



**SITE-SPECIFICITY IN ART TEACHING**

**The Transformative Impact of Blended Mobility Courses in ADRIART.net**



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Abstract:	<p>The present article discusses several pedagogical assets gained through a combination of blended-learning supported student mobilities (as short, condensed international residential courses) and the site-specific approach in teaching within the realm of arts and creative industries. On the curricular background of a collaboratively developed international master programme Media Arts and Practices, and based on an empirical combination of structured focus group reflections, stakeholder surveys and gradually assembled 'lessons learned' within the teacher collective, those key issues are presented that need to be observed when conceiving and implementing such mobility formats. Pointing at both curricular and managerial solutions that increase the positive impact on students as well as other stakeholders in these workshops of high social and academic value, the article concentrates on the most important lessons learned within the 3-year curriculum development and pedagogical piloting project of ADRIART, reaching from logistics issues to joint mentoring models and group dynamics management. Such production-oriented (but process-aware) course designs may not only provide timely academic programmes as a response to a 'glocalized' world, but also foster students' engagement with the actual (social, economical, natural, political etc.) environment and the development of autonomous life-long learning habit(u)s.</p>

Figure 1: Overview of the Media Arts and Practices programme structure

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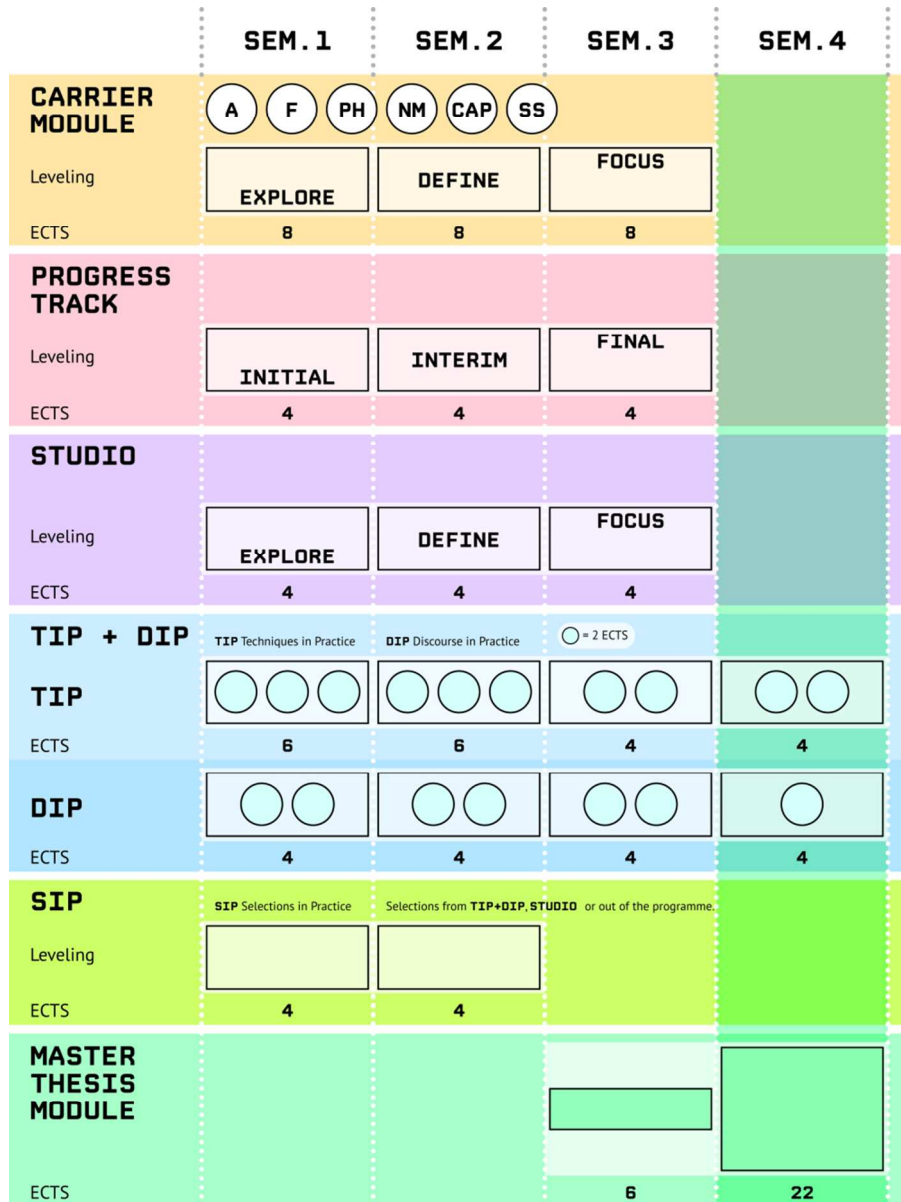


Figure 1: Overview of the Media Arts and Practices programme structure  
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## SITE-SPECIFICITY IN ART TEACHING

### The Transformative Impact of Blended Mobility Courses in ADRIART.net

#### SUMMARY:

The present article discusses several pedagogical assets gained through a combination of blended-learning supported student mobilities (as short, condensed international residential courses) and the site-specific approach in teaching within the realm of arts and creative industries. On the curricular background of a collaboratively developed international master programme Media Arts and Practices, and based on an empirical combination of structured focus group reflections, stakeholder surveys and gradually assembled 'lessons learned' within the teacher collective, those key issues are presented that need to be observed when conceiving and implementing such mobility formats. Pointing at both curricular and managerial solutions that increase the positive impact on students as well as other stakeholders in these workshops of high social and academic value, the article concentrates on the most important lessons learned within the 3-year curriculum development and pedagogical piloting project of ADRIART, reaching from logistics issues to joint mentoring models and group dynamics management. Such production-oriented (but process-aware) course designs may not only provide timely academic programmes as a response to a 'glocalized' world, but also foster students' engagement with the actual (social, economical, natural, political etc.) environment and the development of autonomous life-long learning habit(u)s.

KEYWORDS: mobile, site-specific, methodology, new media, blended, ADRIART

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The international curriculum-development project 'Advancing Digitally Renewed Interactions in Art Teaching and Training' (ADRIART) was began in October 2011, establishing a network among four universities from Croatia, Austria, Italy and Slovenia. The complete two-year implementation cycle of the international master study programme, developed in the project, methodologically explores the format of short academic mobilities, strongly supported by digital media and e-learning methods. Among four countries and in five languages, the emerging study programme – that has just recently concluded its full piloting 2-year cycle – seeks to treat site-specific topics in interdisciplinary ways, while stimulating multi-cultural academic exchange and the graduate's development towards self-sustainability.

At the point of writing this article, 5 jointly run 'mobility' courses have been already repeated twice (Venice, Ljubljana, Graz, Rijeka, Komiža), while the Venice and Komiža mobility had already been pre-piloted in 2011 and 2012 with similar methodology. In this time, various models of deployments were delivered and evaluated, crucially influencing the collaborative curriculum-development effort for the 'Media Arts and Practices' (MAP) master programme as the major output of the ADRIART project. The mobility mechanism became a crucial part of the new study programme, integrating three of its core modules. The MAP programme is now regularly running at the University of Nova Gorica in Slovenia and at the Rijeka Academy of Applied Arts in Croatia. Its goals are focussed on students' competencies of both

personal autonomy and international collaboration. The most specific programme outcome would thus be that the student autonomously develops and manages own role and competences in a collective learning setting and in the individual master project, applying the developed roles and competences constructively and collaboratively within site-specific, topic-relevant production environments, nurturing a culture of continuous and strategic competency development.

By combining residential and short-mobility-based study experience, students acquire and/or upgrade self-defined (i.e. mentor- and peer-supported reflection of) discursive skills and specific theoretical (history, criticism) as well as project-management related knowledge, along with practical skills related to field-specific methodology and technology, evaluating all of these (along the so called 'Progress Track' module) against other components of competence in the field, and reflect on their interconnections. The student's pivotal productive task is to carry out independent creative conception, realization (production) and finalization (including presentation) of a coherent project, based on research and/or development work in the selected area. The student completes this practical project, related to a methodologically developed, theory-supported written thesis, consolidating the student's both written and oral-discourse competence.

### 1.1 Curricular Background: Open Curricular Structures

The MAP programme offers a selection of so called Carrier Modules, from which a student selects one on the basis of his/her master project proposal, interest or motivation: Animation, Film, Photography, New Media Technologies, Contemporary Art Practices or Scenographic Spaces. These Carrier Module areas are not defined and implemented completely

independently, rather they are supported and closely intertwined with other compulsory and elective modules, which students can select according to their particular interests and needs. Each student's individual master project represents the vertical vertebrae of his/her study programme, it is systematically developed, individually mentored and collectively reviewed within the compulsory Progress Track module, where students regularly present and discuss with mentors and peers their personal (portfolio) as well as master thesis project progression.

Within the Studio Module the student is required to take one Studio course run per semester. A Studio course is a collective, congested study experience, closely connected to a student's individual Carrier Module, usually implemented outside of the school in the form of a short mobility. As a self-standing course connects the areas of more Carrier Modules into a cohesive topic-based and research-oriented production. Often realised as a 'site-specific' project in workshop form, it treats a specific topic in an interdisciplinary way. The offer, as well as profile (content) of Studios is 'sensitive' to the realm choices of each year's student cohort.

<Figure 1 here>

Figure 1: Overview of the Media Arts and Practices programme structure

Throughout the entire course of study students take a variety of smaller 'courselets' that provide them with competencies required for their final master project. These are organised within three compulsory supportive modules: Techniques in Practice (TIP), Discourses in Practice (DIP) and Selections in Practice (SIP). The Selections in Practice (SIP) module represents the most 'open' part of the curriculum, offering the students to freely choose any of

the smaller units offered under TIP or DIP, perhaps attend an additional Studio course, or accredit any of the externally attained level- and area-relevant credits.

## 1.2 Site-Specificity in Teaching

The mobility courses are methodologically constructed under the paradigm of 'site specificity' granting the main role to the space as it is now (when students experience it), whereas certain focus of every respective 'mobility' is given to either demographical, social, cultural, ecological or migratory etc. aspects, often with a critical slant. Thus the space itself emanates an assignment/purpose towards the creative (within the pedagogical, academic) process, often teleologically tasked by a product (outcome), as defined by the student (or group): e. g. a short documentary film (Venice), an ambient installation (Rijeka, Ljubljana), a public space intervention (Graz, Komiza), as an independent art (or even design, e.g. Ljubljana) piece, a potential (group) event such as performance, action or staged piece (Komiza, Graz, Rijeka). As a rule, these courses are based on researching the topic in advance of the arrival at the site, preparing the students via a common blended learning (online supported) course design.

Site specificity is otherwise a fairly well-established term in the artistic context, one that emerges in the sixties, mainly within the Land Art movement, where artists left the studio and the gallery space to work with nature and natural phenomena, exposing their works to nature's flows and rhythms. Throughout the years, site-specificity has also become explicitly an urban phenomenon, as artists start to interfere in the city's processes and structures with aesthetic and political acts. Miwon Kwon (2002) stresses how artists are increasingly becoming deeply involved with social and political struggles, expanding the physical notion of site to a more complex intertwined system that defines different societies. It is exactly in this expanded notion of the site and of the artist's role in intervening and working with it, that participative



and collaborative practices have been gaining ground. Also, since the sixties one can observe a movement happening simultaneously in different continents that invites the audience to interact, change and/or experience the art work. This has grown in combination with site-specificity towards a less authorial relation of the artwork, where interdisciplinary groups work sensitively to local problems.

The site-specific approach of the ADRIART mobilities mostly draws on this point, instigating students to react critically and sensitively to the specific locations where collective work is to be developed, and reflect themselves as (becoming) parts of these social systems. The methodological approach always includes a previous research online (here with the help of Moodle.org-based learning management platforms), in-situ research and the set up of an artistic exhibition (screening, spatial intervention etc.) that will offer a challenging and eventually professional framework for students to present their artistic responses to those places. In these responses, the students are mentored into combining different professional, academic and personal competencies, developed and reflected along the above described study programme, combining concrete media production techniques with artistic strategies of topical investigation and aesthetic expression.

Throughout the three years of the project, these site-specific mobilities (see [www.adriart.net/mobilities](http://www.adriart.net/mobilities) for full archive) covered such different areas, topics and artistic expression forms such as the interdisciplinary short-documentary film workshop series 'Hidden Lives of Venice on Video' (2011-2013) in Venice, Italy; the mixed-media installation interventions in Rijeka, Croatia (2013 in the Rikard Benčić factory brown-field, 2014 'Under the Flag of Displacement' on the former Yugoslav army ship); the interdisciplinary and

collaborative interventions of 'Responsive Art in Public Realm' in Graz, Austria; among others. Not only the participants of these intensive workshops, but also the sites (and their newly built audiences) themselves were no doubt transformed by the potentials of this methodology.

In the following, the present article discusses the various (but mostly student) stakeholder feedbacks, revealing the manifold transformative processes and leading towards lessons-learned that can be applied in similar curricular contexts – not only in teaching art, but above all encouraging interdisciplinary education models that become truly meaningful to the(ir) social environment – within a local and especially in a broader regional, (which here means) international perspective.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Research Background and Motivation

Making students 'move' around the place(s), move/shift in perspectives, learn and act in a site-specific (but still supported in the curriculum) way is somewhat new to the field art and media pedagogy. Thus the underlying focal question: does the introduction of learning through exposure to 'specific site or social context' bring new quality and significant departure from the traditional training/education setting? Ambition to demonstrate that innovative site-specificity mobility approach in the field of art didactics generates important stakeholder benefits requires a research design able to detect effects in various fields of interest. This in turn brings the research focus onto qualitative aspects of the MAP pilot-activities implementation from various stakeholders' views, addressing curriculum and supporting

processes as well as curriculum-supported elaborations (such as e.g. study materials) and outcomes. Thus the article tries to answer the question of how the MAP concept specifically addresses the needs of target participants and other primary stakeholders, as well as which transformative processes may be instigated in this way.

## 2.2 General Research Framework

In trying to gain in-depth understanding on how the site-specific mobilities (as a specific and distinctive quality of the MAP study programme) function in terms of its expected effects, a research approach has been devised following the mixed methods approach. In order to obtain a 'complete picture' quality of the site-specific mobility implementation and its effects, a research design should simultaneously address three challenges:

1. Exploration of multiple stakeholder perspectives in context...
2. ...of social intervention (from needs assessment through process and impact phase) developed to produce (generate) expected effects,...
3. ... that take place in specific substantial context of art and media education.

The broad conceptual framework is dwelling on the principles of programme evaluation (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman 2004), and the principles of utilisation focused evaluation (Patton 1997). However, since the object of the study is an art and media education programme, one can not ignore the substantive field of teaching-, didactics-, and pedagogy-related effects, thus the principles of Kirkpatrick's evaluation model (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick 2005) have been employed as well. Such an applied research design brings different but compatible substantive foundations and combines them into complex metrics. The applied theoretical concepts including the mixed methods approach of combining quantitative and qualitative data and the principle of triangulation are thus being used to provide valid empirical findings and

conclusions on effects of site-specific mobility as a new and timely teaching approach applicable (not only) in teaching of art and media, presented later in the results section of this article.

Empirical research relies on mixed-methods research principles and general guidelines for conducting and analysing surveys (Babbie 2007; Neuman 2011), focus groups (Krueger & Casey 2009) and content analysis (Babbie 2007; Neuman 2011). The validity of empirical findings has been provided following the triangulation of data sources (focus groups, mobility satisfaction survey, program and teacher evaluation questionnaire) and triangulation of stakeholder perspectives (students, project management, mentors, external project stakeholders). Following the general principles of qualitative data analysis, opinions and views expressed by mobility participants have been compiled in explanatory patterns organised according to common cause (expressed meaning), which is grounded in the theory and concepts presented in the introductory section of this contribution. The occurrence or frequency of expressed opinion has been observed as well.

### 2.3 Mobility Satisfaction Survey

Aspects observed with the mobility satisfaction survey follow the 'standard list' of topics addressed by questionnaires used to address participants' reactions to teaching/training (Bee & Bee 2003; Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick 2005). However, in the mobility satisfaction questionnaire the focus has shifted from training programme evaluation (c.f. 2.4 below) to mobility evaluation since mobility represents the 'new quality' introduced by the MAP programme.

Since all mobilities and projects build around the idea of local environment or social problems ('specific site or social context' – i.e. site-specificity, c.f. 1.2 above), the questions aiming to assess the social aspect of a mobility were also introduced. The mobility satisfaction questionnaire predominately focuses on assessing how well students' needs have been addressed in following aspects of mobility implementation: effectiveness of specific site/social context, effectiveness of applied teaching methods and mobility organization. General relevance of mobility to individual learning needs and the meeting of expectations have also been measured. A 'mobility' is here considered a residential, multi-day intensive learning event at a specific location, embedded within a blended learning concept (pre- and post-stages online). Survey participation has been anonymous and voluntary, response rates varied at around 60-75 per cent.

#### 2.4 Quality-of-Study-Experience Questionnaires

Traditional aspects of study experience like correlation of learning efficiency against set outcomes and expectations, the quality of delivered teaching and the study materials, as well as satisfaction with equipment and rooms have been covered with two parallel university-level questionnaires aimed at the education programme as well as conducted on course or module level. Quality-of-study-experience questionnaires are administered annually at the end of the programme's implementation, within each university's own quality assurance system. The response rate varied from 60-70 per cent.

#### 2.5 Focus Groups

Focus group discussion method (Krueger & Casey 2009) provided detailed descriptions of stakeholders' opinions and views in the areas of: needs assessment, mobility implementation (teaching process, learning environment, course enrolment and supporting processes) and

impact of site-specific mobilities. It has to be noted that all four focus groups (two with students and two with program facilitators) were characterised by frank and open attitude of participants, expressing both constructive and critical opinions.

### 3.RESULTS

In the following, the empirical findings are presented by paralleling and contrasting perceptions, understandings and interpretations across stakeholders (students and facilitators: program management and mentors). This article organizes the presentation of the results according to observed aspects of implementation, outlining advantages and challenges of the MAP site-specific mobilities, in order to ultimately arrive to more broadly applicable lessons-learned. All (anonymous) quotes throughout this chapter stem from the focus group transcripts.

The below table that compares the quantitative results of anonymous surveys in the selected mobilities within the last two years of the project, shows a clear positive trend and a high 'escape velocity' on most of the important aspects of such demanding international course implementations. Even if the demands were increased both on teachers and students in terms of the method and topic complexity from one year to the other, the repeated and well-monitored mobility course runs managed to bring about improvements on almost all student-satisfaction aspects through the cycle-based improvement that each year responded to the quality-assurance data, gained beforehand. The qualitative investigation into the teachers' community (c.f. 2.5 below) only confirms this, bringing about valuable lessons for the future development of this programme and the mobility concept in general (c.f. chapter 3 below).

Table I.: Results from the QA questionnaires, deployed in eight selected mobilities

For Peer Review

<b>QA QUESTIONNAIRE / STATISTICS / MOBILITIES / 2012-2014</b>									
<b>MOBILITY CODE</b>	<b>H1</b>	<b>L1</b>	<b>R1</b>	<b>B1</b>	<b>K1</b>	<b>H2</b>	<b>R2</b>	<b>K2</b>	<b>average</b>
<b>1. FACILITIES</b>									
The mobility facilities were convenient.	4.5	4.2	4.3	3.7	4.2	4.5	5.0	4.3	<b>4.3</b>
I have no problems orienting around local environment.	4.5	4.7	4.8	4.6	4.7	4.5	4.7	4.1	<b>4.6</b>
Equipment was all working and was sufficient for mobility tasks.	3.6	3.0	4.0	3.3	3.2	3.6	4.7	3.8	<b>3.7</b>
The transport to mobility site was well organised.	4.7	3.5	3.8	3.4	4.5	4.7	4.3	4.1	<b>4.1</b>
The mobility environment (site and social context) stimulated me to learn.	4.3	4.3	4.5	4.3	4.7	4.2	5.0	4.6	<b>4.5</b>
<b>2. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LEARNING METHODS USED</b>									
On-line learning was valuable (sufficient) in preparation on mobility.	3.7	3.8	3.8	4.1	3.2	3.7	4.7	3.6	<b>3.8</b>
On-line learning has also proved useful after completing mobility.	3.3	4.3	3.3	3.7	3.2	3.2	4.0	3.5	<b>3.6</b>
There was sufficient extent of face-to-face learning related to (prior to) mobility.	3.9	4.2	3.5	3.9	3.0	3.9	4.3	3.9	<b>3.8</b>
The mobility significantly contributed to my skills and knowledge.	4.0	4.2	3.8	3.3	4.2	4.0	5.0	4.5	<b>4.1</b>
There were no major distractions that interfered with my learning	4.1	3.3	3.0	3.3	3.8	4.1	4.3	4.3	<b>3.8</b>
<b>3. RELEVANCE TO THE LEARNING NEEDS</b>									
I do not anticipate barriers in applying what I learned.	4.0	3.3	3.3	4.2	4.0	4.0	4.3	4.3	<b>3.9</b>
<b>4. MEETING THE EXPECTATIONS</b>									
The mobility met my expectations.	3.8	4.2	3.5	4.2	4.0	3.8	4.7	4.3	<b>4.1</b>

**Legend of mobility codes:**

H1 - HiloVv, Venice 2012/2013 H2 - HilloVv, Venice 2013/2014 K1 - Komiža (Croatia) 2012/2013 K2 - Komiža (Croatia) 2013/2014	B1 - Benčić Factory (Rijeka, Croatia) 2012/2013 R1 - RAPR (Graz, Austria) 2012/2013 R2 - RAPR (Graz, Austria) 2013/2014 L1 - LOGOS (Ljubljana, Slovenia) 2012/2013
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### 3.1 Mobility Expectations Fullfilment

By and large the conducted mobilities met the **students' expectations – which were sometimes very different among national/disciplinary groups**. For some participants the expectations have even been surpassed, with additional note that questionnaire results showed improvement over time through declining trend of response variability and increasing response average (from around 3.8 to 4.2 on a 5-point scale, c.f. the table above). This finding has also been supported through focus groups results, whereby both positive aspects as well as possibilities for improvement have been replaced with perceptions of almost unanimous agreement that mobility expectations have been fulfilled, some even surpassed. When considering participants expectations related to learning outcomes, analysis again shows positive but weak effects. Participants quite unanimously (from around 3.6 to 4.1, c.f. the table above) agree that they will be able to apply what they have learned. None of the results of the Study-Experience Questionnaires did not give a topic-relevant finding: The student satisfaction with equipment and the materials amenities varies from 3.2 to 4.5 on a 5-point scale, and is above the average of 4 concerning the teaching quality and learning objectives attainment.

On the other hand focus groups pointed to some initial problems where insufficient (not clearly enough, in trans-disciplinary terms) course descriptions presented at the beginning seem to have generated some **false expectations** and in consequence generated **dissatisfaction**. 'If the organisers will do such a workshop again, I recommend them to

define the working process and the expected skills of the students more precisely in the beginning...' (Širok 2014, 10)

Facilitators however shared the awareness of challenges related to defining students' needs because of participants' heterogeneity – especially in regard to initial knowledge levels and different expectations. These issues have been actively dealt with by incorporating changes in MAP activities and remote mobilities, along the following 'lessons':

1. **recalibrate expectations** by shifting the focus from output to process, i.e. onto 'getting a feel of being in a certain professional position (editor, director, actor...)';
2. organize a technical (residential) workshop at previous (learning) phases at home universities to **assure a more even skill level** at the mobility, especially as regards the understanding and mastery of basic technical (production) processes;
3. expand the **benefit of the trans-disciplinary mix** by openly reflecting on different roles and competencies prior, during and especially after a conducted mobility event, always adjusting the language (trans-disciplinary translation).

### 3.2 Mobilities as Added Value

**Mobilities are without doubts recognised as main source of added value** within the MAP programme. Participant focus groups revealed that perceived added value of the (whole) MAP programme, predominately relates to perceived benefits of these remote mobilities. Mobility satisfaction surveys conveyed a similar picture, whereby respondents on average agreed that the mobility environment stimulated them to learn. Added value has been recognised in different areas and in different ways, whereby the amount of

gained knowledge and experience varied from workshop to workshop and from participant to participant:

- **Mobility as new creative, experimental experience.** The mobility enabled participants 'to focus for couple of days on to the project only, which is difficult in daily life in local environment' (Širok 2014, 10), experiencing working group influence, location and thus 'switching to other frequency'. Terms like 'culture shock stimulating numerous opportunities', 'intensive period providing life experience, networking, adaptation to local environment' (Širok, 2014, 10) have also been used describing the extra dimension, opening up through the mobility experience.
- **Professional development** has also been recognised as added value by many participants in form of dialogue on expert level, its specific discourse and the variety of skills and competencies that can be learned at a specific congested space and time: '... there is dialogue on the expert level going on, that I am not able to get anywhere else, since I can not gather/ get such people' (Širok 2014, 10).
- **The element of 'laboratory and experimentation'** was additionally highlighted in a sense that added value hides in the opportunity to experiment in some areas, for what one rarely allocates time, or does not dare to do it in order not to jeopardise won artist name and reputation: '... I am very sceptical person... If I am not able to do, what I want to do and if I am already here, then I'll try to do as much different things I find useful as I could. And I am very satisfied (here) and I am receiving a lot.' (Širok 2014, 10)
- **Added value in relation to regular or future work** has also been perceived in the function of an exploration exercise or experiment and as a 'living tissue creating

future potential and at the same time growing / merging with your own future life (setting up joint future projects)' (Širok 2014, 10). A confirmation of already acquired competencies as well as official certification (master degree) was also expressed by two discussants as a particular value of the programme (context).

Facilitators perceived added value in a broader perspective, related to whole project i.e. at the academic programme level and in terms of its development. They have seen the sources of added value for students in:

- project itself as being something completely new and otherwise unattainable – a **valuable experience as a single opportunity** for not only students, but teachers as well;
- students getting to know (network with) each other and the mentors, increasing mobility practice and potentials, and producing collective (authorship) work;
- an emerging '**living consortium of students, teachers and locations**' coupled with individual attention and topical focus, generating lots of 'interesting stuff' where students can get involved in professionally (even at a later stage);
- project as such '**...shifts the focus of the students to regional level** and empowers them to think at the such level about their possibilities' (Širok 2014, 11);
- establishing the space for further development on the basis of experience and constructive (**peer**) **criticism, providing students with orientation** where to go next (or how to better autonomize) **in their career pathways**.

### 3.3 The Learning Process Barriers and Advantages

**Despite strong positive perception of the remote-mobility added value, there were some challenges that arose throughout the project.** The learning process advantage/barriers that have been perceived by the students can be organized around the questions of appropriate amount of remote mobility activities dynamics, of the (ever) present tension between the need to push the students and creativity time demand and of the (in)ability to cope with the mobility event's complexity.

- Several participants expressed concerns that the specific **condensed mobility task flow** disturbs focus, constantly fragmenting the initial workshop idea, which can in the end effect lead to (communication) ignorance. Excessive dynamics can also lead to nervousness ('I wish to be left alone and work' (Širok, 2014, 11)) and the perceptions that workshops are too output-focused.
- Questions also arose about whether the border between 'pushing students to be active' and the '**personal creativity time demand**' is perhaps not set in disfavour of the personal creativity time (often considered as somewhat sacred to the artistic process).
- Complexity challenges came in the form of problems related to **preparation tasks sometimes being seen as not synchronized with the overall mobility task**, thus conflicting 'students' expectations vs. management expectations' as a mismatch related to workshop outcomes. Whereby having the (otherwise rare) possibility to be mentored by 5 or 6 different mentors was met by appreciation on one side, this was also seen as confusing (only expressed as a problem of one workshop), if not managed or coordinated and voiced properly.

The facilitators were aware of those problems, however they were also bound to support initial remote mobility and programme concept, where **programme expectations are not oriented on the product** (artistic piece), **but on the process** (discussions and work with curators, fellow creators, the environment, etc.). They also expressed the need to continue efforts in finding the right balance within the existing blended course design paradigm and proposed (implemented) some measures to fine-tune this implementation aspect.

#### 4. DISCUSSION of 3 mobility cases' lessons learned

In this coherent chapter, the article comparatively discusses, along the lines analysed above, both the pedagogical conceptualisation as well as the organisational implementation of three different mobilities, lead by three different partners of the ADRIART network. In order to recognize the improvements and the 'escape velocity' that these site-specific mobility courses have developed throughout their piloting, especially as regards the learning goals, the most recent course runs were selected: 'Hidden Lives of Venice on Video', 'Responsive Art in Public Realm' in Graz of March/April 2014, and 'Mapping Komiža Narratives' These three courses were also selected because the qualitative data triangulation through focus groups presented in chapters 2 and 3 above happened mostly before them – thus rounding up the here presented investigation.

These three mobility course implementations are highly comparable in terms of the global didactic and organisational structure (blended learning teaching&learning model,

intensive workshop setting of 8-12 days, 12-18 participants with 4-6 mentors, site-specific and interdisciplinary profile), however they differ in the art/media-production approach and thus realm paradigms, corresponding to different 'carrier modules' of the MAP programme ('Film' in Venice, 'Contemporary Art Practice' in Graz, 'Intermedia/New Media' in Komiza). Only the most meaningful examples and evidence were selected, such that condense the above mentioned aspects in cases of good practice – and furthermore, show at the student's developing competency in both professional skills and academic reflection, since some students (selected by mentor committees according to an internal call) attended two different mobilities.

The Venice course was organised around the strict and linear production line of a short documentary, so the most challenging factor was to bring in, next to the film production (Nova Gorica) and film theory/history (Udine) students, architecture/contemporary-art (Graz) and applied-arts (Rijeka) students who are not used to linear production styles, founded on research-based synopsis development, tiring location-scouting and gradual closing-up onto the actual real-life characters or the portrayed:

No abstract, alternative or experimental ideas could be realised. /.../ In my academic career I never learned much in just obeying a process forced by a course leader but more in trying something out and experimenting. (anonymous response in the questionnaire after the preceding Venice 2012 mobility)

Still in Venice, the average rank of satisfaction with the facilities and the equipment was above 4 (of 5, as top rank), whereas the (most intensive of all) online research stage was felt as mostly supporting to the face-to-face learning process. As an interesting ex-post observation, the mentors of the ADRIART community realized that the students keener of or more used to open or free methods (and usually critical towards the workshop setup in Venice, as voiced in each of the final evaluation rounds) always realized the individual learning value of the 'closed' format of this film production oriented workshop only after several months had passed from the mobility, when they could **re-apply and evaluate the film-production know-how** (and its production rigorousness) **in their primary professional or academic settings.**

Interestingly, a participant of the Komiza 2014 Intermedia/New-media course challenged himself with **transposing** the strict film-production **method** to the Komizan site-specific setting and the open-form pedagogical method used there – and proved quite successful with their final product (a 'fakeumentary' art video/film about a foreigner, being dressed up as a traditional Komizan man and learning to prepare a traditional Komiza pie from a local woman, without them speaking a common language). The student claimed in the final course evaluation round that the film would not have been as good, or actually finished at all, if he hadn't been through the experience of the Venice course beforehand – which he could later in Komiza **not only transpose into another artistic field, but also transmit to his tandem fellow.**

Similarly, a participant of the Graz interdisciplinary workshop that intensively combined the fields of climate research, data sonification, and contemporary interactive art by



exposing students both to complex academic inputs realized she could transfer the there (re)acquired **artistic autonomy of the interdisciplinary approach** to another, the Komiza setting. Which might be the more valuable in her case of a mature student, taking up the artistic career track after a decade of 'academic hibernation' in the realms of industry, while raising a family. This proves not to be the only case, as the current intakes of students to the international MAP programme show a positive trend of the BA art enrolments in terms of the life-long learning paradigm at both the Rijeka and the Nova Gorica university.

In both Graz and Komiza workshops, the initial reluctance of students towards the online research preparation activity or at least revision of relevant artistic and media productions such as possible or probable in the given interdisciplinary and/or inter-cultural context seem to overlap. However, the final evaluation rounds in situ as well as the mobility satisfaction surveys (filled in a week or two after the mobility) of both courses show a **positive reflection of the online learning towards the assessment of the learning goals**, set for the course: online preparation not only wakes the 'social suspense' for the upcoming international course, but raises relevant questions and may develop assumptions or even models (as project ideas, synopsis articulation etc.) of how to respond to the issue at stake. In such a blended setting, the students start navigating within the topical field before they actually arrive at a location – and can well put up with the many false expectations and wrong assumptions this usually brings about. It may be assumed that the social atmosphere of the face-to-face setting boosts the positive impact of (or at least self-reflective awareness in) the online learning stages. Whether in an

individual production, a tandem or in a group, the **collective and collaborative dimension** of these mobilities – that often include the locals participating as either the portrayed, informants or at least inhabitants of the site in question, but at the same time being their audience or users – seems to bear most important interdisciplinary and inter-cultural value.

All the mobilities however, despite being conducted in the realm of digital arts, inspired students to **creatively deal with the analogue domain of public space and enter into actual interactions** with people (becoming participants in artistic works, or more importantly even: processes), nature and the built environment. This crucial phenomenon was arguably due to the site-specific focus of these mobilities, sometimes pushing the limits of student's expectations and broadening the understanding of interdisciplinarity in collaborative context:

The course structure needs to allow enough breathing room to experience not just the landscape and people, but also the opportunities and failures.  
(anonymous response in the questionnaire after the preceding Komiža 2013 mobility)

And most importantly perhaps, the academic partnership of ADRIART seems to have developed a capacity to **learn from experience, developing a profoundly collaborative practice within an educational (creative) community**:

This time everyone suddenly found their focus, working with clarity and peace

of mind. We tested and collected the material. In between there were doubts again and groups were reshuffled, but there were no real conflicts. We were lying in the sun and swimming, on some days we worked through the night and helped each other along. (a participant of the Komiža 2014 mobility who has previously attended two other mobilities, in her reflection text after the course)

## 5. CONCLUSION AND LOOKOUT

Such a future-oriented approach as conducted and reflected in the above contribution not least successfully addresses the EU-promoted elements of mobility (raising inter-cultural awareness) and the social responsibility or sensitivity of the academic process. A successful marriage between academia and 'the real world' might be brought about especially by interdisciplinary collaborations – if conducted in a well orchestrated, participative way, fostering a spirit of collectivity within an individualist mainstream of the social practices and structures. Different cultural and especially professional practices and languages should be gradually tuned onto understanding each other's positions and (default) practices, softening each other up to embrace foreign, not-yet-experienced ways of working, thinking and communicating.

Upon the rich experience and the manifold lessons learned as presented in this article, the ADRIART mobility workshops model is currently being transposed onto other teaching and learning environments at both the master-programme implementing universities in

Rijeka and Nova Gorica, as well as being further developed by other partners of the growing network, both existing (Graz and Udine) as well as newly accessed (Weimar in Germany and Caldas da Rainha in Portugal). An even broader partnership is being forged under the name of 'ADRIART 2.0', aiming to address recent challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century higher education, such as reorienting student graduate profiles for employment within an interactive business-university collaboration paradigm as well as constantly improving the existing and seeking for new educational methodologies.

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