WHAT IS HOME TO YOU?

Making the discussion on belonging tangible with design research methods.

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CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To all those who have experienced a sense of belonging or longing for it. This ambiguous feeling is one which we cannot easily put in words, and for that I am grateful to the people who helped me in doing exactly that: defining belonging.

To the brilliant and kind PhD researchers Fenneke Wekker and Lieke Wiessink whose research and words showed me the nuances and possibilities in researching belonging. To Anja Overdiek who allowed me to experience the world of Applied Design Research. And to Anke Hamers for sharing her time and expertise with me.

And to all those who participated in my research and shared their personal stories, I am eternally grateful.

To my colleagues and teachers, for their patience and guidance. To my parents who encourage me to follow my dreams and always help me with my projects, and who have given me the richness of being from two cultures. To my sister who is always there to test my material and listen to my ideas. Lastly to my partner who has been there through all the emotional rollercoaster these two years have brought, and who is always there when I need him.

I used to hate airplanes. Airplanes meant there was a goodbye involved and that I had to transition. To transition to the other country. Every time I found myself in the 'other country' again, I would rearrange my being; the way I talked, walked, dresses and the interests I expressed. I am an actor of my two identities, jumping in and out of roles as the cultural context shifts.

INTRODUCTION

In this publication I write about a search; a search for belonging and how I would define it, a search for how to talk with others about it and a search for whom I need to be to do both things.

I feel as someone who is half Croatian and half Dutch, but if you would ask my mother this, she would tell you that I am both. I am also half a designer and half a researcher. I have always felt like I fall between the lines, knowing just enough about one and the other, but not specialising in either. Always looking for bridges on which I could stand to represent both worlds. I believe that being this bridge is the best way to approach themes concerning people who find themselves living between lines too, because that means being able to understand multiple worlds. For someone who inhabits multiple worlds (of interest, culture, identity etc.) an expert in just one field will not be able to understand the scope of their longing.

When I was younger, I couldn't choose whom I wanted to be, so I dreamt of having multiple lives. To be everything. At that time my dreams included being a ballerina, a police officer, and a gym teacher like my mom. Today I hope to become a design researcher, with an aim to guide society through the changes in our social dynamics, and to give a voice to those that are unheard.

I started this research because of the question *where are you from?*. For someone who inhabits multiple world this question can lead to an anxious self-examination, only to discover that the categorisation we are used to is no longer applicable. In this world the use of design research is a valuable approach to participative studies, and can be a notable ally in shifting towards a new perspective concerning the words *culture* and *belonging*.

HOW TO READ THE BOOK

This publication has two focus points: it focuses on the conceptual part of researching the sense of belonging, and on the methodical perspective on how to develop a design research method fitting for the theme. As a book it is structured to be read from the beginning to the end, but just like the life of a multicultural which is painted by a way of going back and forth in time and space, it can also be read in a different order.

So, if you are a designer and want to know the ins and outs of the methodology I developed to research belonging, read chapter 1 and 2 first. If you are a researcher or are curious about the sense of belonging and how participants from a design research study define it, go to chapter 3 and 4.

When I moved to the Netherlands, I had a wait-and-see attitude. I wanted to fit in, so I patiently observed and learned how I was supposed to act in social situations; what type of clothes should I wear and when you do or don't bring presents to someone's house. In this new context I was afraid to be different, afraid to be stared at. My main goal was to be understood and accepted.

After a few years, when I got settled and made friends, I felt a sort of stubbornness coming up. Now that some of my walls of protection were lowered and I could open myself more, I started to miss the other me. The me that I folded up and stored away in some box in my mind, to create space for the Dutch nationality. And so through the new space created by comfort and safety, the other me, the Croatian nationality crept out of the box and started to demand attention. Suddenly I realised that I didn't always agree with all that I learned to do here. But only after I felt safe enough to open up to belonging, I could realise that.

So now, when I visit my friends, I always bring flowers or food, never visiting empty handed. Even if it's just a quick hello. And when we salute, I answer in Croatian. With that I create my own mix of home, with a bit of both my nationalities.

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CONTEXT

We live in a world of high mobility. Mobility of goods, information, and people. As a researcher I am most interested in the mobility of people across cultures.

Over 272 million people in the world do not live in the country where they were born. This means that about 3.5% of the global population is an international migrant. People migrate for many different reasons; for love, for adventure, or for a better life. But that dilemma, why we migrate, I will leave up to the poets and the politicians.

In the context of moving across cultures, however, the way we look at belonging has changed. According to Morley and Robins our modern mobility is "profoundly transforming our apprehension of the world: it is provoking a new experience of orientation and disorientation, new senses of placed and placeless identity"[17].

When crossing cultures a fragmentation of our cultural identity happens, as our identity is constructed only of a part of the total culture. Thus the "culture which develops on the new soil must therefore be bafflingly alike and different from the parent culture"[3] One could say that by placing our identity in a new cultural context we lose our sense of belonging. We are still the same, but the place and people are different, and our previous techniques of attachment might not always work. Rapport and Dawson claim that "being rootless, displaced between worlds, living between a lost past and a fluid present, are perhaps the most fitting metaphors for the journeying modern consciousness"[19]. The question then, is how do we deal with this?

In such a transition we are reminded of our necessity to feel a sense of belonging, to feel at home. Now, belonging and feeling at home are two very similar but also different concepts. In academic

research they would be approached as two different notions, but to most people, belonging and home are often synonymous.

Cultural Belonging

"Belonging is a feeling of comfort and security based on the perception that one is an integral part of a community, place, organisation, or institution"[1]. Belonging to a culture can offer a sense of comfort and security. Culture in this case alludes to habits, morals, traditions etc. These cultural markers help us to navigate life and when we recognise them in our surrounding it makes us feel comfortable and safe. We know then that we fit in the puzzle. Thus, when we are familiar with the cultural markers of our context, and these are in correlation with our (cultural) identity, we can form an emotional attachment to said context.

Maslow[16] and Duyvendak[6] both claim that belonging and feeling at home are essential, even existential feelings for all. Without it we might lose our sense of selves and feel alienated. In my research, which is contextualised in cultural belonging, I look at home as a metaphor for a cultural fit. Here, according to Melissa Butcher, home provides "a sense of coherence, a temporal past that embeds us into place and a future that is secure"[3].

Looking at approaches to a new perspective on belonging, a lot is being said about how we can create feelings of home. But to speak of the how we first need to know the what. Belonging is a personal and subjective emotion and as such should be deciphered first. As Wert et al. say in their paper on qualitative research methods "knowing what something is may involve the conceptualization of its 'how' – its process and its temporal unfolding in time"[27]. However, belonging is not an easy emotion to grasp. One of the key researchers on belonging, Duyvendak, mentions this intangibility in his book: "while everyone initially agrees that we know what it is to

feel at home, the moment we have to describe what it means to us, we begin to stutter. Feeling at home, then, is one of those emotions that eludes words"[6].

Though difficult to decipher, defining belonging is an important part of our adaptation. According to political sociologist Fenneke Wekker "once we are able to recognise feelings of home, we will also be able to understand better in which social interactions and relationships such feelings are likely to occur – or not"[26]. Therefore, re-defining or re-placing our sense of belonging in a new cultural context. Butcher also introduces this as a strategy of adaptation in her book on Managing Change; "Home, its redefining or re-placing within a new cultural context, becomes a strategy of adaptation to reduce discomfort and to recreate a state of well-being in a seemingly transient mobile existence"[3].

New Cultural Context

A new cultural context is any place which is different than the previous cultural context in which we have lived. This includes a transitional process and it means that the transition is recent, otherwise it would not be considered new. The novelty is not only counted in time, but in the experience of adjustment. For example, for one person adjusting to a new culture can be a quick process, while for another it might take years. However, the involvement of a transition does not necessarily refer to a physical transition, as according to Duyvendak "feeling at home in an immigrant society is not only a challenge for new arrivals, but also for the native-born who see their world changing every day"[6]. A new cultural context is a context in which the sense of belonging has been altered, either by our own arrival or the changes in social dynamics.

Next to the element of redefining, in this research I also look at the personal context in which we experience and talk about belonging. This idea was especially strengthened by what sociologist Maggi Leung said during the "(Making) Sense of Belonging" program at Pakhuis de Zwijger in June 2021:

"We are the designers of our own sense of belonging."

As hinted with her choice of words, design plays an important role in this. The methodology I developed builds upon this idea, aiming to give space and tools to those who search for belonging and guide them through their personal development process. Here it needs to be said that there is a relationality to be taken in consideration with 'deciding to belong'. Sometimes constructs of identification are placed upon us, and we cannot escape them. This is, however, part of a more political approach to studying the sense of belonging and something which I will not get into in this publication.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Boxes. Check one, check other.
People don't know they don't furrow between the layers like I do.
They don't switch and twitch and actively make the decisions of which.
Which part of me belongs today, which aspect of my personality will offend the
least and blend the most, and work and succeed and bury the lead
like a switchboard of traits that decide my fate,
and I'm always the impostor.
I see both worlds so clearly,
and I skip and jump, dance and fall between.
Never seen.
I belong in the spaces between.[10]

Over the course of the last couple of years I have searched for what it means to belong through many different paths and media. I have met people seeking the same goal or recognising themselves in the art and design projects with which I commented on this longing. Within my studies this search culminated in the development of a design research method fitting to answer the question of *how we can co-create a sense of belonging in a multicultural society?*

I believe that to answer the question concerning the problematics of falling between lines, a method which combines the personal quality of design, and the in-depth strength of research is the most fitting way. Research focuses on understanding the world as we know it, while designers focus on developing futures[13].

The previous chapter contained a part of the theoretical framework and the sources this research relies on. Based on that framework, more specifically on the research by M. Butcher[3], F. Wekker[26] and Y.Y.Kim[14], I developed a methodology which follows this hypothesis:
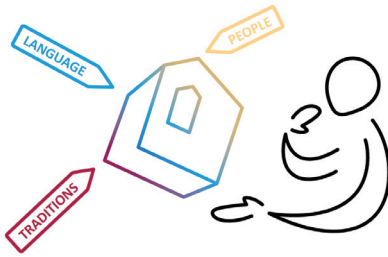
Defining belonging is part of an *adaptive strategy*,

and as such aims to find *internal equilibrium*

and *coexist in a new cultural context.*
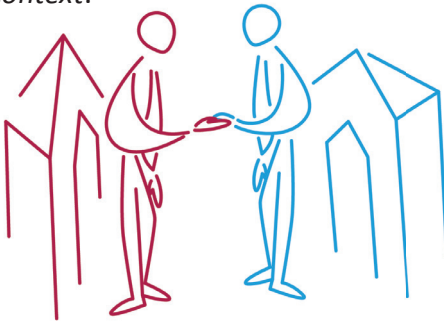
Thus re-finding our sense of belonging.

My aim with this research is the development of a methodology, which will support making sense of belonging, in a reciprocal co-creative process and to test the developed methodology in a qualitative case study.

RESEARCH VALUES

"Who is the expert when it comes to understanding people – the detached scientist or the ordinary person in daily life?"[20]

I believe that in the discussion about belonging the ordinary person and the scientist need to work together to initiate a new approach. The ordinary person is the expert in his or her felt experience, while the scientists is there to collect and co-analyse with the ordinary person what it means to belong. This equal collaboration between the researcher and the participants is one of the values I aim for in this research.

Reciprocity
Reciprocity in this research refers to an exchange of effort. The effort of participation is recognised and answered by the researcher in terms of an artifact, memento, or experience.

Alongside collaboration, I believe that reciprocity and continuity are necessary to develop ethical research. In their paper on Exploring and developing reciprocity in research design, Trainor and Bouchard mention that "The researchers scope, depth, and nature of inquiry introduce vulnerability to participants lives"[25]. For the research into belonging this is especially true. The stories shared during the research methods are very personal and the emotions connected to them can leave the storyteller vulnerable. Because of this I find it important to take into account reciprocity when designing and conducting research that focuses on personal experiences. In the end, the participant shouldn't be left 'exposed' or empty handed, but should be given something in return for their effort that could help them navigate their opened emotions, if only for a short while. This leads to the third value of my research; continuity.

Continuity

Continuity in this research refers to the importance of recognising that the emotional and internal processes prompted by the research workshops will be continued. As researchers we should be aware of the fact that processes we trigger don't end with our research, but continue in the everyday life of the participant.

Continuity in this research is focused on personal development. This research is placed in the personal context of belonging and thus cannot count on a network of some sort to offer the continuity needed, but here continuity needs to be assisted personally. For example, by co-creating something which will have a personal meaning to the person, and which might stay for a short while as a reminder of their values on home and belonging.

A PLAYFUL APPROACH
The Methodology

Design Research is an iterative process in which multiple methods and iterations of methods are developed to find the one that is most suitable for the participative designerly way of research. This way researchers and designers can critically question the co-creative aspect of it[12] and iterate on the conditions for participation.

Consequently, during this master I have developed and tested multiple methods, which you will find described on the following page. This process helped me to develop my methodology as a design researcher and position myself in the context of research on belonging.

Methodology
A strategy developed for a research context. A methodology refers to the overarching approach, while the methods are smaller, more specific approaches.

REFRAME THE QUESTION

DEFINE BELONGING
THROUGH
EMBODIED DESIGN
RESEARCH METHODS

CAPTURE INTO
SOMETHING
TANGIBLE
TO ENSURE
RECIPROCITY AND
CONTINUITY

That belonging is abstract and elusive has already been expressed by Duyvendak in his research on The Politics of Belonging[6]. As mentioned before, I believe that design research methods are an appropriate approach to this challenge, specifically the element of reframing which design research brings. In the creative process reframing has "the ability to put a commonplace event in a new frame that is useful or enjoyable"[2]. In this case the usefulness refers to guiding someone in translating an abstract feeling to a tangible definition.

In my methodology I apply the reframing perspective to the way I ask my question. I explain how I do this in the following chapters.

As mentioned in the theoretical frame, defining is a strategy for

adaptation. But I also believe that defining our sense of belonging with others can help us put in perspective what home is and how we can re-construct that feeling in a new cultural context. Aside from reframing, in this process of defining I include an embodied approach because connecting the body to this discussion strengthens the personal development process. It connects the sense of belonging to our identity and offers a closer look into our feelings.

Embodied

An embodied approach is one where the participants or researchers body is involved in the process. According to Perry and Medina, the body represents "our means of making meaning, representing, and performing"[18]. I refer to an embodied process when the body is involved in the meaning making and thus personalises the defining process to the participant.

However, just defining has a deterministic effect. It leaves the discussed subject open and bare, and the participant at loss with what one should do with it. Hamers et al. rightfully question the ethics of a deterministic research session, "To what extent are participants able to cope (proceed, elaborate) after an artist or designer has left the scene?"[12]. To tackle this issue, in my methodology my aim is to end the research session by capturing the defined sense of belonging into a tangible object. This way ensuing a continuation of the opened subject.

Tangible

I refer to tangibility as the opposite of abstract. It physicalises and visualises a subject, through which we can clarify and make something easier to apprehend to ourselves and to others. Making something tangible "entails a task of arrangement and processing. And this means that any image you produce is a result of such work"[9].

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HOMESICK TATTOOS

Homesick Tattoos is a *cultural probe* sent out to gain insights of the feeling of belonging and what is needed for it. The probe asks participants what they miss most from their home or culture after transitioning. They can choose between people, place, language, or something other personal to them. The form of the end result is a temporary tattoo, expressing connection and identity. This also answers the underlying question; *How open are people to connecting with each other through recognition, when they share a common longing?*

MEMORISING BELONGING

Memorising Belonging is an interview method in which personal memories are deployed to make the feeling of belonging tangible. Next to this the feeling of belonging to a culture is put in comparison to belonging to a friend group. This is a method of *reframing* and together with the *five why's* method of asking the same why question five times to get deeper information on a subject, it helps to make the feeling concrete.

TRANSITIONAL OBJECT

This method builds upon a theory from the field of psychology about *transitional objects*, objects we attach to as children and which help us to bridge a transition in life, e.g. a teddy bear or blanket, and our attachment and identity-forming connected to those. This same concept can be applied to a transition of home and culture.

CULTURAL IDENTITY RITUAL

De Cultural Identity Ritual is an *embodied interview* in which I have a conversation with the participant on their cultural identity. The body is involved to bring the symbolism of the personal aspect of belonging close to oneself and to reunite the captured cultural identity with the participant. This interview is done with someone who had experienced a cultural tradition and towards the end, by cleaning the body paint and the symbolism of their body, start a conversation about adapting and fitting in.

CULTURAL IDENTITY CARDS

Cultural Identity Cards is a card game developed as an iteration on the method with the same name. Cultural identity can be very abstract and intangible, which is why this method reverses the process from language to image. The cards use the role of imagery to initiate the participant in expressing their cultural identity. After that the concept of sharing and understanding is introduced, and the participants can learn from each other's similarities and differences and embrace these together. This way the double layer of making your cultural identity your own, and sharing about each other's backgrounds, is achieved.
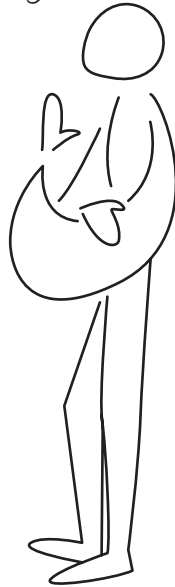
ESCAPING AMBIGUITY
Methodology Development

REDEFINING BELONGING

*If I can define what
home is to me, will
it help me belong?*

Redefining Home

Redefining home is an act of taking definitions of what we consider to feel like home and applying them to a new context. In this process definitions get a new meaning and place in our emotions. It is part of "an adaptive process to feelings of dislocation, that is, part of the process of demarcating difference and asserting belonging to a particular locality"[3] and includes reaffirming existing boundaries and defining new ones. When redefining we become aware of the cultural identity we possess and try to find the right adjustment for it in a cultural context which, in the process of dislocation, is different than our previous context. This is valuable to our sense of belonging as, according to Fenneke Wekker, when we understand and recognise these feelings, we are "able to understand in which social interactions and relationships such feelings are likely to occur – or not"[26].

I started this research thinking I could co-design something with participants, which would help create a sense of belonging. But talking to experts, both in the theory and in their everyday experiences, and finding not one but many different definitions of belonging across multiple academic contexts, I realised that instead of focusing on the how I should concentrate on the what.

Thus, in my search I tested different approaches to define belonging. These ranged from defining through design, defining through a guided conversation aided by design, or defining solely through conversation. The latter being more a form of academic qualitative research rather than of design research. I mention it in this chapter to show the effect defining had in this method.

approaches to define belonging

defining through design

defining through guided conversation, aided by design

defining through guided conversation

BELONGING TATTOOS

CULTURAL IDENTITY CARDS

MEMORISING BELONGING
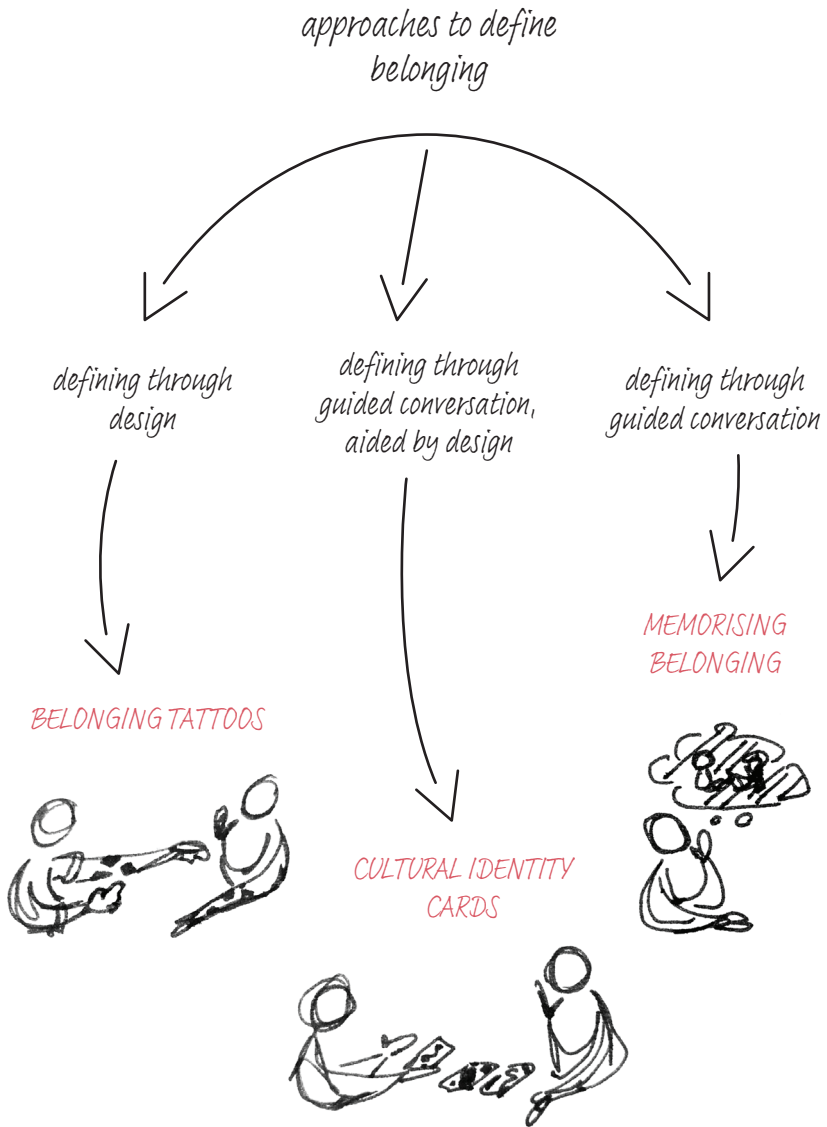
CULTURAL IDENTITY CARDS

In the *Cultural Identity Cards* method, I applied visual association as an aid to help the participants put in words what they feel4. They were first asked to choose a card based on the illustrations in relation to their cultural identity. These were made based on the cultural classification of Hofstede and Pinto[8], but solely as a guiding tool. The theories on which they were based were not known to the participants. On the back of the cards an unfinished sentence asked for their answer; *My culture is* _____ or *In my culture it is important that* _____, ending in the requirement of an example.

Though in my experience visual association often works quite well, especially when aiming to express how one feels, in this research it proved to be less effective. By asking the participants to express themselves in words, the language part overshadowed the clarity and easiness which design can offer. The language aspect made the process slow and tedious. This happened both in the native language of the participants, as in their second or third language. Even though eventually I can guide participants to their definitions, the purpose of using design methods in this research is for the design to play an important role in making the discussion about belonging accessible.

MEMORISING BELONGING

In *Memorising Belonging*, I tried to implement memories as a tool of conversation. By focusing on the positive aspects of memories about feeling at home and belonging somewhere, I hoped to bypass the vastness and elusiveness of belonging, and make the participants feel at ease to express their thoughts. In a video interview we talked about each other's memories, starting from belonging to friends and proceeding to how we remember the feeling of belonging to our cultural context. In this method language was my main tool. Through asking an introductory question; *When do you feel like you belong with your friends?* I tried to create the setting for the interview. The aim of this question was to bring the discussion about belonging closer to a context, friendship, recognisable to many. After doing this I continued the interview with the five why's method[22], with the aim to gain deeper knowledge. While these approaches helped in bridging the complexity, the process required close assistance from my part. I had to guide the participants closely in their defining process, without which they would not have reached the same answers.

Thus for the case study, which emphasises on the personal development of the participant, this approach was not very effective. However, the five why's method is something which I would like to follow up on in further research, as the results of this approach showed its potential in generating a profound understanding of the more general definitions of belonging.

For example *I feel like I belong when we speak our secret language*. After implementing the five why's method, the participant expressed that the secret language is a way to share similar identities for him and other people who had a similar background. It was a 'new' language, a combination of two, which could be comprehensible only to those who shared both cultural backgrounds.

In another example, a participant expressed that she experiences belonging when she is *eating with her family, where everyone speaks at the same time*. For her this meant that she could be herself without overthinking it, because she knew the social cues and expectations. In their book on Psychology in the Multicultural Society, Knipscheer and Kleber make a similar claim: "Culture provides security. Cultural habits and customs are 'signifiers. They prevent a person from having to decide and improvise every moment"[15]. Furthermore, Butcher sees home as a "necessary stabilising weight"[3]. This shows that asking further into the definitions of belonging as given by the participants, can bring us closer to a more general understanding of the subject.
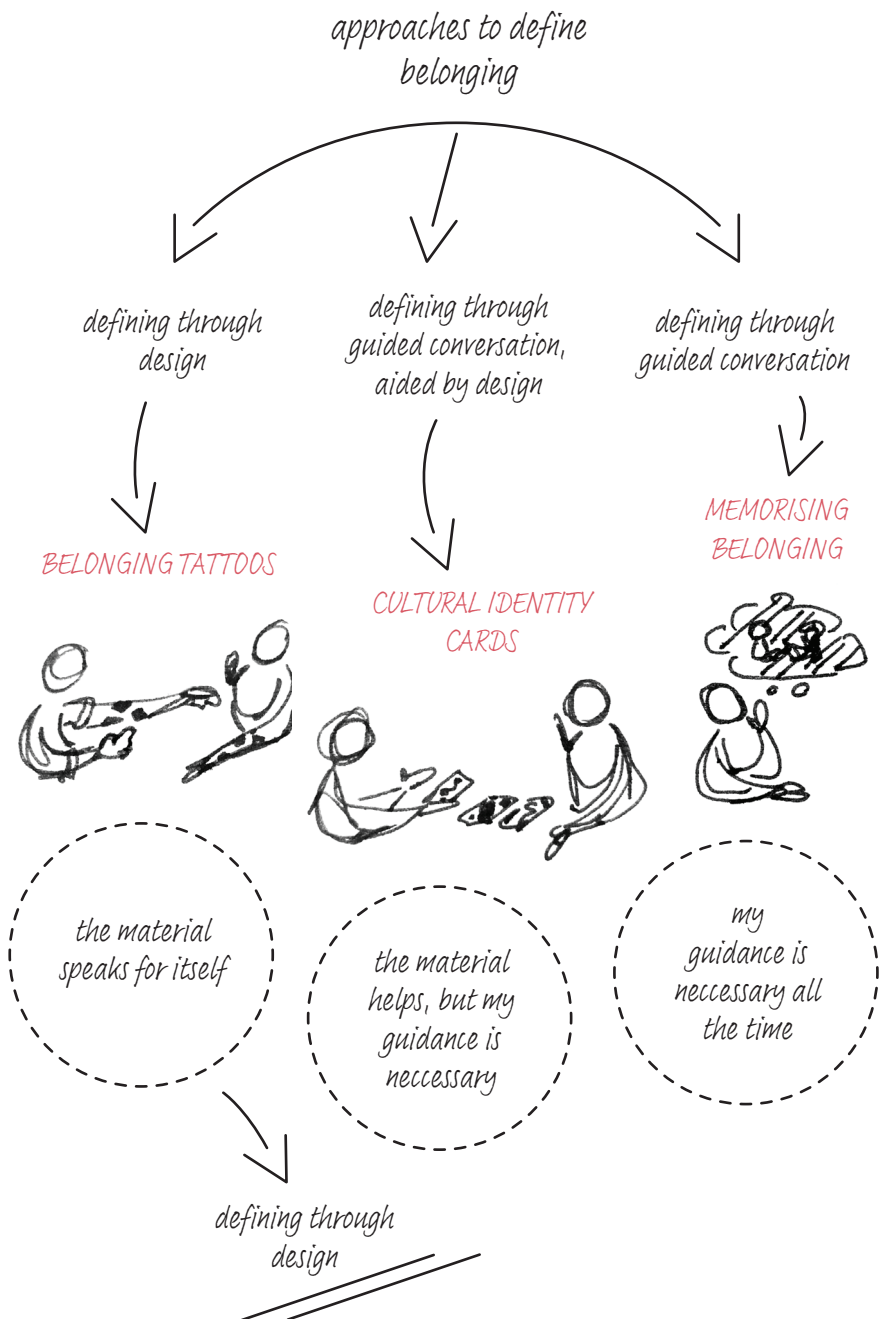
BELONGING TATTOOS

The first design research method I developed for this research, *Belonging Tattoos*, was a design probe in which I asked my participants to define what they missed most from their previous cultural context, in terms of belonging. I asked them to do this through means of a temporary tattoo. They were offered four colours, representing four categories: people, place, language, and something else. After making the tattoos they were asked to elaborate on their choices and to reflect on the relation between their tattoo and their identity. In doing this they went through a process of arrangement and processing of their thoughts, necessary for "turning any of the information 'in' your head into something representable"[9]. Similar to the Lego Serious Play method, a research method developed by Roos and Victor, this method harnesses "an individual's ability to 'think through their fingers' through the use of constructed metaphors and narratives"[21,24], as the participants give meaning to the colours, shapes and placement of the tattoo. At the same time looking specifically at the personal perspective of what home means to the participants themselves, and by this giving them a chance to express their feelings on their own terms. Thus, bridging the complexity of belonging being a personal and elusive feeling.

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The tattoos and the answers to the questions showed the effect of defining belonging through design can have. For example after sending out the probe, some participants responded by saying that the method showed me once again that home is not a place but the people, while another participant expressed that she was *glad to be able to find my own definition for what I missed specifically*.

Between these three approaches: the tattoos, the memory interview, and the cultural identity cards, the act of making which came with the tattoos proved most effective in helping the participants put their feelings into words. Therefore it shows how design can clarify the complexity of belonging.

approaches to define
belonging

defining through
design

defining through
guided conversation,
aided by design

defining through
guided conversation

BELONGING TATTOOS

*CULTURAL IDENTITY
CARDS*

*MEMORISING
BELONGING*

the material
speaks for itself

the material
helps, but my
guidance is
neccessary

my
guidance is
neccessary all
the time

defining through
design

REFRAMING THE QUESTION

How do I ask about home and get answers on belonging?
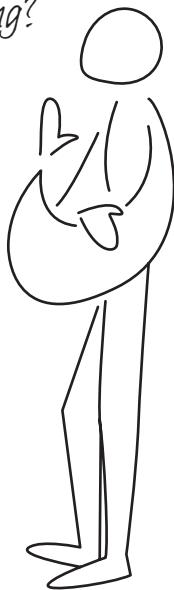
Reframing

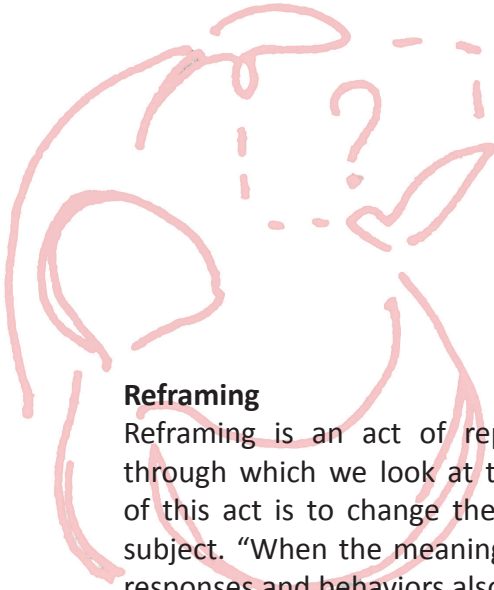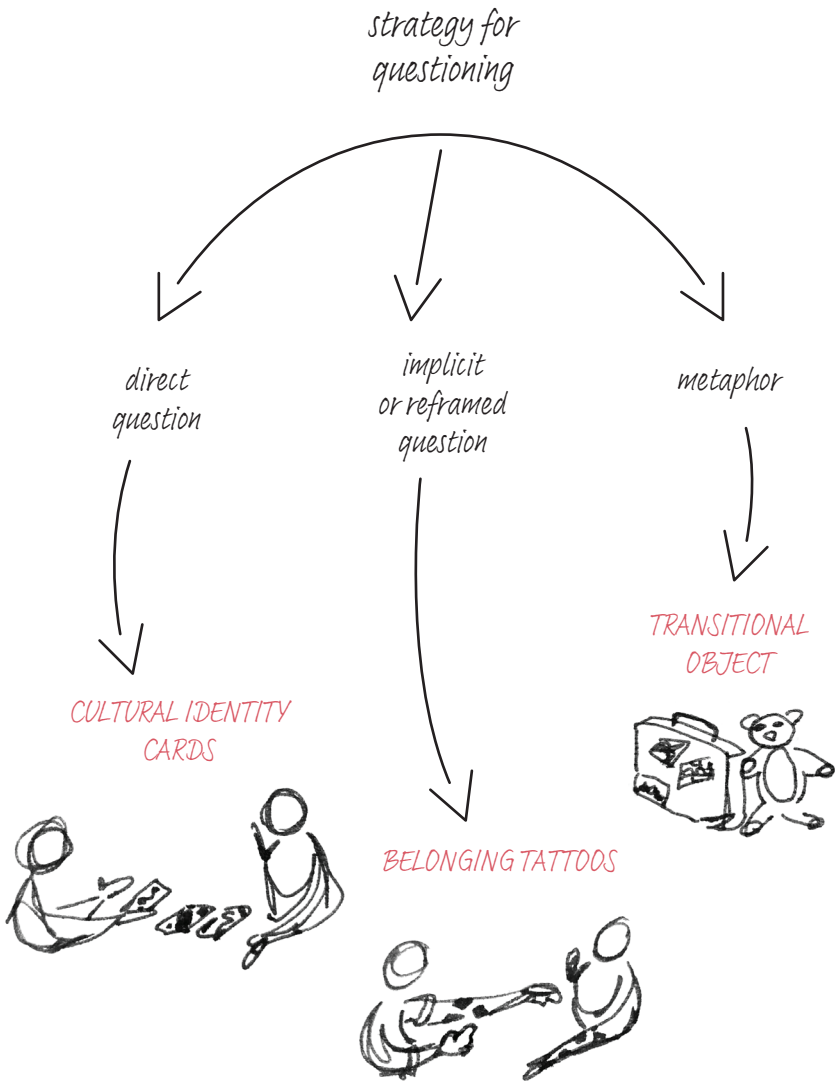Reframing is an act of repositioning the frames through which we look at the world. The purpose of this act is to change the perspective towards a subject. "When the meaning changes, the person's responses and behaviors also change"[2]. Reframing is also a pivotal element in the creative process, as it has "the ability to put a commonplace event in a new frame that is useful or enjoyable"[2].

One of the values design research has is to adjust perspectives. In the book Trading Places, Hamers et al. say that design researchers are trained to "capture people's imagination and use different media to bring together, discuss, and disseminate different views"[12]. In this way design has the quality of reframing the question. By doing so, questions that are elusive and subjective can be answered. In developing my methodology I tested a few different ways of reframing. In the following graph you can see which strategies of questioning I explored.

strategy for
questioning

direct
question

implicit
or reframed
question

metaphor

*CULTURAL IDENTITY
CARDS*

BELONGING TATTOOS

*TRANSITIONAL
OBJECT*

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CULTURAL IDENTITY RITUAL

In one of my methods, the *Cultural Identity Ritual*, a one-on-one embodied interview, I asked the participants to describe their cultural identity. First I helped them to symbolise the stories they shared about their identity, and after this they painted those symbols on their body. In this process the symbolised identity was strengthened and brought back to themselves. However, this method did not go without its struggles. The first difficulty rose with the combination of these two words, culture and identity. Participants required an explanation of what a cultural identity is. In my explanation I referred to it as a part of their identity which is constructed through and thus has the characteristics of the culture they grew up in. The interview itself went well, but it required a lot of one-on-one guidance in finding what their cultural identity is and how this could be put in words, images or symbols.

Why did you choose this form?
Does that make you you?
What in your surroundings makes you you?
What kind of a feeling does that give you?
And what kind of a feeling does that give you?

To conclude, asking what belonging (and cultural identity) means directly can be done, but getting to the answer might require a longer and guided path. Hence, in researching belonging, a fine balance of questioning is important. Asking too directly results in a strenuous conversation and can create a blank in the minds of my participants. On the other side, straying too far can be problematic too.

TRANSITIONAL OBJECT

In another method, the *Transitional Object*, I took a theory from psychology literature as a metaphor for belonging. That theory is the *transitional object* which, as explained by Winnicott, refers to „blankets, soft toys, and bits of cloth to which young children frequently develop intense, persistent attachments"[28]. In this method I asked participants to think of such an object in relation to their migration. One approach to create belonging is to "'familiarize' new places by bringing aspects of one's own home – as many mobile home people do on their holidays (think of the camper and caravan)"[6]. In other words, when we move, we tend to take a part of home or something representing our identity with us. My hope was that by focusing on the object which guided us through this transition, I can guide the participants into a conversation about belonging and equip them with words to explain what home means to them. However, in analysing the results, I realised that during the process I lost the focus on belonging. Similarly to the cultural identity ritual, participants did not immediately understand what the term transitional object meant, even though in this method I took time to explain it in the introduction.

The participants could not see a connection between the object and their identity.

My assumption that introducing a new notion to the participants would help facilitate a discussion about belonging, was not supported. The guidance necessary by posing my questions this way was too much for what I want to achieve with this research. Thus, I decided that a balanced reframing of the research question is necessary, with an implicit question hidden in the design of the method.
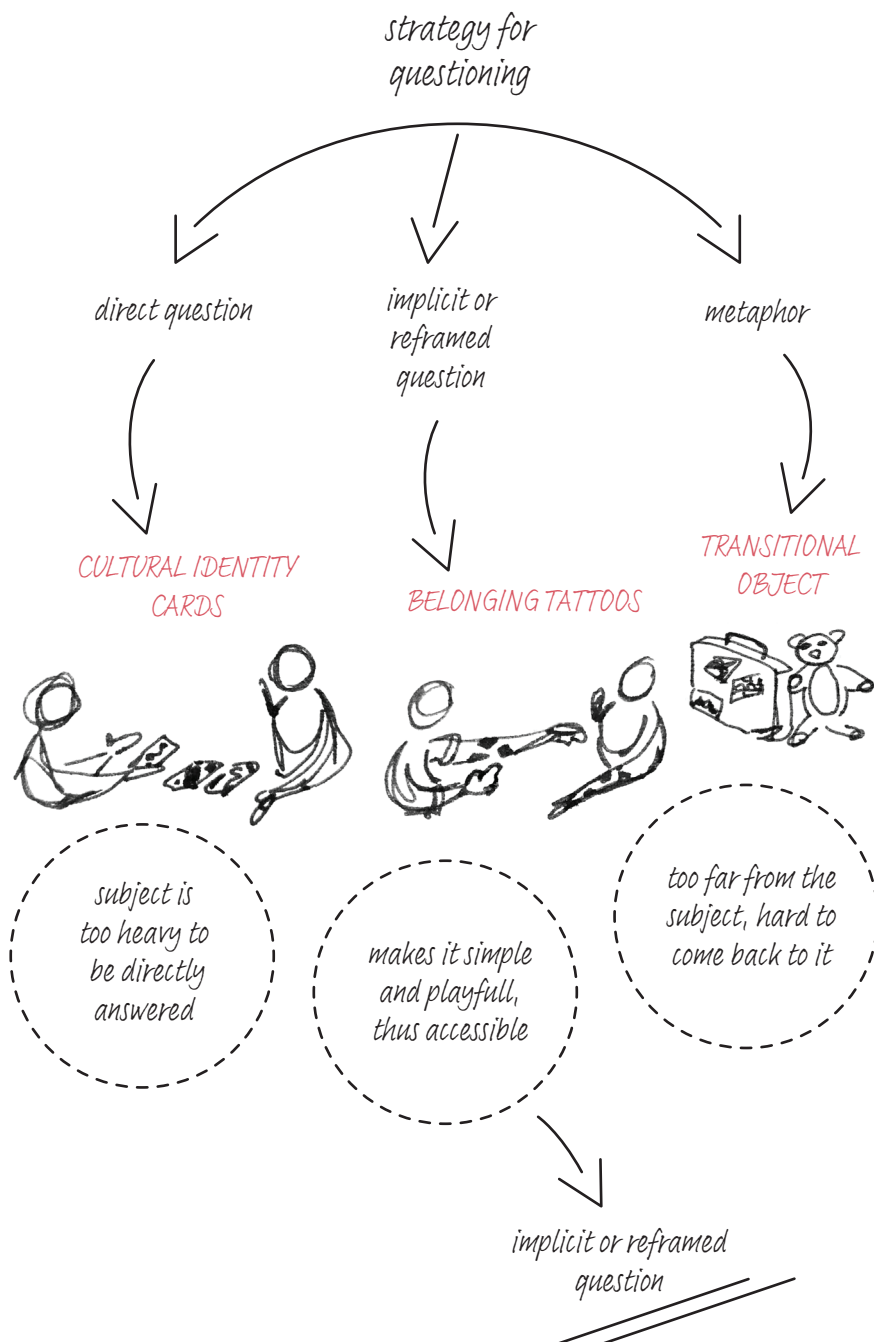
BELONGING TATTOOS

I tested this approach, a reframed or implicit question, in the design probe Belonging Tattoos. In its first iteration, the probe asked the participants to make a tattoo based on what they missed most from their home country. This way the imposing question about one's sense of belonging was reframed to a sense which is more often spoken of, homesickness. Aside from reframing the question, an implicit question is hidden in the choice of media. Tattoos are often a form of expressing one's identity and by putting something on our body we think about how we present ourselves. These two approaches proved very valuable as they made answering the question easier. The creative process required through the design made the question easier to digest, and as Gauntlett mentions in his book on Creative Explorations, the time spent meant that "the participants' more fundamental concerns were able to emerge from the jungle of potential and received opinions, and were expressed on their own terms"[9].

To conclude, after testing these different approaches I decided to focus on reframing and hiding an implicit question in the design when developing my case study.

strategy for
questioning

direct question

implicit or
reframed
question

metaphor

CULTURAL IDENTITY
CARDS

BELONGING TATTOOS

TRANSITIONAL
OBJECT

subject is
too heavy to
be directly
answered

makes it simple
and playfull,
thus accessible

too far from the
subject, hard to
come back to it

implicit or reframed
question

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THE TANGIBLE AND THE EMBODIED

Can involving the body and making the definitions tangible contribute to reciprocity and continuity in my research?

„The body is our method, our subject, our means of making meaning, representing, and performing."[18]

In the methodology, defining through design and reframing are techniques to bridge the complexity and elusiveness of belonging, but embodied research and tangibility support the values of this research. As mentioned before, these values are equal collaboration, reciprocity and continuity.

Looking at the personal context, embodied understanding helps to connect the sense-making process to the person, by including their body in it. This is also relevant to the continuity of the research. In my research and the researches I have participated in, I have noticed that, if e.g. the participants of the study make a drawing on a paper instead of on their body, they are less inclined to take it with them and be reminded of the process they went through. However, our body is difficult to escape, and in that sense it is obvious that we feel more connected to it than to external objects. This allows for a deeper connection to the subject which we embody in such a process.

For the same reason of initiating continuity, and for the value of reciprocity, in my research I am to co-creatively capture the 'results' of the process in something tangible. "Artifacts are carriers of meaning; just like chess pieces on a board, they make knowledge or information explicit, tangible, portable, persistent"[11]. By making the abstract tangible and taking the tangible object with you, e.g. on your body, a reciprocal action is introduced and a sense of continuity is initiated. Reciprocity in this case aivms to continue the personal development process through these tangible 'objects'.

In the following paragraphs I explain the role of the body and tangibility, how that translates to the methodology, and describe how each of these values were constructed.

CULTURAL IDENTITY RITUAL

As described in the previous chapter, the *Cultural Identity Ritual* aims to guide the discussion about migration and the sense of belonging by involving the body as a canvas. The discussed cultural identity is translated into symbols by the participant and painted on their skin.

These were some of the symbols made during the ritual. They represent *the importance of finding your own way* and *the importance of family rituals*.

Through this ritual, the subject is made personal. While this process resulted in a fruitful discussion and valuable knowledge for myself and my research, it also highlighted the missing values of this research. Though the participants had an active and personal

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role in the method, by designing the symbols for their identity and painting them on their body, a sense of reciprocity and continuity was still missing. After the last step, were the participant washes off their bodypainting to which I ask the participant how much, if any, of their cultural identity they felt they had to give up to belong, the only trace left was a photograph of their bodypainting. After going through this very personal and sensitive process with them I realised that they were left exactly how I feared, empty handed and 'exposed'. While strongly focused on the embodied experience, and even though you could argue that the photograph of the painting can be seen as the tangible something to give back, in its essence, this method lacked both reciprocity and continuity.

MEMORISING BELONGING

After that experience, in designing *Memorising Belonging*, I focused on how to implement reciprocity and continuity. I thought of the artifact as a carrier of meaning, making "information explicit, tangible, portable, persistent"[11]. If in the process of the method I could achieve these actions, the values of my research would be represented. As described in the previous chapters, in this method, the participant and I first started a discussion about our sense of belonging with friends, and then within our cultures. As this was a video interview I could afterwards capture the moment in which the participant thought of their memory and give it back to them with their formulated definition.

The design of the photograph, like a photograph of a loved one that you keep in your wallet, emphasised the transference of what happened during the interview as a sort of reminder of their sense of belonging. Hence offering space for continuity. The reciprocal action in which the 'gift' the participant receives is a tangible artifact, reminding them of their own definition of belonging so that they may re-place this in their everyday context, turned out to be the leading approach I took throughout my research. However, in designing the reciprocal and continuous act for this method, the involvement of the body got lost. This affected the defining process, as the participants now had to formulate their definitions solely by thinking and express it in words. Whereas it is through 'making' that we are better able to formulate our complex thoughts and emotions. This assumption was thoroughly tested by Wouters and van Hoof, in the context of Lego Serious Play, who claim that a "'hands-on' approach (one first builds a scenario with bricks, and subsequently tells a story), provides a more profound and thorough understanding of the challenges and possibilities of the real-life world to the participants of a session"[29].

BELONGING TATTOOS

Looking at the *Belonging Tattoo* method, the issues of including all the values and methodology components, were more balanced than in the other methods. The method rested on the embodied approach, by implementing the body directly in the defining process, as the tattoos were the primary tool for expression. Only after making them would the participants put their definitions in words. In my research I find it important that the person who gives the definition is also the maker of the tangible object. Thus in this method, I found it essential that the power of defining something so personal, lay in their hands. By placing the tattoos on their body, and my presence being less required in the defining process and more in the discussion afterwards, the equal collaboration value was balanced out.

Alongside that, the defining process, and it resulting in something tangible, represents a reciprocity to which participants of this probe have responded positively. In this case the reciprocity lays in making something difficult light and playful, and having a creative reminder afterwards.

This tattoo presents the relationality of the symbols. For this participant people, language and place are equally important to feel at home.

For this participant traveling to people who are important to her represents a sense of belonging.

A tattoo is also something that stays. A temporary tattoo, such as the one used in this research, stays for a week or two. As such, it can form a conversation starter to the outside world if the participant wishes to put it in a visible spot. In the beginning I thought the placement of the tattoo could also tell about the participants relation to their sense of belonging, but that is something for further research.

The conversation starter thus affects the continuity of the process. Some participants mentioned that in the days after making the tattoo, they had conversation about their sense of belonging with people with whom they normally don't often speak about such subjects.

In conclusion, when looking at all the values and elements of this methodology, the tattoo method is most effective to answer the question of this research. Based on these results I iterated on the design probe to fit the setting of a case study, which I describe in the following chapters.

BELONGING TATTOOS
A Case Study

> "We can learn a lot, then, from the stories that are told and the way that they are told,"[9]

The previous chapters were about the development of my methodology. The method that came out of this research is an iteration on the design probe, called Belonging Tattoos.

Surprisingly, this was also the first method I developed for this research. At that moment I was searching for a connection to the body and choose tattoos as the material, as these are highly personal and often used as a form of identification. While conducting the research, elements of this method proved most effective. It presents a new and appealing way to speak of belonging and home, while staying simple and accessible due to its visual nature.

To answer the question of *how can we co-create a sense of belonging in a multicultural society?*, I applied the results of the methodology to the Belonging Tattoo method. The method consist of one activity, the making of the tattoo, through which participants are invited and encouraged to discuss with each other their tattoo making thoughts and decisions. Before the start I explain what we will do and describe the instructions of the tattoo. On the one hand, this method is meant to help the participant define their internal emotions attached to the sense of belonging. On the other hand, it offers space for discussion and sharing of perspectives. This last part is where I as a researcher am most interested in when it comes to analysing results.

In the following paragraphs you can find the description of the method. In the illustration after that the phases of the method during a workshop.

PARTICIPANTS AND THE SETTING

The participants involved in this case study were a mix of multi- and monocultural people differing in age, gender, and backgrounds. What brought them together is the place of the case study.

Multicultural
According to the definition of Oxford Languages a multicultural is "relating to or containing several cultural or ethnic groups within a person or society". In this publication I refer to a multicultural as someone whose identity is altered by either having been exposed to multiple cultures through their family or through living in different cultural contexts for a substantial period of their life.

Though in the beginning of this research I believed that this research is mainly aimed for the wellbeing of the multicultural, I now believe that to foster an open conversation and lead to a shift in perspective a diverse group of people is needed who, together, can discuss their varying definitions of belonging. Part of this change in perspective was formed due to the variety of people who came to the workshop, as the case study was called in the communication to the participants and collaborators. Here I have to admit that I was naïve to think that, people who haven't experienced a big cultural crossing in their lives wouldn't have the same need to discuss their sense of belonging, or lack of it. On the other hand, I believe that in the integration discourse, accepting our own fragmented selves is only part of the process. And that often, in similar issues, learning from people who we deem different than ourselves and their perspectives on e.g. belonging is what helps us understand and accept each other.

The case study took place in settings which were, in one way or another, already connected to the theme of belonging. Places such as community centres, where the environment is safe and

comfortable, and where people come to connect. The Voorkamer, one of the places of this case study, refers to the community centre as a "place for new experiences". This means that there is a certain openness to discuss themes such as belonging and home there. As my research takes place in the personal context, I do not wish to frighten people with my questions in their daily routines, but to ask them in a setting where they come when they feel ready to discuss these feelings and to learn about other perspectives.

During this case study, I have tested the method Belonging Tattoos in a few different settings:

At a foundation for inclusivity with a co-researcher who was developing a community with 9 Syrian and Turkish women (Sichting Mano, Rotterdam).[A]

During the closing of an exhibition about belonging ("Longing for Belonging", VOX-POP & LAB111, Amsterdam).[B]

At a community centre, as an event during their coffee moment on Wednesdays in the evening (De Voorkamer, Utrecht).[C]

A

B

C

TATTOOS AND COLOUR CATEGORIES

The material of this method consists of packages with four coloured temporary tattoo pieces.

The participants are asked to design a tattoo and use colours, size and perhaps shape to indicate what belonging means to them. The four different colours and their meanings are: yellow representing

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people, blue representing language, red representing place, and black representing something personal to the participant. In this categorisation I turned away from the abstract qualities of belonging which can be found in academic papers, such as the "atmosphere of home" and "self-expression"[23]. While these are equally or perhaps even more relevant for the sense of belonging than the categories I propose, I found them too abstract to be of guiding effect in this method. The sole aim with using these categories is to guide the participant to their own definitions. Thus if a participant, when reading about the place being important, has the opposite reaction, the category still serves its purpose. I choose these three elements because in my own experience and in the various discussions I had with other people sharing multiple cultures, these elements were the most common topics of conversation, when discussing belonging and feelings of home.

The question I ask in the tattoo package is to choose a certain colour combination based on how important the element is for their sense of belonging, e.g. *language is important for me to feel like I belong*.

THE PARTICIPATIVE STRATEGY

In the development of the methodology and this case study, I searched for a strategy which would foster participation and openness. This was not always easy as discussing the sense of belonging can not only be elusive as Duyvendak describes it6, but is also very personal. I noticed early on that asking participants to describe their definition of belonging in a group setting would lead to limited and shy expressions. In researching belonging then, a group participation needs to be slightly adjusted from the norm. The norm being a group session in which all insights are shared with the group. After this experience I adjusted the setup of the workshop to smaller groups. I would only address the whole group in the beginning, when introducing the workshop, by describing what we were going to do and what was asked of them. After that the participants would sit in small groups next to the distributed Belonging Tattoo packages and start making their tattoos. To find answers to my research, I would go from table to table to discuss their process and visualisations. By leaving it personal and not forcing them to express their emotion to a group of strangers, and while experiencing support in their defining through the knowledge that they were not the only ones doing it, the participants were more open to share their definitions. Even those for whom language was a source of insecurity.

Another element of focus was my own role in the process. I have often experienced how overwhelming the presence of a researcher can be. Hence, in my own research I wanted to position myself in such a way to avoid that experience. An important part in that was sharing why I am doing this research and expressing my own experience as a bicultural to connect to my participants. I find it important to use the word 'I' and start from my own curiosity when explaining why I ask these questions.

1 Introducing the workshop to the whole group.

2 Opening the tattoo packages, in smaller groups.

3 Cutting the design and placing the tattoo on the body.

4 Collecting data through discussions in small groups.

TOUCHING GROUND
The Results

BRIDGING THE PERSONAL
AND ABSTRACT

This case study is essentially a test drive of the iterated *Belonging Tattoos*. During the workshops I concentrated on the effectiveness of it, in terms of participation, the function of design as a guide for the participants defining process, and how it was experienced. I also looked at the way the discussion took place between people during and after the making process.

To analyse this, I followed two characteristics of belonging which were highlighted during this research; that belonging is personal and that belonging is abstract. These were also the leading subjects in my problem solving perspective.

BELONGING IS PERSONAL

> *I find belonging difficult. I live here (Utrecht) now, but I am going back (to London) next year and I find that a bit scary.*

That belonging is personal is something which we realise the moment we start a conversation about it. But the variety of definitions from this case study proved this even more, and in the following chapter I describe these in detail.

Alongside discussing the made definitions, I also took note to discuss the experience. Here, and through observation during the making, is where I learned most about the effects of the method. For example, there was a visible shift in the atmosphere, in the in the workshops at the exhibition and the community centre. While in the beginning the participants tended to be somewhat tense,

towards the end they became more relaxed. I believe this had to do with the fact that I displayed the material across smaller tables, at which maybe two or three people could sit.

On the contrary, during the workshop at Stichting Mano, the material was displayed on one big table where all the participants were seated. After making the tattoos, I asked the participants to share their definitions with the group. In this case the tension was still visible. Some of the participants didn't want to share their definitions, while others needed some guidance in putting their definitions in words. Although this workshop also reflected the abstractness of belonging, I believe that the personal aspect was the reason why they felt so reserved. Because when asked directly how they felt or what they had made the participants would react shyly. Some even expressed that they would rather not discuss their tattoo.

In this case study I also experimented with introducing the workshop. I do not mention this in the publication as it has been a fairly new element, and not yet properly tested. For example, at the community centre I displayed candy crackers with questions as conversation starters. I aimed for this to introduce the thought process before asking them to make the tattoos. Although I cannot say much about the effects of the candy cracker introduction, this approach did trigger a comparison for one of the participants, in which she expressed what type of questioning is preferable when it comes to the personal aspects of belonging.

> *In the beginning when I read the introductory questions (in the candy crackers) all I though was no. I didn't want to think about home because this is very personal. And it also has some negative connotations. But the tattoo was something which I was excited to do and it made me realise that thinking about belonging can be simple and positive.*

These insights showed me the effects design research has in such a personal context. The participative strategy, in which the display of the material leads the structure of the discussion should be taken into account. Even though for this case study, the developed strategy works and needs not be further assessed, it might be an important element for further research. For example, looking from the perspective of group psychology.

Looking at the personal context, as Kint, Klooster and Levy mention, the first person perspective "requires a more intuitive and sensorial exploration of culture"[5]. Thus when developing research into personal and cultural subjects, the design research process "in which people are asked to make things, and then reflect on them, rather than having to speak instant reports, 'reveal' themselves in verbal discussion"[9], is an effective way to go.

BELONGING IS ABSTRACT

In this publication the difficulty to define the sense of belonging has often been displayed. Others have mentioned this complexity too, e.g. Gauntlett says that "the notion of having a picture 'in the mind' – the kind of thing which we might then seek to get 'down on paper' – is incredibly complex. Most people's brains don't carry around a ready-made diagram of their identity, or anything else, any more than they contain ready-to-go paragraphs of word-based description"[9].

However, this research aim is to exhibit the qualities of design research to bridge this abstractness. Getting to a method which has these qualities has been thoroughly described in the development of the methodology. In the case study I asked the participants how they experienced the method. In their responses they expressed their relation to belonging, often using words such as difficult or heavy.

Belonging is something I struggle a lot with and I find it difficult to explain when I feel like I belong. Because I am still looking for this. Words would be even more difficult.

Belonging can feel so heavy, it was interesting to think about what is (most) important.

But when discussing the tattoo afterwards, it seemed to have lightened the load. Some participants even expressed it being simple or positive. During the workshops I would go from table to table to discuss the making process. I noticed that in the first few moments when opening the tattoo packages, participants were a bit apprehensive. Especially some for whom English was not yet a fluent language. But in making the tattoos they opened up and approached it in a light and playful way. For example, one participant was apprehensive of the tattoo as a medium, as this was something he was against, due to his religion. But once he understood that it was only temporary and could also be washed off sooner, he was excited to participate. With some help from other participants, who spoke both Dutch and English, he had made a tattoo and ended up showing it to everyone in the workshop so that he may tell his story.

For another participant, who expressed that belonging is very personal to her and somewhat difficult, the colour restrictions assisted her and made it more accessible.

It was good that there were 'restrictions', in terms of colours etc. This made it an easy and accessible thing.

To conclude, the Belonging Tattoos method showed potential in this case study, to bridge the difficulties of researching belonging, due to it being personal and abstract. The relation of these insights to the field I describe in the conclusion.

BELONGING DEFINED

Though the actual findings of this case study are of lesser importance in this publication, as the publication is primarily aimed at discussing the developed research method, "some consideration of the findings enables us to see how the data were treated, and what a study of this kind is able to show"[9].

When I started this research my question was *how we can co-create a sense of belonging in a multicultural society?* I had hoped that in the myriad of definitions I could find some overlap with my participants, and from that choose one signifier with which we could work to inquire further knowledge on its meaning. Thereby starting the process of co-creating belonging. However, in this scope of research this assumption was in vain. What I discovered, by asking various people for their personal definitions of home, was that there is a multitude of perspectives. Looking at the results I saw different interpretations, perspectives, voices, wishes etc. In the following paragraphs I discuss some of these findings and their potential for further research.

THE STRUGGLE OF CHOOSING ONE

In this case study I ask participants to choose a certain colour combination according to what most defines home and belonging for them. One of the things looked for was a repeating category. The following image shows the colour yellow as most chosen in this case study. From the 30 participants, 18 results could be fairly interpreted with the amount of discussion possible due to the time, context and sometimes language limitations. Out of these 18 only 8 participants had a preference for 1 colour being most important, and which overlapped with others. They choose the colour representing people as most important for their sense of belonging.

people are most important

black represents humanity
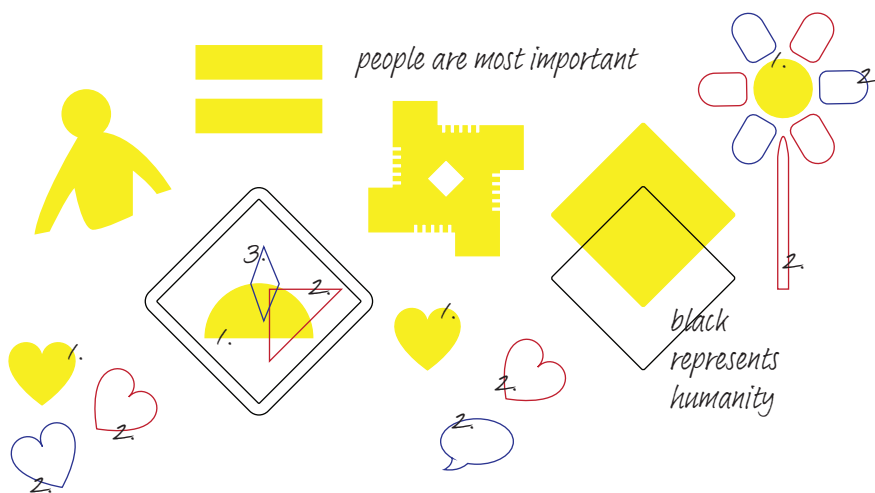
When discussing their choice however, only 5 were persistent in their decision. 3 of these participants expressed a varying opinion when asked to define their tattoo, e.g. the tattoos in the following image:

thesethree participants expressed that people are both most important and equal to place and language
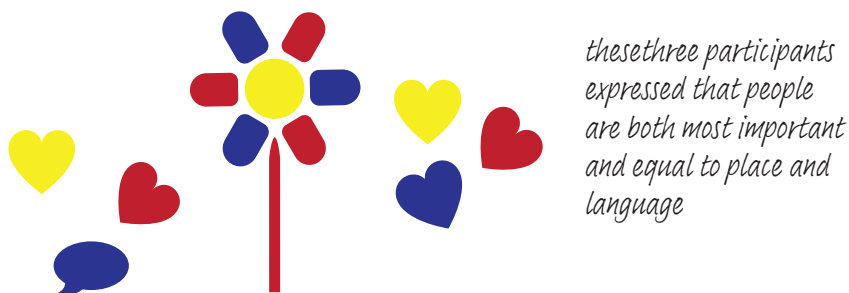
It was especially interesting to see the relations the participants made between the 3 colour categories. Contrary to my initial assumption, the relationality between these categories (people, place and language) turned out to have the strongest implications. The most common relation was that of equality between the categories, a sense of balance reached between people, place and

language. When asked to describe their tattoos the participants strongly expressed that all 3 are equally important. The implications of this result I will leave for further research. However the strength with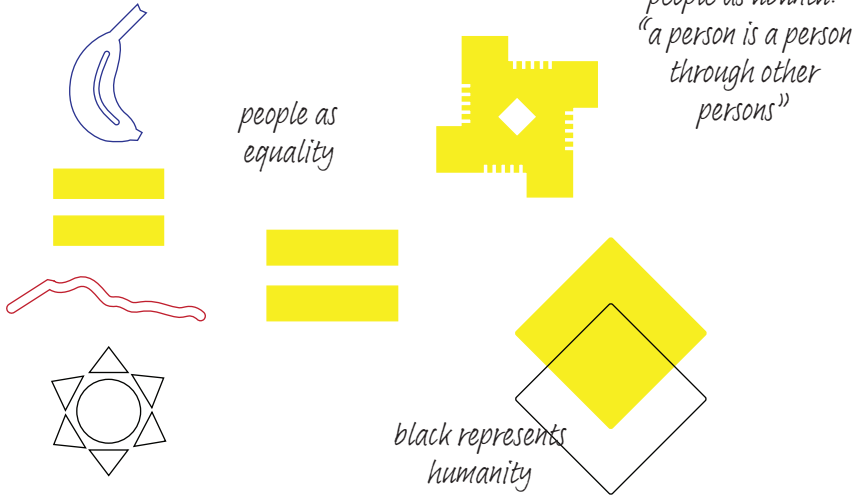 which the participants expressed this idea during our discussions was striking. Some even went further to give meaning to the relation, by proposing place (and language) as the thing(s) that envelop and connect them to people. For example, *the place and language envelop the people because in my travels I carry them with me*.

space is eqaul to
the people, and
language

space is eqaul to but also
evelopping or protecting
the people

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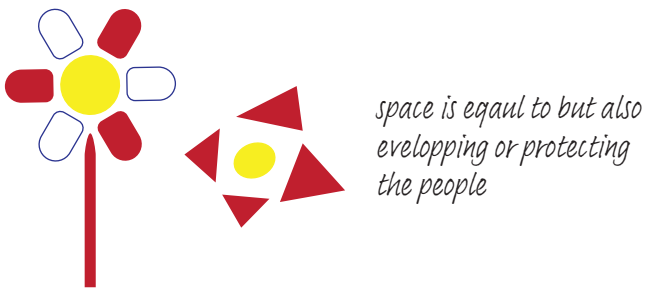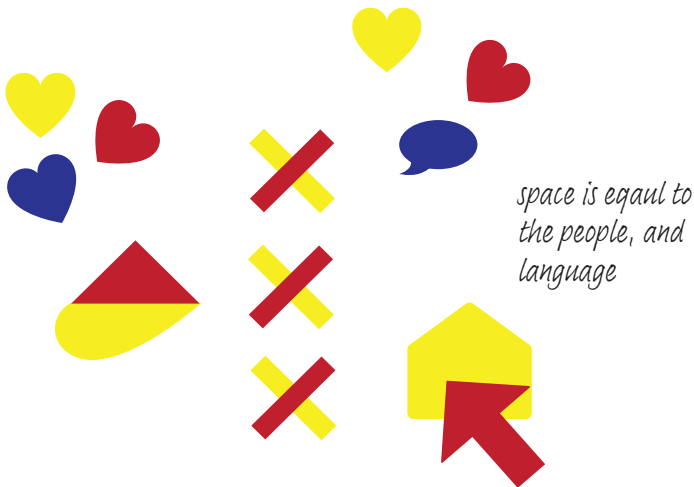
FROM ABSTRACT TO TANGIBLE

The aim of the method was to help participants translate their abstract emotions into tangible representations. These tangible representations should then lead to a definition which can help the participants in their new cultural context and which could offer more knowledge about definitions of home for the purpose of research. As such I tried to ask my participants not only to make a tattoo, but to try to be specific in their making and defining process. Looking at the results of this case study, this proved to be a challenging task. Still, some of the participants managed to give a specific meaning to the shapes and colours of their choosing. For example, *place as a type of mindset where one can feel accepted* or *people when a sense of equality is present*.

a specific city:
London
and
Amsterdam

a type of space:
with a lot of
nature (and hills)
and
very flat

the space where she
can walk her dog

space as a mindset

people as ubuntu:
"a person is a person
through other
persons"

people as
equality

black represents
humanity

I believe that here, and in the relationality the participants attach to the categories, is where the potential for co-creating a more general definition of belonging lays. This is also where the interactive play between the researcher and the participants needs to find its balance through co-creative strength in order to, as Hamers et al. phrased it, "translate practical experience into knowledge that can be shared and discussed across projects, across borders"[12].

CONCLUSION

This study explores the role design research can play in the context of belonging. It tries to answer the question on *how we can co-create a sense of belonging in a multicultural society?*

Through the research that question has slightly shifted from a general to a personal development context. The developed methodology represents a new approach, focused on implementing embodied design methods in the re-defining process of an individual's search for belonging. As (applied) researchers we often look for a general insight, one that can work for many different people and be applied in other similar situations. When I started this research I had the same objective. I expected to find a few signifiers of belonging and hoped to create a tool that would foster a general understanding of one of those signifiers and thus help us in this search. Instead I discovered the range of different, personal, approaches to the sense-making of home and belonging. And thus the developed methodology represents a tool which helps people in their personal reconstruction of belonging, illustrating the richness and nuances of belonging, rather than looking for a general understanding.

In developing the methodology I came across two challenges; the fact that belonging is abstract, and personal. The main part of the developed methodology thus focuses on how to manage these challenges so that the discussion on belonging can be lead without obstacles.

This is where design research plays an important role. The results of the case study showed the qualities of the creative embodied approach. For example, its quality in bringing a sense of clarity and lightness to belonging by having the participants 'think through their fingers'. A creative process, in which the time and hands on approach

allowed the participants to process and arrange their thoughts and translate the abstract feeling into a tangible definition. While the embodied approach allowed for a personal and authentic answer, the reframing approach made the difficult question easier to digest. Lastly, the participative quality of this methodology showed its quality in bringing different views together, while leaving enough space for someone's personal process.

Aside from the results of the methodology, I believe it is necessary to mention the position of the design researcher and their role in the future. In this context, the design researcher's role is to "test abstract concepts in practice and, vice versa, translate practical experience into knowledge that can be shared and discussed across projects, across borders"[12]. If these values are applied empathically and ethically, the personal and nuanced approach in defining abstract social topics such as belonging is safe in the hands of designers and other creative researchers. I believe that here lies the potential of 'crossing borders'. By bridging different fields through engaging with public issues, in public space, design researchers can produce "knowledge at a local scale, which then, perhaps, can be transferred to be applied elsewhere by other designers, artists, students, institutes, companies, and collectives working with comparable publics in different domains"[12].

I want to end this publication with a quote from Images of Applied design Research, as I believe that this perfectly summarises the role of design research in the social context, as examined through this study, and I hope to implement it in my further researching endeavours.

> "Visualising takes guts, because intuition, skill and empathy are needed to imagine things that are (still) difficult to put into words."[13]

LEXICON

Continuity
Continuity in this research refers to the importance of recognising that the emotional and internal processes prompted by the research workshops will be continued. As researchers we should be aware of the fact that processes we trigger don't end with our research, but continue in the everyday life of the participant.

Cultural Belonging
"Belonging is a feeling of comfort and security based on "the perception that one is an integral part of a community, place, organisation, or institution"[1]. When right, belonging to a culture can offer a sense of comfort and security. Culture in this case alludes to habits, morals, traditions etc. These cultural markers help us to navigate life and when we recognise them in our surrounding it makes us feel comfortable and safe. We know then that we fit in the puzzle. Thus, when we are familiar with the cultural markers of our context, and these are in correlation with our (cultural) identity, we can form an emotional attachment to said context.

Embodied
An embodied approach is one where the participants or researchers body is involved in the process. According to Perry and Medina, the body represents "our means of making meaning, representing, and performing"[18]. I refer to an embodied process when the body is involved in the meaning making and thus personalises the defining process to the participant.

Methodology
A strategy developed for a research context. A methodology refers to the overarching approach, while the methods are smaller, more specific approaches.

Multicultural
According to the definition of Oxford Languages a multicultural is "relating to or containing several cultural or ethnic groups within a person or society". In this publication I refer to a multicultural as someone whose identity is altered by either having been exposed to multiple cultures through their family or through living in different cultural contexts for a substantial period of their life.

New Cultural Context
A new cultural context is any place which is different than the previous cultural context in which we have lived. This includes a transitional process and it means that the transition is recent, otherwise it would not be considered new. The novelty is not only counted in time, but in the experience of adjustment. For example, for one person adjusting to a new culture can be a quick process, while for another it might take years. However, the involvement of a transition does not necessarily refer to a physical transition, as according to Duyvendak "feeling at home in an immigrant society is not only a challenge for new arrivals, but also for the native-born who see their world changing every day"[6]. Thus a new cultural context is a context in which the sense of belonging has been altered, either by our own arrival or the changes in social dynamics.

Reciprocity
Reciprocity in this research refers to an exchange of effort. The effort of participation is recognised and answered by the researcher in terms of an artifact, memento, or experience.

Redefining Home
Re-defining home is an act of taking definitions of what we consider to be and feel like home and applying them to a new context. In this process definitions get a new meaning and place in our emotions. It is part of "an adaptive process to feelings of dislocation, that is, part of the process of demarcating difference and asserting belonging to a particular locality"[3] and includes reaffirming existing boundaries

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and redefining new ones. When redefining we become aware of the cultural identity we possess and try to find the right adjustment for it in a cultural context which, in the process of dislocation, is different than our previous context. This is valuable to our sense of belonging as, according to Fenneke Wekker, when we understand and recognise these feelings, we are "able to understand in which social interactions and relationships such feelings are likely to occur – or not"[26].

Reframing

Reframing is an act of repositioning the frames through which we look at the world. The purpose of this act is to change the perspective towards a subject. "When the meaning changes, the person's responses and behaviors also change"[2]. Reframing is also a pivotal element in the creative process, as it has "the ability to put a commonplace event in a new frame that is useful or enjoyable"[2].

Tangible

I refer to tangibility as the opposite of abstract. It physicalises and visualises a subject, through which we can clarify and make something easier to apprehend to ourselves and to others. Making something tangible "entails a task of arrangement and processing. And this means that any image you produce is a result of such work"[9].

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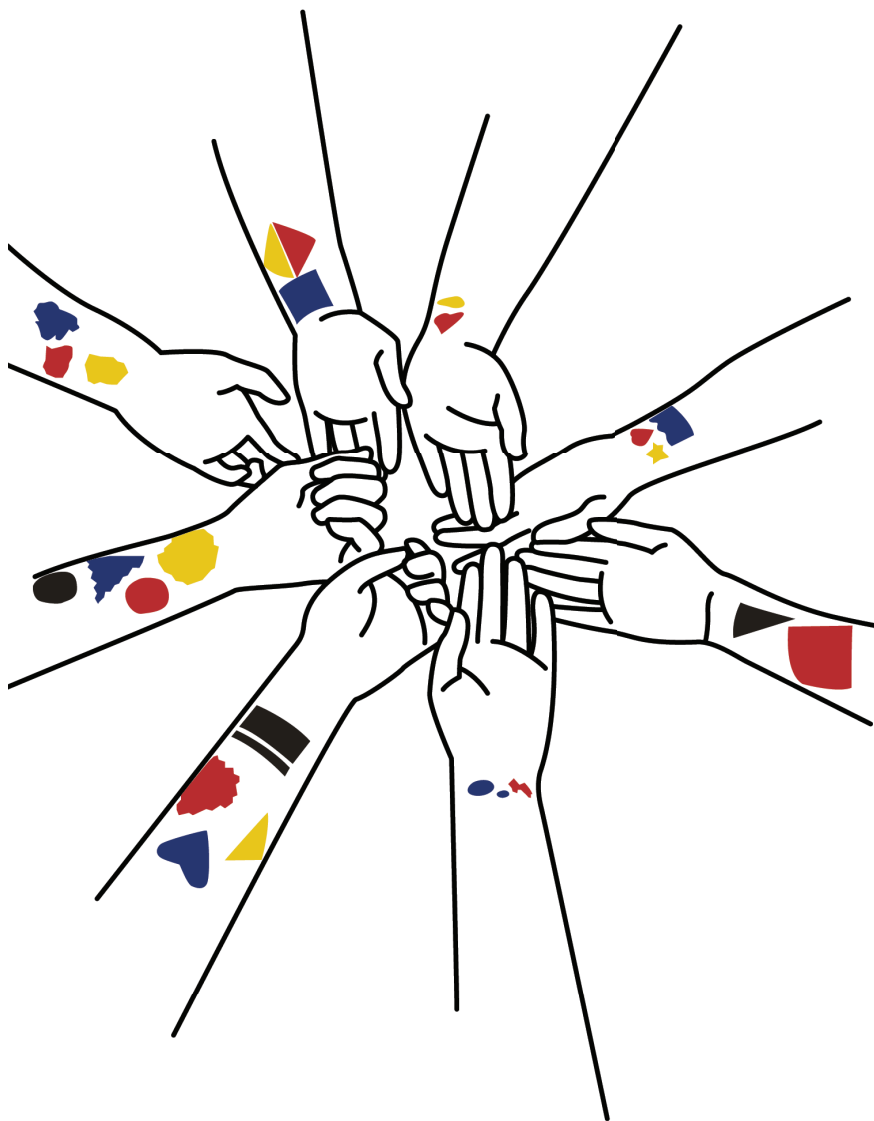
Tattoos from one of the case study workshops, at Stichting Mano.