and physical therapies, forensic documentation of torture, legal and welfare advice, and creative projects.

The Art of Recovery project was developed over two phases; a five-week pilot in 2017, and a British Academy funded 18 month project in 2019, which included a ten week workshop series. The participatory artmaking workshops were designed to run within a safe, therapeutically supportive environment. The project obtained ethical approval from the Lancaster University Ethics Committee and the FfT ethics committee. Art of Recovery involved a qualitative inquiry applied to participatory artmaking, drawing on action research methods. Data collection included relevant demographic information, observations and discussions within small group workshops and interviews, and visual data in the form of original artworks and photos. We used a qualitative thematic analysis to identify key themes across the data (see Rose et al., 2018 for a detailed discussion of the overall findings of the first programme and conclusions reached).

The Art of Recovery project engaged displaced people whose traumatic experiences prior to exile in the UK had necessitated referral for psychological support. Participants originated from, Afghanistan, Cameroon, Central African Republic,
Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Iran, Rwanda, Togo, and Sri Lanka. Because there were specific vulnerabilities associated with participants in this group, care was required in engaging them in participatory action research artmaking; it was important to provide a safe creative space for the workshop, physically and psychologically. Addressing physical requirements involved using a room with which participants were familiar; and arranging furniture in ways conducive to individual and group support. The programmes benefitted from psychotherapists who provided clients with weekly clinical sessions, and a psychotherapist was always present within workshops. There were five language interpreters within the workshops, around whom participants with a shared language were grouped. Within the organization, psychotherapists and interpreters worked with clients over various lengths of time. We constructed a space where participants could explore and express themselves through artworks within a supportive environment, one that enabled participants to feel confident and to embrace creative expression.

The project is informed by a Deleuzoguattarian framework, where Deleuze and Guattari argue that knowledge is multiple, contextual and relational, and propose that meaning is constructed, or mapped, from semantical territories composed by ‘rhizomatic’ networks of connected ideas (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988). We understand rhizomatic here as non-hierarchical knowledge production, akin to the way under-ground rooted structures grow and branch horizontally, with no unified structure or centre of power. Integral to this framework is the concept of deterritorialization, seen as a disruption between an individual and experiences associated with a certain location in space and time. It describes the movement by which one leaves a territory, to constitute and extend the territory itself, involving destabilization of habitual ideas and practices, creating the possibility to journey into ‘completely new territory’ (Smith, 2016, p. 2). Thus, deterritorialization entails practices of extending the territory from where something originates, by connecting it to other territories in order to seek change. Artmaking, from this perspective is seen as a deterritorializing method (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988) to create new ways of thinking, (also see Smith (2016). We investigate deterritorialization as a vector able to effect changes in self, here in transition between participant’s original homeland and new homeland.

The artmaking workshops considered the theme of landscapes, loosely defined as places and spaces (i.e. territories) associated with safety. The intention was to engage participants in remembering past, potentially traumatic, experiences within a new creative and contained environment. We hoped this context would extend the territory and create new thinking associated with their previous experiences to enable their reframing.

**Method: A Deleuzoguattarian framework leading to change**

The action research method included a cyclical reflexive feedback loop of information comprised of six stages (see Figure 1) repeated over ten weekly workshops and a reflective workshop at the end of the project. In addition, participants
completed a short demographic questionnaire (age, homeland and years lived there, whether family still lived there, positive associations with their homeland, any experience of artmaking) and the self-reported measure (WHO-5) Well-Being Index, establishing a base-level of each participant’s well-being at the start of the project, repeated in week five and in the final workshop in week ten. Following the workshops, we invited participants to individual 30–45 minute semi-structured interviews; and a joint interview with two of the FfT psychotherapists who were providing therapeutic support for the participants.

The action research design as a cyclical reflexive feedback loop, illustrated in Figure 2 included the contribution of psychotherapists at each stage, in a clinical capacity in the individual sessions with each participant as client with their

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| Stage | Participants | Explanation |
|-------|--------------|-------------|
| i. Co-design: | Participants, interpreters, psychotherapist, project team (PT). | Discussion of content of forthcoming artmaking workshop |
| ii. Artmaking workshop once a week for 10 weeks: | Participants, interpreters, psychotherapist, PT | Workshop themes and materials introduced by PT, changes made to workshop result from pre-workshop co-design discussion and post-workshop debriefing |
| iii. Reflection, action and intra-action. | Participants, interpreters, psychotherapist, PT. | Participants engage in one to one discussion with PT (and interpreter) to reflect and explore all dimensions of the workshop, the artworks produced, feelings and encounters. Verbal and written reflections describing artworks and feelings informed participants’ psychotherapeutic work and subsequent workshop sessions. |
| iv. Post workshop debriefing: | Interpreters, psychotherapist, PT | Discussion of participants’ engagement, artworks, verbal and written reflections, and wellbeing –what worked well and less well? What did participants suggest? Our responses to participants and artworks. |
| v. Group discussion between clients during and post workshops | Participants, project team, psychotherapist, interpreters. | Artworks exhibited add to previous weeks. Participants reported back to PT and psychotherapist. Verbal and written reflections describing artworks and feelings informed participants’ psychotherapeutic work and subsequent workshop sessions. |
| vi. Psychotherapeutic clinical session: | Participant, psychotherapist | Discussions between participant and psychotherapist identified changes their artworks and feelings, reflected back to participant who found these changes informed subsequent workshop sessions. |

Figure 1. Table of activities.
interpreters, and as a presence in the workshops. Although, for reasons of confidentiality the content of clinical sessions was not disclosed to the project team, participants and their psychotherapists noted that sessions included discussions of, and reflections on, their artworks. These sessions influenced what participants brought back into workshop sessions and was felt by them to potentially reinforce beneficial shifts in their thinking.

The co-design element empowered participants in the design of the weekly workshops, by providing opportunities to make suggestions at the beginning and at the end of workshop sessions for following workshops, and these were integrated as appropriate. For example, participants suggested in the pilot phase that they would like more modelling materials. In the next phase we provided a wider range of materials including sand and clay. In the workshop with 3 D modelling participants initiated making clay pots and pans and performed ‘cooking’ food associated with their homeland, colouring them with paint, and ‘sharing’ the food with each other. This prompted a lot of laughter and strengthened the bonds between participants, even where language was a barrier.

The action research cyclical feedback model echoes Deleuze’s core philosophical ideas about interactive dimensions of ‘three spheres of reality’ (Delanda in Buchanan and Lambert, 2005, p. 86), the ‘actual’, the ‘intensive’, and the ‘virtual’ (Deleuze, 1994). For Deleuze, both the actual and the virtual are real. Whilst, the actual has concrete existence, the virtual does not, but it is no less real for not having a concrete presence in the world. There are many interpretations of this complex notion, but a simple analogy is provided by Buchanan (2010) who
suggests the virtual is equivalent to a computer screen, it may only exist in a virtual space but although its physical interactions happen at the level of hardware, its effects upon us are none the less real. Building on Deleuze’s notion, the virtual has also been interpreted as the realm of ‘ideas’ or ‘affects’ (O’Sullivan, 2001). Deleuze explains the actual as in a continual state of movement; things are continuously changed by our thoughts of them. The virtual, described as the background to the actual, holds the potentialities through which the actual is actualized.

The virtual and the actual constantly interact and modify each other through ‘intensive processes’ and, as a consequence, the world is constantly transformed. The intensive are processes that affect, for example, thoughts, memories and feelings (Drummond and Themessl-Huber, 2007, p. 435). Following O’Sullivan (2001, p. 129) we propose that the reflective processes of artmaking are intensive processes because these can actualize ideas or affects. For example, in the process of thinking of an idea, the thinking is an ‘intensive process’ that generates actual knowledge, for example in the shape of an artwork or a piece of writing. Simultaneously, that knowledge adds new elements to that idea and hence, it changes it. Therefore, virtual and actual are generative entities; the actual stems from the virtual through sensuous experiences and the virtual is a potentiality that becomes actualized. For example, memories of experiences marked by particular affects define the continually developing thoughts that shape the sensations related to those experiences. In turn, this shapes behaviour.

Taking part in the project could have re-traumatized participants, and as noted earlier we were careful to design the research to reduce this as far as possible, by encouraging a focus on the positive associations with landscape and providing a sensitive, supportive workshop environment. Our findings suggest that re-traumatization was mostly averted and where there were difficult memories artmaking was helpful. From a Deleuzian perspective, the potentialities of the virtual (affects and ideas) may be modified when actualized within the reflective processes of artmaking, as new experiences are generated in the course of expressing thoughts and memories. This process, arguably, may reaffirm (more hopeful) new and different potentialities of the virtual.

Within the art workshops we invited participants to express spaces and places they had experienced as safe-havens, loosely referred to as ‘landscapes’. These might be recalled from their country of origin, experienced on their journey of migration, imagined as a place that they would like to go, or representative of their life in the UK. Participants made paintings, drawings, and collage, using acrylic paint on canvas, board or paper, crayon and pencil, felt, wool, stones, feathers, clay, and plasticine etc.

Self-expression, and finding a voice through artmaking was sometimes difficult for the participants in the early stages of the programme and sometimes involved contradictory emotions. The two examples below are typical of artworks made in the first few workshops where participants’ explored imagery associated with their trauma. Samuel’s (all names are pseudonyms) painting clearly demonstrates this, where he began painting a landscape in bright colours, depicting his mother
making cassava for dinner, and then as the realisation of his image settled with him, he over-painted it in dark colours.

Workshop 3. “I wanted to make a painting with bright colours. But today I am very sad, so all the colours are brown and dark; and it is all a mess. It is dark in my homeland. I miss my mum.” Samuel, originally from Togo, Africa.

For several early workshop sessions Pierre was unable to find anywhere safe to depict.

Workshop 2. “The image shows a crocodile in the sea, a snake in the tree, and a lion with big teeth on the ground. Central Africa – Thinking about what I am feeling now. I imagine [what] my position now looks like [in] this picture. The story of my life. I want to make safe – this tree is the UK. When I went to the tree, snake waited for me. I try to save myself to get down, but a lion waited for me outside. So I am confused what I do now. I want just to be safe.” Pierre, originally from Central African Republic.

There was a noticeable shift from depicting traumatic associations to imagery depicting more positive experiences whether in their past or present lives. Subject-matter that expressed past events explored in early workshops to imagery that was more concerned with current experiences and present lives. This change in associations appeared to reflect transitions in thinking, and was usefully explored within the action research process by researchers, participants and their interpreters and psychotherapists in the course of the workshops.

**A process of becoming**

In order to capture fully the experiences of participants engaged in the *Art of Recovery* programme it is useful to introduce Barad’s (2007) notion of ‘intra-action’. Related to Deleuze’s notion that the virtual and the actual constantly interact and exist in processes of becoming, Deleuze suggests there are no bounded subjects or objects, but only multiple entities that come into existence forming ‘assemblages’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988), that reciprocally produce and modify one another. Barad’s intra-action proposes subjects and objects do not precede their interaction, but rather emerge through particular intra-actions. Barad proposes that when people and objects are mixed together, they open new possibilities to act. These possibilities, and also the agencies of each participant, emerge within, that is ‘intra’ the interaction. Therefore, apparatuses, that produce phenomena, are not assemblages of humans and nonhumans, they are the condition of the possibility for action of ‘humans’ and ‘non-humans’, not merely as ideational concepts, but crucially, in their materiality. Subjectivities and their agencies emerge and materialise within the relationships they establish with other subjects and objects. Within the context of the artmaking workshops, distinct agencies emerge according to observations, such as the people in the room, an image taking shape – perhaps a boat, a sea, a child, a cell – or sunlight beyond the window of the workshop studio bringing sensations of warmth to the session. These entities do not precede, but emerge through the intra-action of everything, the intra-actions
between all things encountered, living and non-living, including action research which, due to its cyclical reflexive feedback loops, allows integration of the emerging entities as the project develops.

Our understanding of Barad, and Allegranti and Wyatt (2014) led us to infer the ‘entanglement’ of phenomena as one in which each of us is an observer, each bear witness to each other and to everything. Acts of observation were enacted by us all as witnesses in the room – participants, interpreters, the psychotherapists. We can see everyone as porous entities to each other, and to the phenomena encountered. We were immersed in and being produced by a process of becoming. The materials of the workshop, its layout, the building, its clinical rooms, the walls filling up with exhibited artworks, these were the fabric that contained discussions, the quietness of concentration, decisions, indecisions, disappointments, and achievements. It felt that over the duration of the weekly workshops, we became more porous to each other, and to materialities around us. The project team and participants got to know and trust each other. Participants noted that they developed confidence in our ability to help them imagine and realize places they wanted to materialize, encouraged by instruction in basic art techniques and skills. From the start the emphasis was on facilitating individual expression rather than expertise. In this way participants were empowered to decide what they wanted to do in their artwork, to determine their own pace, make suggestions on workshop content, materials used, and organization of the room. In this environment, participants began opening up to share more openly details of their stories, to each other and to us.

The project team engaged in two debriefing sessions after each workshop, first with the psychotherapist and interpreters, and second, with each other. Engaging with the participants meant we encountered their very difficult experiences leading to exile, their trauma and continuing problems. At times we were deeply affected by their experiences, particularly if they echoed our personal histories and circumstances. In week 5 of the fieldwork, when there was a break in the weekly sessions, we set up our own artmaking workshop to express some of the difficult emotions we were experiencing, and to externalise some of the deeper ways in which painful emotions had been triggered (see Figures 5 to 7). The sessions opened up lines of communication between us and levelled the distinction between us as project team members, and the clients as participants whom we observed. After our workshop we connected our participation with observation in what was significant in ourselves, each other, and the clients.

Figure 5. “As a migrant myself, I was deeply touched by the participants’ impossibility to return home because those places did not exist anymore. As the workshops unfolded, I could see how my interaction with the participants and their stories modified my perception and relation to my home. This is expressed in my work as multiple paths that cross and interact with each other, weaving together a new interconnected fabric.”

Figure 6. “A participant depicted how she had been imprisoned, her three young children couldn’t find her, and were in danger looking for her... In the UK she is separated from her children who are still in Cameroon. I was distressed by her story
Figure 3. Image by Samuel, originally from Togo, Africa.

Figure 4. Image by Pierre, originally from Central African Republic.
and it triggered feelings of anxiety associated with separation that I visualized as a fragmented vortex.”

Figure 7. “A participant had noted in conversation that he experienced great loneliness and his artwork showed a place where he could go to alleviate that feeling. As the researcher I was profoundly affected by his account. Later when as a team we did our own artwork in response to the workshops my artwork expressed the isolation but then the connection I could locate with hope and other people.”

Shifts were occurring in us, and in the participants. One of the ways this became apparent was observable in the subject-matter of participants’ artworks. As the weekly workshops progressed, the predominance of imagery in early workshops depicting traumatic events shifted to images reflecting experiences in current lives, and to experiences encountered in the workshops, including depictions of the building itself. For example, Karnou, made a painting of his national flag in workshop 4, describing the fighting that led him to leave his country “I cannot go to my country because my life is in danger. The religious fighting never finish, because people want revenge. Nowhere to go — everyday they kill.” By workshop 5 his imagery had changed to depict more positive elements of his life in the UK and at Freedom from Torture (Figure 8). He explained “This is the Freedom from Torture building. I’ve done this building because when I’m here I feel safe. Today I make this building because if I didn’t I would feel crazy on the street. When I come here I feel OK, safe. I’m learning more about painting and music. It helps me mentally to be normal like everyone. When you talk about the building you talk about the people inside the building. I never forget this place in my life.”

The materials of artmaking were agents for imaginative transformation as they were spilled or brushed, moulded by hands, drenched in colour or subdued.
into greys and blacks. Through reciprocal witnessing and supporting actions, artworks and knowledge emerged, human and non-human phenomena coming together collaboratively in a creative, experiential encounter, augmenting the Deleuzoguattarian framework of interactive spheres. Through the workshops, discussions, debriefing sessions, we created opportunities for the inexpressible to emerge, through voices and through visual imagery, to give a voice to what had been unsayable. These were reflected upon, within the workshop and in the psychotherapy, as agents in the cyclical reflexive feedback loop of reflection, action and intra-action. The intensive processes of actualization from the virtual encountered within the generation of new potentialities were seen in the form of the artmaking and reflective sharing.

Observable changes took place over the course of the workshops, as participants bore witness to testimonies and emerging artworks. Another example of a trajectory of change is evident in Ashan’s paintings; his early work depicted traumatic events that led to his exile (see Figure 9) whilst later workshops depicted more positive memories associated with his life in Sri Lanka (see Figure 10).

Workshop 1. The image shows the bombing of a town, a school, and a church. There are dead people in the ‘safe zone’, barbed wire and handcuffs. Ashan explained: “The last war happened in Sri Lanka. What happened there is in my
**Figure 9.** Image by Ashan, originally from Sri Lanka.

**Figure 10.** Image by Ashan, originally from Sri Lanka.
picture. This happened in a place called V*. There is a school. I have painted a church. There are some soldiers. Lots of Tamil speaking people are there affected by the war. School children were also affected. Sri Lanka is an island surrounded by water. I have done the blue sea.”

By Workshop 4 Ashan was able to paint this, as he recalled “I was a fisherman in Sri Lanka. I feel safe in this place. There is a tree near the river, dark green river. Two swans in the river. I am feeling happy drawing this picture. Like being near the water. The water/pond is in my imagination. The yellow colour represents it is a sunny day.”

Similarly, images by Roshan (see Figures 11 to 13) changed over the course of the workshops from images concerned with the reasons why he had to leave Sri Lanka, to those that evoke fond memories.

Workshop 3. “My painting is about the Tamil land where Tamil speaking people lived and living now […] Because of the war we had to leave our country. Tamil speaking people were tortured and killed. I have come to UK because of torture and war. 146,047 people died in the war. I was a farmer – enjoyed farming. Now doing nothing.” Roshan

Workshop 5. Roshan described his painting: “I have drawn the picture of a big river and an island two kilometres from my home. I went there with my friend’s there. Will I be able to have a good time there again? It will never come back I think. I remember my friends. Makes me feel sad also. We cooked food on the island. We climbed the tree to look out for the elephants. We were guarding the crops by the river from the elephants –at night time. We went home during the day time.”

Workshop 6. Roshan modelled his artwork in sand, clay and plasticine on card, explaining: “I am drawing a real picture in my homeland Sri Lanka. A pond and the

Figure 11. Image by Roshan, originally from Sri Lanka.
irrigation to the nearby farm. We grow paddy (rice). I enjoyed taking care of my farmland. I was very active and watering the field. Snake was also there. It has bitten people, some died. It reminded me of my happy life in the pond. I was a vegetarian then. There is a forest near the pond. Leopard, elephant, snakes, foxes, crocodiles

Figure 12. Image by Roshan, originally from Sri Lanka.

Figure 13. Image by Roshan, originally from Sri Lanka.
they are all there. Coconut trees are there. We grew paddy and harvested, used tractor to the take the rice with husks.” (see Figure 13).

We have seen in the examples above how processes of change were expressed in artworks. Images moved beyond depictions of initial events related to trauma, to places associated with safety, safe places in their original homeland, and the safe place of the building within which workshops were experienced.

The next section draws on the Deleuzian concept of rhizomatic growth to explore how, in relation to their reflections on their healing landscapes, participants’ thoughts, memories, and sense of identity underwent varying degrees of change. This allowed the possibility of a transition into a different way of reflecting on their past and future.

**Lines of flight leading to change**

The Deleuzian idea of rhizomatic growth (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988) offers potential in the field of action research as an alternative to what can be described as an arborescent (tree-shaped) structural model of knowledge dominant in the West. The arborescent is based on hierarchical growth with relatively limited and regulated connections established between its components (Bogue, 1989). This is based on the repetition of existing dominant models of thought, the dissemination of similarities and ‘the elision of difference’ (Bolt, 2004, p. 40). In other words, the arborescent as a framework reproduces existing dominant patterns of thought instead of promoting the creation of new knowledge and ways of thinking that could transform the current state of affairs.

In contrast, Deleuze describes a rhizomatic model, inspired by botanical structures that typically are root-like, underground stems that grow and branch horizontally. The rhizome, in Deleuzian terms, is a non-representational model of knowledge production that defines non-hierarchical and horizontal expansion, not subsumed within a unified structure or a center of power. The rhizome forms unregulated networks that generate multiplicity and heterogeneity (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988). Instead of building from doubling and reflecting, this model embraces the creation of new knowledges, through an establishment of different connections between already existent elements. In other words, the rhizome model praises difference, and sees difference as a constructive and creative tool. To imagine an experience as rhizomatic is to accept that the experience itself can grow beyond its extremities or limits. Processes of action research generated rhizomatically can be termed lines of flight (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988) meaning that experiences grow from reflexive practices to form ‘unregulated networks in which any element may be connected with any other element’ (Bogue, 1989, p. 17).

Thinking about Deleuze and Guattari’s (1988) notion of ‘assemblage’ in this project we consider the identity of an individual, as an assemblage in a permanent state of becoming, constantly under construction and modified by their experiences within unfolding dialogues. Identities emerge through the intra-actions between the individual, objects and associated phenomena. Identity is conceptualized as a
dynamic grouping of memories, experiences, and thoughts, not as fixed self, but as an assemblage in becoming affected and transformed by objects and all phenomena, including every new artwork (Rioseco, 2018, p. 108), and from the now extended network (rhizome) from which they constantly originate. As Deleuze and Guattari (1988, p. 8) suggest, what characterizes an ‘assemblage is precisely the increase in the dimensions of a multiplicity that necessarily changes in nature as it expands its connections’. Deterritorialized rhizomatic networks of meaning, composed of chains of newly connected elements bring about change, as new perceptions and ways of thinking emerge from the dynamic trajectory of participant’s becoming, with potential for the creation of new meaning, that is, for a ‘reterritorialization’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988).

This notion is similar but different to the model developed by Smith (2016) who also explores Deleuzian action research through artmaking as deterritorializing method (Smith, 2016). Smith understands her territory not as a static, stable entity, but a grouping of ‘objects, bodies, expressions, and qualities, localizable at a particular point in space and time’ (Smith, 2016, p. 38). She suggests that if action research is defined as a territory, artmaking is the tool for deterritorialization, to facilitate the creation of new ideas and the generation of change. The concept of deterritorialization describes situations where the aim is to produce a dynamic opening of new potentialities, made available through concrete practices. If we see Smith’s project and our project sharing the notion of Deleuze and action research as territory, artmaking offers a method to effect processes of deterritorialization. Indeed, Smith (2016, p. 37) proposes ‘action research as an accompanying territory in which Deleuze, artmaking, and action research become an object of encounter’. In our project, the process of action research as a cyclical reflexive feedback loop comprised associated phenomena and their intra-action throughout the process of encounter. The encounter is mandatory for the creation of an assemblage. In the case of Art of Recovery each identity in becoming (i.e. each participant) was influenced and changed by the intensive process of making artworks and the cyclical feedback loops of reflection. From there new artworks grew, creating new points for reflection and intra-action, and so on.

In Figures 14 to 17, artworks by Thierry represent the process whereby new artworks grew from each other. In his case, from painfully distressing representations of the past, to images where he was able to connect with more positive memories, thoughts, and the start of a shift in his self-identity. The connection between past and present opened new potentialities, new thoughts that deterritorialized the originals, contributing to a stronger sense of self.

Workshop 1. Thierry reflected: “Remembering the past is always bad for me, describing a place back home, other things, I don’t want to think about it. Growing up as a refugee, nothing is good for me.”

Workshop 3. Thierry explained: “The church, somewhere I used to go with my mum, my late Dad, my siblings. [Remembering] my mum also helped me remember about the past.”
In Workshop 4 Thierry described the solitude of his life in the UK and feelings of intense loneliness caused by separation from his family: “When I’m bored and lonely I go and sit down in the park. The people that come along bring memorial flowers.” In later workshops he was able to connect difficult memories of loss from his past playing football with his present enjoyment of playing football in the UK.
Workshop 7. Thierry explains: “This is about football, we go there every Thursday—I look forward to playing football tomorrow. We play football for one hour, meeting different people, having fun. I like being there, I don’t like talking, just seeing people laughing is what I like. […] I play with Samuel (another client), he is
the striker so I play number 8. By Workshop 8, when visiting the park, he started to be able to experience animals, green trees, and water in ways beneficial to his wellbeing and as he says his picture describes: “…a park somewhere in S*, it is a lovely park, with some water, trees… Is where people go with dogs, where people go to relax. There are some animals (ducks) in the water. Saturday last week by myself, because I am alone. Sometimes when I don’t have anything to do I go to the park, I like where I can sit and I can see green trees.”

We suggest the practice of artmaking produced a deterritorialization of memory, thought, and identity over the duration of the project. Participants’ exposure to the intra-action of the phenomena they encountered, the safe space, artworks, supportive others, the past and its connection to the present, reflection and feedback etc. became relevant parts ‘entangled’ with their experiences of trauma, such that the original experiences were changed. The creation of artworks offered new agents of deterritorialization within clients’ experiences and identities-in-process. This notion was reinforced during semi-structured interviews with the research team after completion of the workshops.

For example, Pierre looked again at the artworks he produced and described how in Workshop 1, he wanted to show himself “scared in his present situation” in a tree, with an alligator, a snake and a lion waiting underneath Figure 4. He then pointed to an image from Workshop 5, of himself mining diamonds from a river: “Just remind me the good past we had before, before we enter this country, so we had a good past and we had a bad past as well, so all of that is good, useful to remember everything, so that’s fine.” In later workshops he made objects out of clay, such as a Spiderman cake and a decorative French military hat painted bright red and gold. Looking at the images again, he said “I feel very, very proud, when I saw that [the hat] I said oh it’s not me. It’s not me do that, it may be that I saw someone else, it’s not going to be me because it’s ok it’s ok it’s fine.” When asked how he felt about sharing his memories he responded “Very good, is very important to people to sit down, to change your idea of..., to design, to do something is very good, when you are yourself you can’t do nothing, [...] we need to be together to do something, to change minds, very good for me.” We wished him good luck, he responded “Yeah I hope so because everything is done, now I’m just waiting, so I’m chef now whatever, and I need to work to give my experience to the people, to enjoy my life, that’s all.”

In the interviews, when looking at their artwork during the workshops, participants experienced a range of emotions from sad and difficult, to more positive. This process suggests they were able, through the artmaking to reterritorialize and connect their past memories and events associated with original homelands, with their current lives in the UK.

Karnou looking at his artwork said “ sometime I can’t remember, sometime when I’m confused I panic. I lost everything, but I remember those things, something important for my life so that’s why I remember to make it. When I feel safe to come to the table like here so I can try to remember something.” Conversely, once Karnou had made images associated with safety he was able to explore more emotionally disruptive images, because he was “confident now”, such as the
painting of a sunset, remembered from when he came up from the diamond mine underground where he worked, he said “it help to tell other people about it, you can find the beautiful sun like that, but maybe I can’t go this place anymore.”

An individual’s identity is understood here as a dynamic and fluid assemblage, composed by multiplicities of agents – that is, other identities, objects, bodies, experiences. The identity and the agents are constantly forming and changing, new entities emerging at particular points in space and time. This potential for constant transformation is what principally characterises an assemblage. In other words, an individual’s identity manifests in this context as an assemblage in becoming, that is, in permanent ‘state of process’ (Message, 2010, p. 280). Crucially, the formation of an identity is characterized by a dynamic reciprocity, an intra-action that exists between the multiple agents that co-function to shape it. Here we understand an identity as a co-emerging assemblage in becoming (Rioseco, 2018). This reciprocity means changes in any of the agents will necessarily trigger processes that have potential to transform an individual’s identity. This is relevant for this project, because by understanding participants’ identities as fluid, the integration of artmaking as an agent of deterritorialization (Smith, 2016) brings potential to initiate further major transformations.

Similar transitions in self and identity were described by Marie, illustrated by the trajectory of her artworks (Figures 18 to 21). By Workshop 7 Marie was able to introduce new positive experiences in her present life (the LGBT community) from the old connections with distressing past events that led to her trauma and exile. The actualization of these new positive experiences expressed through her artworks, prompted new thoughts about her current situation “I feel happy every time I meet up with my (LGBT) community members, as we share the same ideas. I

Figure 18. Image by Marie, originally from Cameroon.
feels relieved in my head.” Changes of this kind are examples of deterritorialization, signaling changes in self-narrative, and the emergence of a different way of being.

Workshop 3. Marie describes this scene: “My children are looking for me as I was arrested. But they cannot find me. For I am cuffed and cannot look for my children. I was locked up in a hut on the other side of the village they (my children) have to pass through the bush with poisonous snakes.”
In Workshop 4, Marie explains: “The story behind my painting is telling about the distance between me and my children. I am in the UK and the ocean separate me and my children, I do not know when I will be able to be reunited with them. Even though I am in the UK, I am safer here than I was in my country, but I miss my children a lot and the same for them. I am lonely, isolated without them.”

In Workshop 5, Marie explained: “My drawing is the Freedom from Torture building. This building is my safest place. Every time I come at Freedom from Torture I feel safe. Because the staff here are friendly and lovely. They make me feel better and assured. This place is in my mind all the time.”

By Workshop 7, Marie was happy to tell us: “This is the LGBT flag. Whenever I see this flag it boosts my morale. Especially looking at the colours. It brightens my day as they are also bright. It is my safest place, being part of this community. I can’t wait to go to the event that is happening in London next week.”

The project team experienced changes in their thinking. For example, one of researchers said: “When I returned to my painting (Figure 6), I saw the vortex of fragmentation and separation but it was no longer as frightening. I saw the pieces interlocking, the binding colours of blue and gold and pink, and I saw what holds us together. This gave me a feeling of hope”.

Another researcher shared, “Once I had modelled the isolation and loneliness, I became aware of the need to show how I have connected to the outside and the connections built, and this eventually evolved into the gold glitter which did feel hopeful. I think this process was facilitated by the use of collage and colours.”
A third researcher recalled: “After the workshops were over, and having understood better the life and experiences of the different participants, I understood that they have not only lost their homes but that also, many of them, have truly found a new one in the UK. They are incredibly strong and resilient people, and they have showed me that life can always be rebuilt, no matter what, and in so many different ways.

The programme’s cyclical feedback loop within the Deleuzoguattarian framework suggests properties of the virtual (ideas and affects) are actualized (artworks, people, room, intra-action etc.) through the intensive practice of artmaking (creative actions driven by memory, thought and self-perception). The interaction between the actual and the virtual generated new memories and thoughts, which further change self-perception. Thus, properties of the virtual associated with those memories and thoughts were experienced differently from before, they returned differently from previously held memories and thoughts, to modify our becoming, generating change and transition in the individuals. When we looked again at our artworks, or revisited feelings of trauma, they were different from before. In other words, ideas and affects associated with past events, were modified and expressed as different memories, thoughts, and identities when integrated with intensive processes of artmaking. Through emergent intra-actions (Barad, 2007) between human and non-human agents, new experiences were created, and ideas and affects were not manifested exactly the same every time; but characterized by a return of difference.

Conclusion

An important reflection on the research was whether the artmaking process had the potential to disrupt the pattern of continually being caught in old memories and feelings associated with a virtual sense of trauma. Did the artmaking, by facilitating the generation of new ideas and ways of thinking about difficult experiences, have the potential to enable their reframing? Exploring the Deleuzoguattarian framework gave us insight into a process of disruption, where deterritorialization extended the territory from where thoughts originated, by connecting them to other territories, initiating their change. New knowledges were achieved through a continual return of difference from the virtual to the actual, a process that took place through intensive processes of actualization embodied in the concrete practice of artmaking. The actual, or life in all its forms –artworks, memories, traumas, emotions, places, people, buildings, smells, sea, wind, thoughts, and consciousness were dynamic and in a continuous state of process, constantly being actualized through artmaking. We argue that in actualizing the virtual, the memory, thought, and identity associated with trauma, though the intra-actions with processes of artmaking, participants were enabled, to some degree (depending on the level of engagement with the workshops) to generate new experiences in association with previous experiences, modifying their process of becoming. The participants who were able to attend most if not all
workshops tended to report the most change. The process generated change and transition for these participants in relation to their experiences of trauma.

For instance, Marie’s experiences in her homeland leading to her persecution, exile and separation from her children, were reframed by the artwork of the LGBT flag. The flag signalled recognition that she was now safe, and had found a supportive, accepting community, and identity within it. This helped to give new positive qualities to her identity in becoming. Pierre was able to come to terms with difficult memories from the past and concretely actualise positive elements of his present life in baking and making. Reflecting on his artworks he acknowledged his skills and formed new ideas about being able to bring joy to people, and so enjoy his life. Thierry, who could only bring himself to remember the past with great pain and sought to avoid remembering the past, found solace in recollecting being with his mum, dad, siblings, and playing football, memories he was able to bring into his present life in artworks. His artworks connected his past with his present, strengthening self and identity, and his self-reported enjoyment of things in the park, albeit that he was still alone.

Artmaking involved creative acts, bringing new experiences of artworks, people, room, intra-action etc., into imaginative visualization and realization. As they returned to the idea of the place through artmaking, there was potential for their memory, thought, and identity to be revised; the places they could barely think of for the reasons why they fled, seemed now, from here, different. The places were not quite the same anymore, because in the process they had changed, becoming had established a different way of being.

The Deleuzian framework highlights processes of action research where knowledge is produced rhizomatically, non-hierarchically, to generate lines of flight. These new thoughts grew from reflexive practices of artmaking to form new networks of new thoughts in relation to memory and identity. Deterritorialization disrupted participants’ habitual ideas and practices, prompted by a continual process of reflection through artmaking, produced new potentialities, new knowledges, and the establishment of different connections between already existent elements. Artmaking actualized difficult associations related to homeland and trauma, from where they constantly returned from the virtual background of contingent potentialities, returning differently with new qualities. This perspective also acknowledges and embraces multiplicity and heterogeneity and the creation of new knowledge, identifying difference as a constructive tool. The cyclical reflexive feedback model understood through the Deleuzoguattarian conceptual framework, demonstrates how participatory action research can be deeply transformative.

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**ORCID iDs**

Emma Rose [id](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8205-0647)
Macarena Rioseco [id](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2345-7575)

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Author biographies

Emma Rose is professor of Contemporary Arts in the Lancaster Institute of Contemporary Arts, Lancaster University, UK. Emma’s research explores the contribution of participatory art for health and wellbeing, using qualitative and action research methods. She developed the theoretical lens of therapeutic landscapes in connection with art and wellbeing, self-identity, environment, emotion and psychoanalytic theory. Previous studies have involved groups marginalized by society such as older adults, people living with dementia, the transgender community, women refugees and survivors of human rights abuses. Her recent research has been published in Design for Health, Health and Place, and International Journal of the Image.

Amanda Bingley is a lecturer in the Division of Health Research, Lancaster University, UK. Amanda’s research interests in the relationship between mental health and place. She has a background in psychotherapy and in cultural geography, and teaches qualitative methods with a focus on narrative research and creative arts. Her research includes exploring therapeutic landscapes as greenspace for health and wellbeing in older and young people; health and place in relation to end of life and dementia care; and the use of participatory arts most recently in research with migrant women, and with children involved in disaster, their recovery and resilience in a UK and EU wide context.

Macarena Riosco is a lecturer in Académica Departmento Artes Visuales, Universidad Metropolitana de Ciencias de la Educación, Chile. Macarena completed a PhD in Arts at Lancaster University in 2018 with a focus that connected her practice-based research on abstract painting to Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy. She has exhibited her artworks internationally in Chile, Argentina, UK and Italy, presented conferences in the UK, Italy, Canada, Brazil and Hong Kong, and is publishing in international journals such as Deleuze and Guattari Studies.