The Felicity of a Kitchen Table:

Reflections on Common Space Within a Residential

Social Therapeutic Setting

Corinna Balavoine

Rudolf Steiner University College, Oslo

Master Program

I wanted agreement now, I wanted synthesis and the plain truth- without the formalities of debate. There was nothing left to debate, no heated discussion that seemed to progress toward any healing solution. I wanted only *truth*, as simple as you could serve it, straight down the middle, not the product of dialectic but *sui generis*: Truth! We all knew the truth but we insisted on distorting things to make it seem like we were all, with each other, in such profound disagreement about everything- that first and foremost there are two sides to everything, when of course there were not; there was one side only, one side always. Just as this earth is round, the truth is round, not two-sided but *round* and-

From *You Shall Know Our Velocity*

Dave Eggers, 2002

Content

Acknowledgements
Abstract

Abstract

This narrative qualitative study researches the kitchen table and common space. The kitchen table is a part of everyday life and is often taken for granted. Common space is also a relatively undefined space that contains elements of both private space and public space. This paper would like to connect the two themes, the kitchen table and common space, to enhance their visibility. The kitchen table can be understood as a symbol for human values. Common space can be understood as a space in which one enjoys felicitous moments and feelings of belonging. It can also be a learning arena for social skills and a balanced encounter between self and the world. This paper explores the kitchen table and common space within a residential social therapeutic setting. It asks what social workers can learn from common space. It phenomenologically examines what is space and place. It uses the methods of group interviews with social workers and students with special needs, and an autoethnographic journal of photos and texts. The paper concludes that values such as freedom and security can be experienced within the framework of common space, and encourages the reader to consider common space to be an important aspect of social care.

Acknowledgements

1. Introduction

A prerequisite for acknowledging common space is the assumption that we are entities who are able to move in and out of various kinds of spaces while remaining intrinsically ourselves. We neither dissolve into our environment nor remain completely independent of others. Boundaries of self have been drawn, either consciously or unconsciously, in order to enter a common space. At the same time, some degree of permeability is required if we wish to attain an experience of that which is common within a common space. Without this permeability we would transport ourselves through or inhabit this space without any awareness of it. We would remain ignorant of our environment.

Common space is a space that is shared by a group of people. In the context of this paper it is a space shared by individuals who

- Are not family or personal friends (although family and close ties are not excluded).
- Have different social roles and functions within the group.
- Do or do not reside in the immediate vicinity of the shared space.

Both structured events and unplanned spontaneous activities can take place within this space. It is not owned or in possession of any one individual, although an individual can have overall responsibility for this space.

A residential social therapeutic setting as defined for this paper is a setting that architecturally integrates individuals' private quarters with common spaces. It includes the services of social workers, who either reside in this setting or come into this setting on a daily basis to assist with domestic and personal care.[1] Private quarters are bedrooms, apartments or houses. Common spaces can be, for example, kitchens, living rooms, hobby rooms, laundry rooms, meeting rooms and gardens. Persons residing in this type of setting can share common meals together. Scheduled work or school activities can be incorporated in this setting, but can also take place elsewhere.

---

[1] "Social Therapy is a professional discipline inspired by Rudolf Steiner, a philosopher, teacher and the founder of anthroposophy and put into practice by Karl König, founder of Camphill Community living. At its heart is the concept that a healthy social environment is essential for adults with developmental disabilities to live productive, independent, and joyful lives. A healthy social environment is cultivated through community where all members make a contribution according to their ability. Establishing the necessary spiritual, social and physical conditions for this form of community to thrive is the art and science of Social Therapy" (Camphill Communities California, 2008, Social therapy defined).

Common space within a social therapeutic setting is manifold. Architects and health services plan common space, builders construct it and social scientists study it. But in the end we as individuals inhabit it and can make it our own. Floor plans of residences and public buildings show us where common space is planned. How this space is used is a result of habits and constellations of people (Certeau, 1984; Sennett, 1990). That is to say, space is either realized or dismantled in the social sphere (Lefebvre, 1991). The concept common space, as I propose to use it here, rubs against other concepts that have been in the forefront of social services. Implementing independent living and focusing on individualism versus the family or a group are a part of our training as modern social workers (Mosher, 2010). The study of common space focuses rather on interdependence and connectedness. Groups of people use common space. It is not a space that disregards or shuns the needs of the individual, but it is a space in which the individual must relate his or her needs to the needs of other individuals. Common space can become a place for the individual where there is "a focus of value, of nurture and support" (Tuan, 1977, p. 29).

I believe the kitchen table is potentially such a place. The kitchen table has been chosen for this study because as an object it is easy to place, and at the same time it is a place that can be experienced and named as a metaphor for values. By bringing the phenomenon of the kitchen table into visibility I hope to lift into consciousness some values of common space within residential social therapeutic settings. I hope to thereby contribute to a better understanding of the existing role and potential of common space. It is perhaps in questioning what the balance between self and space is that we can find means to better employ the use of common space and thus enhance the quality of life in residential social therapeutic settings.

2. The research question

I have often been asked, "How can you possibly live like that?" The question was not always so direct. Sometimes it was worded like "I have to hand it to you that you can hold this out". Other times I was told something like "I just have to have my peace and quiet when I come home", and the other person would look searchingly into my eyes. In a few instances I experienced that a person hightailed it out of the house, no explanations left behind. The discomfort, I assumed, was related to a lack of personal and private space, boundaries that were not traditionally defined, traffic patterns of living that broke off with what one was used to or expected in a private residence.

I lived in a residential therapeutic setting when I was questioned like this. The house I was living in was one of a few houses located within an intentional community. It was owned by the foundation I worked for, the community held the house in its stewardship and I had responsibility for the daily household. I was a householder. But sometimes I felt that my work consisted more of holding doors open than of holding a house together. It was one thing to keep a household running smoothly, to see that necessary items were kept stocked, and that a cleaning schedule was followed. But I began to question if the house I was living in was a home.

I had a bedroom, and a place to sit and look out of the window and dream. These spaces I shared with my husband. The other living spaces in the house were shared with other people. Over the years there were many people. Students who just had left their parents' home, long standing residents of the community who needed daily care, adventurous spirits who wanted to try out something different, the intermittent guest who needed a place to sleep and the use of a raincoat. I questioned if my tasks should also include being a homemaker. But the questions grew more complex. I wanted to know if it was my home that I was homemaking. Or if it could be my home when it seemed to be everybody else's home at the same time?

One day I was sitting at the kitchen table in this house. I had just washed the floor. Then a resident of the house, a kind fellow human being, walked into the room with muddy shoes. It felt to me like the marks could just as well have been left on the back of my blouse. I was indignant and I was overreacting. Still, the experience gave me an important clue to my questions on homemaking in the form of other questions: I asked myself if I had I lost my

mind. I asked myself what could this floor possibly mean to me, that I had experienced muddy footprints as an invasion on my soul. Was I maintaining the floor for the common good or had I mistaken it as a part of me? Who or what was I washing when I knelt down to wash the floor? And I asked myself how I could relate to the materiality of the house without needing to possess it. How could I identify with it without losing my identity? I felt the space in the house that was neither private nor public, but that nevertheless was related to me, was a special space and that I could learn a lot from it.

In the master studies program I tried to define this experience. I interviewed women about how they had learnt how to clean. In the following year I lost myself, and probably my fellow students, in a quest of trying to define spirituality within homemaking. I wanted to size down the existential question what is home, into a question relating to the social worker's task of helping others create a home.

But this question led me back to my specific situation of sharing residential space with many other adults who are not my family. I am not sure when I began to call this space common space. But there it is. I would like to explore this special space under the name of common space. I would like to ask what we as social workers can learn from common space. I would like to address the question of the importance of common space in finding one's identity and defining one's relationship to the surrounding world. I have chosen to study the kitchen table as a potential place of common space.

My research question is:

What are some of the qualities of common space as can be found at the kitchen table within a residential social therapeutic setting?

3. Literature Review

3.1 Introduction to the literature review

Bachelard introduced me to the term "felicitous space". In his book on the human imagination *The Poetics of Space* (1958/94) Bachelard undertook an exploration of "felicitous spaces"; a great part of this study was devoted to domestic spaces. This book has had an important influence on me, and the title of this project "The felicity of a kitchen table" was a reflection of this. The word felicitous, which means 'pleasing' and 'fortunate', is derived from the Latin word for happy, 'felix' (Online Oxford Dictionary). A felicitous space is not a metaphor for happiness; it is a source of happiness and has the power to create happiness. Poetry "which interweaves the real and unreal" (Bachelard, 1994, p. xxxv) allows us to enter into this healing dynamic space of being and becoming. My search in literature was guided by the hypothesis that a kitchen table is poetic and that the space around a kitchen table has the potential of becoming a felicitous space. It can appear as an image in your mind when you hear a story or it can live independently as an imagination in a poem. It can be found in memories, becoming visible in a moment of recollection. A felicitous space can also be physically and geographically located. I can take you to it or point it out to you on a map or a floor plan. Its existence however is continually being established by my relationship to this space. When I name a space felicitous, I imbue this space with a personal human value. It becomes a special space, different from other spaces. I encapsulate it, and in doing so, in some ways I also inhabit it.

From where or what whole, though, has this felicitous space been extracted? Is space, stripped of adjectives, also devoid of value? Can a space be neutral, having no distinctive feature, possessing no characteristics of its own?

Space defined in the English language is a continuous area or expanse, 'free', 'available' or 'unoccupied' (Online Oxford dictionary). The characteristics free, available and unoccupied can all be placed within a spectrum of human values. Free is the opposite of full, cluttered or imprisoned. Available adds the experience of the passing of time; something is available before it has been or inevitably becomes unavailable. Unoccupied can allow for a sense of personal room, but is also connotes uninhabited and can evoke a sense of desolation or a picture of emptiness. These characteristics are laden with associations and values. Space is

also defined as the dimensions of height, width and breadth "within which all things exist and move" (Online Oxford Dictionary). This definition, which I experienced as almost majestic, can induce images of inside and outside. It makes it possible to imagine a whole, and a whole can be understood as containing parts. Space can therefore achieve the characteristic of an entity; of a unity that does or does not attend to the fragments it either houses or consists of. This definition seems to be also laden with human values. Finally when the word space is used in a visual context, it is analogous to being void or blank, as in a space between words. This use of the word defines space perhaps most neutrally, but it is limited. When we draw our attention to space, it would seem we somehow inhabit it with values and ultimately ourselves.

> Space that has been seized upon by the imagination cannot remain indifferent space subject to the measures and estimates of the surveyor. It has been lived in, not in its positivity, but with all the partiality of the imagination. (Bachelard, 1994, p. xxxvi)

What then is space? If we want to confer a meaning onto it as something other than a borderless void, are the adjectives free, available and unoccupied sufficient? Tuan (1977) helped define space by juxtaposing it against the word place. The Oxford dictionary defines place as a particular position, point or area in a space. Tuan removed the boundaries of this definition and repositioned place, as it were, in a polarity to space. But it is not a static polarity denoting good and bad. Tuan presented space and place to us rather as two spheres orbiting within a constellation of human values. Tuan analysed space and place through descriptions of the human body and our senses. We orientate ourselves in space through the experience of our body (above and below, in front or in back). Bodily experiences in space are augmented by the relations we have to things (close or distant, near or far). These existential experiences transcend our physical bodies and culture and define us in our humanness.

3.2 On the choice of literature

On various occasions I have been asked to hold a course on homemaking. This course was intended for newcomers in my local community but was also included in a larger international network of seminars designed for adults working within this type of intentional community. The theme homemaking within the context of communities and social therapy was for all the

course participants at once personal and professional. The ages and experiences of the participants were diverse, ranging from students who had just left home to established care workers who were finished raising their own families and had reentered the profession. In order to encourage an inclusive understanding of the theme amongst the participants, I felt it was necessary to widen the scope of the theme. I did this by departing from a traditional approach of the theme, for example food preparation, cleaning and caring. Instead we conversed about existential questions, for example, what is time and space, what is birth and dying, what is chaos and order, what is place and home? This method of examining large topics in order to then make individual and situation-specific decisions has influenced my choice of literature in the following review.

What can make the experience of a common kitchen table special? In this review, in an attempt to establish the relevance of this question, I will examine the themes: space and place, place and placelessness, public and private spaces, and domestic space, and touch on the pedagogical aspects of common space. These themes were chosen for their potential to lift the subject of the kitchen table out of parochialism and reposition it in a larger context of common space and social care.

3.3 What is here?

Space and Place, Place and Placelessness, The Practice of Everyday Life, The Production of Space - the titles alone reflect a fundamental questioning of the human being's place in the world. The study of space and place is interdisciplinary. It includes sociology, geography, and anthropology, yet the questions that are raised in order to approach an understanding of the theme go beyond these disciplines. The study of space and place asks us who we are. It asks, what is our place in the world. It asks us what is here.

3.4 Space and place

"Humanistic geographers explore the ways in which places are meaningful and full of significance for people" (Blunt and Dowling, 2006). On the forefront of humanistic geography, Tuan (1977) explored the question what is here, by asking what is space and place. Tuan endeavored to "systemize human insights" (p. 7). There are diverse methods of approaching space and place. A space can have a certain number of feet or meters; a locality

can be found on a map. There are also scientific studies of territory and habitat. But "people are complex beings" (p. 5). Our experiences do not lie only in the world of natural, instinctual territories and habitats, nor do they lie solely in the world of measurement, laws and invention. We have in addition to these experiences also the capacity to attach meaning and symbolism to the world around us (Tuan, 1977). Our experience of space and place becomes thus highly differentiated and often paradoxical. We can perceive space through our physical sensory organs. We can orientate ourselves in space using our physical body as a reference point. But our experiences of, for example, limitless space or a familiar place, go beyond our bodily perceptions and orientations. Tuan coupled the human experience of space and place on one hand to specific emotions. "Place is security, space is freedom: we are attached to the one and long for the other" (p. 3). But these emotions can also change. Space and freedom can also be experienced as a threat. "To be open and free is to be exposed and vulnerable" (p. 54). And the enclosure of a place can be experienced as confining and oppressive. Just as the experiences of security and freedom are contextual and often layered, the understanding of space and place should be suited to the complexity of the human being. Tuan encouraged our knowledge of space and place to be based on these complexities of the human experience.

Interestingly Blunt and Dowling (2006) discussed the terms security and freedom when they spoke of co-housing, collective space and private dwellings. Co-housing provided the security of community and the freedom of "having one's own front door" (Brenton, 1998, cited in Blunt & Dowling, 2006, p. 281).

3.5 Place and placelessness

Relph (1976) distinguished between seven modes of experiencing place. In this way he also addressed the question of what is here and when does a person feel free and secure. "If a person feels inside a place, he or she is here rather than there" (Seamon & Sowers, 2008, Insideness and Outsideness). On one end of these seven modes the experience of existential insideness describes an unconscious and deep identification between person and place, the kind of immersion in a place that could, for instance, be called feeling at home. On the other end of the scale, existential outsideness is the type of strangeness and alienation that can arise between person and place, when for example, the person cannot connect any personal history or identity to a place, or has been displaced from a previous intimate relationship to place. Relph´s studies on place and placelessness were meant as indications and orientations, not as

definitions or categories (Relph, 2009; D. Seamon, 1996). The diversity of human experience, but also the subjective importance of place can be found in Relph's concepts of insideness and outsideness. "Sense of place is a synaesthetic faculty that combines, sight, hearing, smell, movement, touch, imagination, purpose, and anticipation. It is both an individual and intersubjective attribute, closely connected to community as well as to personal memory and self. It is variable" (Relph, 2009, Spirit and Sense of Place). As Tuan, he embraced the complexity of human experience, and did not intend to polarize place and placelessness into desirable and undesirable. Both Tuan and Relph used experiential data to analyze and conceptualize common experiences.

These studies contributed to the question of what is here, and how we as human beings relate to our environment. But as Massey (2005) pointed out we continue to position the concepts of space and place in a dualism of thought (p. 83-85). Both Tuan and Relph encouraged an interweaving of dualistic concepts in order to come to an understanding of space, place, sense of place and place attachment. In some ways, the call to dispel this dualism could be seen to cement it more firmly in the mind. The titles *Space and Place* and *Place and Placelessness* perhaps even conjured a conceptualization of inherent opposites.

3.6 Public and private spaces

Our dualistic understanding of environment can also be found when we examine the terms public spaces and private spaces. An initial understanding of these two concepts infers that the presence of one logically excludes the presence of the other.

There is a large area of study of place and space dealing with public and private spaces, and it includes no less than the rise and fall of civilizations. "Public and private spheres are not predetermined but rather emerge out of particular historical and geographical circumstances" (Blunt & Dowling, 2006, p. 18). Industrialization, the separation of work and home spaces, understanding of class and gender have all contributed to the development and definition of private and public spaces (Blunt & Dowling, 2006; Sennet, 1990; Johnson & Lloyd, 2004; Butler, 2012).

3.6.1 Public spaces

Neal (2010) defined public space as "all areas that are open and accessible to all members of the public in a society, in principle though not necessarily in practice" (p.1). Neal traced the

history of public space: Teaching, shopping and legal procedures took place in the ancient agora. The more utilitarian medieval commons with, for example open grazing grounds, developed later into what we know as public parks. Political power and class structures materialized in the plaza of the Renaissance. The coffee house of the Enlightenment and later the pub (public house) allowed for private conversations to find an audience; this private element within a public place allowed for potential dissidence. [The meaning of the word dissidence has its roots in the 17th century; the Latin 'dissident' meant 'sitting apart' (Online Oxford Dictionary).] The streets, boulevards and arcades of the 19th century allowed for a new element of "people watching" and being seen. Public spaces such as libraries, schools, playgrounds, restrooms and gyms developed mainly in the 20th century. The 21st century added to our definition of public space the new public arenas of Internet and cyberspace.

There are legal and political aspects to public spaces. Orum & Zachary (2010) pointed out two sides of public spaces: Public spaces could be understood as a manifestation of civil order reflecting an ordered world. Public spaces could also be seen as the arenas of oppression and resistance, places where the individual struggled against larger powers such as the state or capitalist interests. Public spaces are places to exercise civil liberties; we "go to the streets" to make our voices heard (Nissen, 2008, p. 1131).

We can also make our voice heard in smaller social relations; public spaces can function as a place to define our relationships as individuals to our surrounding world. Public spaces "provide a stage to interact with friends and strangers…on which we can define who we are to the rest of the world" (Neal, 2010, p. 1). In a study about a group of women's networking and mutual support Gullestad (1984) titled a chapter about entering public space: "Going out: excitement and moral danger", then subtitled it: "Going out: the struggle for visibility".

3.6.2 Private space

Private space could be defined as a space opposite of being visible for and interacting with the world. The Latin word 'privatus' meant 'withdrawn from public life' (Online Oxford Dictionary). Boling (1996) pointed out "*privacy* is connected etymologically both to people and issues that are *deprived* of public significance or office" (p. xi, Boling's emphasis). The gesture of private space is not going out, but shutting out. Private space can include family or a specific group of people, but it is an inside space that differentiates itself from an outside. Private space can be understood on many levels. "Mental territory is the deepest realm of the

private" (Farkisch et al, 2009). Private space is associated with the freedom to be oneself, unseen by the others. It is a place where we feel we are not exposed to the public eye.

Sennet (1990) described the development of the city and the appearance of private space in terms of "fear of exposure" (p. xii). Barricades in an archetypal city provided security from outside. Sacral architecture and religious belief systems orientated the individual to think in terms of inside and outside. Later the home itself became a secular sanctuary. In the 1800's interior domestic designs separated members of the family, making the distinction of what is private even greater. Olsen (1986) quoted a criticism of architecture written in Germany in the 1850's:

> Our private town-houses of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries opened to the visitor at once large areas, halls and courts…those large spaces were for the use of all the members of the household…in the modern residences of the wealthy citizen, however, all the spaces belonging to the communality of the family and household have been reduced to the least possible compass. (As cited in Sennet, 1990, p 28.)

3.6.3. Are public spaces and private spaces opposites?

Although public and private could initially be understood as opposites, closer reflection could disprove this. Public space can be a place of visibility and positive interaction with the world. Private space could be seen negatively as retreating from these opportunities. It could also be perceived as the sanctuary, the safety zone in which the threats of social contacts, as they are perceived as threats, and the dangers of the streets, as they are perceived as dangers, cannot enter. Our experiences of these spaces are complex. Cottam (1999) in a study of attitudes towards space in a slum area formulated this complexity as such:

> Within LaCienaga I will show the important role of ideals and aspirations in residents' appraisals of public and private spaces. Feelings of what a space 'should be like' have repercussions which go beyond the architectural or the emotional. They are factors which cannot be included in any analysis which ignores the impact of built environment. (p. 48)

Baron (1998) differentiated between public and private space, and public and private experience. It is possible to have a private experience in a public space; the example given by Baron was the private experience of an individual in a religious ceremony open to the public. Another example, hearing a world newscast at home, was an example of a public experience

in a private space. The combinations of experience and place (i.e., public experience/public space, public experience/private space, private experience/public space, private experience/private space), which Baron presented in the form of a matrix, help soften the edges of dualism discussed earlier. Baron studied the flow in a cafeteria line, asking how architecture can reduce anxiety an individual may potentially feel upon encountering a new or unfamiliar setting.

> When these awkward experiences are structured, the subject, by virtue of participating in an event larger than himself temporarily gives up some of his/her individuality. The removal of obligations of individuality can be liberating, and allows the subject to participate in a communal experience without (or at least with reduced) self-consciousness. (Baron, 1998, p.7)

Baron's "communal experience" and the "communality" that was referred to by the critic in the 1850's above will appear again in the discussion of common space.

Krasner (2010) also pointed out the complexity of public and private experience and space. Public and private realms were put in context with bodily experiences. Specifically the tactility of environment, where we "push and rub" (p. 16) was studied. When boundaries between inside and outside were reduced to the sense of touch, the experience of what is public and private stood for redefinition. Krasner gave the example of a homeless person and a pet; the "privacy and self determination" of a relationship was not deterred by being visible and living in the public realm of the streets (p.13).

McQuire (2003) linked architecture to an increasing complexity of separating between public and private space. Historically, the introduction and proliferation of the use of glass in public buildings symbolized transparency and openness. Perceptions of inside and outside were challenged when the extensive use of glass became part of private architecture. Social attitudes were also challenged; there was a break from the "cosiness of the bourgeois" (p.107). From the 1950´s "the modern home was construed as giving visual pleasure to its occupants, as well as allowing them to inhabit both inside and outside, amalgamating certain versions of the public and private" (Johnson & Lloyd, 2004, p. 80). McQuire saw the increasing use of the computer screen as an extension of opening private space, like glass windows, "for all to see", and questioned what is the new private domain. Being alone used to be associated with being totally private and unseen; now you can be seen and are still alone (pp. 116-119).

Similarly Nissan (2008) asked if an emerging new public sphere should be examined. The World Wide Web has increased and redefined public space. The "hybrid spaces" of, for example, shopping malls and gated communities challenged the concepts public and private. Privately owned shopping malls, on first impression comparable to an open market square, either prohibited or discouraged non-consumers to spend time there. Gated communities extended that which was considered privately owned to include sidewalks and streets; these spaces were no longer accessible to the general public. Nissan was concerned about the loss of public space. If hybridized spaces later become fully privatized, it would mean a loss of public forum space. Civil liberties would thereby also disappear (Nissen, 2008, p. 1132). Watts (2011) added to the discussion of changing perceptions of public and private spaces by pointing out that people made decisions to belong to gated communities or to use certain shopping centers; their private choices redefined public spaces. [2]

Certeau (1984) pointed out that it was increasingly difficult for the "consumer" (of books, products, technology) to escape from the all invading world of production into an "elsewhere"; the separation of private and public was becoming less and less definable (p. 40). Griffiths and Gilly (2012) described how customers in coffee shops barricaded themselves against other customers with their possessions to create a private territory (as cited in Hall, 2012).

Finally, naming of security and freedom in relation to space and place can be added to the discussion of the public and private realms. Security as a state of mind and freedom as mental activity belong to the private realm; security in physical surroundings and freedom of movement and mobility are largely interconnected with public interests (Tuan, 1977).

All of the studies mentioned in this section emphasized the need to see public space and private space as contextual and evolving, not as separable absolutes.

---

[2] Private choices have long created tricky relationships to public opinions. A magazine advertisement in the 1950's encouraged the housewife to buy a particular bedspread. Her choice of an article intended for use in a *private* room *"tells all the world* that you appreciate fine things" (my emphasis, cited in Johnson & Lloyd, 2004, p. 78, in a slightly different context).

3.7 The stranger, a third place, an in-between

In the previous section this mixture of public and private spaces was partly challenging and partly disorientating. Mixing dualisms perhaps created partially uncomfortable paradoxes.

To add to this complexity Simmel's (1908/1971) description of the stranger can be included:

> If wandering, considered as a state of detachment from every given point in space, is the conceptual opposite of attachment to any point, then the sociological form of the "stranger" presents the synthesis, as it were, of both of these properties. (This is another indication that spatial relations not only are determining conditions of relationships among men, but are also symbolic of those relationships.) The stranger will thus not be considered here in the usual sense of the term, as the wanderer who comes today and goes tomorrow, but rather as the man who comes today and stays tomorrow- the potential wanderer, so to speak, who, although he has gone no further, has not quite got over the freedom of coming and going. He is fixed within a certain spatial circle- or within a group whose boundaries are analogous to spatial boundaries- but his position within it is fundamentally affected by the fact that he does not belong in it initially, and that he brings qualities into it that are not, and cannot be, indigenous to it. In the case of the stranger, the union of closeness and remoteness involved in every human relationship is patterned in a way that may be succinctly formulated as follows: the distance within this relation indicates that one who is remote is near. The state of being a stranger is of course a completely positive relation; it is a specific form of interaction. (p. 143)

Simmel suggested that our relationships are spatial and that the combination of remote and near conjures up the third element of the stranger in the dualism of inside and outside. Note also that issues of freedom and security are indirectly addressed here: the stranger incorporates an unexercised freedom; relationships can be charged with unease or insecurity as a result of this latent freedom.

Oldenburg (1999/2010, 2012) coined the name "third places". Third places are found on the threshold between public and private. They are basically public spaces where a sense of community can be experienced, a place where you can come and go freely and still feel that you in some way "belong". Oldenburg described a move to the suburbs as being a motive to find "third places". In the suburbs the need for informal social contact was not met. "There was no center, no gathering place, no store, and nothing to walk to" (2012, p. 293). It is easy to picture this world of people transporting themselves in private cars on public streets from

planned family/private time to appointed public time/work and back. Oldenburg argued that "third places must stand ready to serve people's need for sociability and relaxation in the intervals before, between, and after their mandatory appearances elsewhere" (2010, p. 48). There is an aspect of neutrality in a third place. It expands the circle of whom you would normally invite into your private home. It is a place where you can let go of a social function or role, and eventually also set aside personal problems for a while. It is a place where, for example, card games are played, because they encourage conversation, unlike video games, which tend to discourage conversation. It is an unplanned, fluid and unorganized space (Oldenburg, 2010). The need for third places was realized in other countries as a result of the study:

> In Novosibirsk, the informal capital of Siberia, the third place concept has been employed to promote democracy and creativity. Traditionally, professional people gathered in kitchens or kuhnya, hence the Third Place (Kuhnya=Kitchen) Project in that city of 1 ½ million where there had been few places for people to gather outside of the workplace. (Oldenburg, 2012, p. 296)

In other studies of cities and neighborhoods the positive intermingling of private and public has also been noted as a place for community building and increasing a sense of belonging. Jacobs (1961/2010) said that in city planning it was rarely taken into account that people like to watch people and described the sense of security people could experience by belonging to a neighborhood and being seen.

P. Thomas (1995) wrote an interesting masters thesis on the chair placed on the front porch. It stood on a threshold. The front porch marked a space between public and private, inside and outside. It was also a "hybridized" space. But the chair, complete with arms, a back and legs, attributes shared with the human who described it in terms of him or herself, became a positive symbol. Even when it was unoccupied it presented a picture for the individual standing on this threshold, the human in an in-between.

Arendt spoke of the in-between as a place where diversity between individuals could appear and individuals could learn to know each other as a "who" instead of a "what". (Daniel, 2004; Sennett, 1990)[3]

---

[3] Arendt named public space as that arena, but public was not the anonymous mass, but rather the heightened arena of freedom where views could be exchanged. A contact between individuals unencumbered by the past was envisioned. Common space was an arena of diversity (Sennett, 1990; Bernardoni, 2011).

In a study on the influence of government planning of living spaces Ostanel (2012) described how this in-between space could easily be overlooked. Residents of a poorly developed area were offered economic support for safer and more comfortable private quarters. But the third element, in this case the courtyard, was not included in the new planning. The courtyard where "outdoor dining, table tennis tournaments, simple discussions, moments of prayer" took place was a collective space that contributed to "the home-making process"(Ostanel, 2012).

3.8 Pedagogical aspects of common space

Granata & Lanzani (2011) described the art of dwelling as a craft. It was something to be learnt and practiced; it was not only inhabiting a private place or home, but also learning how to relate to one's surroundings and the people in one's surroundings. Sennett (1990) elucidated the Greek ideal of poise or grace; this was also a learnt virtue. It resulted from being exposed to the world; if one did not encounter diversity, including also suffering, one had no practicing ground on which to create and maintain an inner balance. These thoughts indicate the potentiality of common space becoming a learning arena.

Suzuki, Motooka, & Katsura (2012) discussed how the architecture of a college dormitory, which had newly focused on more elements of common space, could potentially increase the social skills of the students.

Andreae (2008) addressed personal development in connection with community settings:

> There are times when we are on our own and must be alone in order to mature. But there are also moments in which we can only develop ourselves, only mature as individuals when we develop ourselves together with others. Always alone or never alone, both modes of living lead us into stagnation. If we want to change the world then we have to be prepared to change ourselves. We are the world. (as cited in Grundmann, 2011, p. 298, my translation)

The concepts of legitimate peripheral participation and communities of practice included the beneficial element of common space; expertise and competence could be shared in spaces that were neither private nor public, but communal (Kearsley, 2011; M. Seaman, 2008; Lave & Wenger, 1990).

3.9 Domestic Space

In some ways learning space has always been extended beyond the private and the public into an arena of the in-between. In addressing the discrepancy between academics, which were practiced in the civic and public realm and knowledge learnt, Mackinlay (2009) quoted a passage from Virginia Woolf's *Three Guineas*:

> We have worn private clothes so long…the daughters of educated men have always done their thinking from hand to mouth; not under the green lamps at study tables in the cloisters of secluded colleges. They have thought while they stirred the pot, while they rocked the cradle. (1993, p. 187, cited in Mackinlay, p 723)

Private and feminine are for many found on the same pole as domestic in our dualistic thinking about space. Domestic space thus becomes a hidden realm in this dualism. Again it has not always been so. The separation of private and public, domestic and civic, feminine and masculine has been linked to the separation of home and work places through industrialization (Blunt & Dowling, 2006). Surprisingly, in 2000, Hakim still maintained these dualistic categories by proposing to define women into three groups: home-centred, adaptive, and work-centred (cited in Johnson & Lloyd, 2004, p. 4). But domestic space is also contextual and evolving. Demographic studies of Lacas (1998) showed that 79% of Canadian households were no longer nuclear families. The change in family structures and workspaces, for example, the home office, would necessarily demand a redefining of private domestic spaces and public workspaces. .

In reviewing the literature for this project, I found, what I thought to be, an innovative attempt to reconsider and open up domestic space. Thompson (2002, 2003, 2004) acknowledged the existing dualistic thinking. But domestic space seemed to be permanently defined as feminine in feminine/masculine polarities. Thompson proposed adding the names Hestia and Hermes, and hestian and hermean qualities, to this debate. These qualities were however not meant as another polarity, such as the existing dualities of public/private, domestic/civic. Instead these qualities were thought of as a supporting structure on which these polarities interacted. Thompson suggested using the model of the double helix in order to picture an already existing model of interdependence and complex interaction. This model was named "the double helix of everyday life" (Thompson, 2002, p. 147). I will present Thompson's model in the discussion.

3.9.1 Domestic space as gendered space

Feminist studies have focused on domestic space as gendered space and have treated it politically (Boling, 1996, Blunt & Dowling, 2006, Manzo, 2003). A neat description of the domestic and private sphere increasingly being associated with and dominated by feminine values is a historical study of footwear by McNeill & Riello (2005). The boot, a "symbol of democracy and participation in public affairs" developed within the fashions of men's footwear. The pump and slipper in women's shoe fashions became increasingly delicate and impractical for outdoor wear and limited her appearance in public, conversely mirroring her role as an occupant of interiors. "The physical barriers that prevented free mobility gave way to more socially, culturally and psychologically constructed barriers" (McNeill & Riello, 2005, Abstract). There was of call for papers in 2011 under the theme, the unmaking of the home. Domestic and private spaces were seen as threatened on becoming politicized and public (Domestic Space Information Centre, n.d.)

Blunt (2005) refers to a trend in sociological work on home and home spaces less centered on the debate of gendered spaces beginning in 1998. Indications of this rising interest in domestic spaces can, for instance, be found in an undergraduate studies catalogue. A course "Picturing domestic space: Sociocultural perspectives" is a part of the 2012-13 winter semester at Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington. Kingston (1998); Schmidt-Brabant & Sease (1999), van Duin (1999), and L. Thomas (2011) are examples in inspirational literature for this trend of domestic space being reassessed out of a humanistic, non-dualized perspective. Munzo (2003) however, in a literature review on sense of place and place attachment, warns about a pervading romanticism that has colored many studies of domestic space and home.

3.9.2 Domestic space in literature

Literature can raise existential questions about human existence and home. Different kinds of spaces, so deeply connected with our feelings of existence, are therefore often described in detail in literature. In M. Robinson's (1980) *Housekeeping* the house and with it, the traditional definition of home and relationships vanishes slowly as the borders between nature and domestic space disintegrate. In *The Wind in the Willows* Grahame describes the individual's (albeit a mole's) special relation to felicitous domestic space:

    The weary Mole was glad to turn in without delay, and soon had his head on the

pillow, in great joy and contentment. But ere he closed his eyes he let them wander round his old room, mellow in the glow of the firelight that played or rested on familiar and friendly things which had long been unconsciously a part of him, and now smilingly received him back, without rancour. He was now in the frame of mind that the tactful Rat had quietly worked to bring about in him. He saw clearly how plain and simple-how narrow, even-it all was; but clearly, too, how much it all meant to him, and the special value of some such anchorage in one's existence. He did not at all want to abandon the new life and its splendid spaces, to turn his back on sun and air and all they offered him and creep home and stay there; the upper world was all too strong, it called to him still, even down there, and he knew he must return to the large stage. But it was good to think he had this to come back to, this place which was all his own, these things which were so glad to see him again and could always be counted upon for the same simple welcome. (Grahame, 1908/1984, p. 82)

Descriptions of place in literature, and especially domestic space, offer the reader a sense of the present, but can also indicate how the past, present and future weave together forming the individual's relationship to the world. The values of freedom and security, inside and outside, being social or solitary are found in domestic space. A list of examples in novels and poetry would be too long for this study, but I would like to name literature as a fundamental source for understanding especially domestic space. Included in the appendix are two poems. I will refer to these poems in the autoethnographic texts and discussions of these texts.

Bachelard (1994) based much of *The Poetics of Space* on a study of poetry and literature. The *Poetics of Space* did not report descriptions of felicitous space in literature. Bachelard proposed that the poetic description of these spaces could create this very space within us.

.

3.9.3 The kitchen as domestic space

Is the kitchen purely domestic space? Scicluna, speaker at a conference held in London in 2012, asked: is the kitchen as 'hub of the household' a myth? Or is it the hub of politics and social change? (Domestic Space Information Centre, n.d.)

Johnson described the kitchen as a specific space within dwellings. In a call "to collect current work from around the world on the kitchen", Johnson wrote:

This is a space where work mingles with desire, pleasure, creativity, violence and social interaction; and where domestic technologies, architects and designers

create devices and spaces which shape the definition and meaning of gender. It is a private space which, like all others, registers public discourses as well as private musings. Be this space separated from the grand home by hallways and a social chasm or one modified daily by the placement of furniture, curtains and people; the kitchen reflects and is remade by social and spatial relations. It represents gender, place and culture in a unique way. (Domestic Space Information Centre, n.d.)

The design of the kitchen within the house has in any case been evaluated as central to attitudes and relationships; it "compels certain forms of social relationship" and "patterns of sociability" (Jerram, 2006, Abstract).[4] The kitchen's importance in understanding human relationships has been increasingly re-evaluated (Blunt & Dowling, 2006; Johnson & Lloyd, 2004).

3.9.4 The kitchen table as space and place

We listened to the stories of raids and skirmishes, of talks in London and America, of weapons from China and Russia. The world expanded when the news was playing. The walls of the avocado-green kitchen fell away and we floated in a larger space. Sometimes I had to rest my head on the fresh-scrubbed table and close my eyes to keep myself from spinning off into the emptiness. (Eames, 2012, p. 241)

This literary text can serve to introduce the kitchen table in its relationship to space. Both public and private space, and domestic and civic space can be seen in this description. It is a shared space, a common space, but at the same time a place where "the deepest realm of the private", the mental territory (Farkisch et al, 2009) can be found.

Anonymous, in *A Woman in Berlin*, described a couple in a bomb shelter during the raids during World War 2. A suitcase was propped up to be its tallest, a napkin was spread out on the surface, and the meager evening meal was shared. Fahlander (2010) suggested:

Eating together often conveys a sense of belonging and tightens the bond between members of the household. Perhaps it is the positive feelings of satiation and lack of fear of starvation that somehow percolate through and create a sense of intimacy. (p. 37)

---

[4] see also Certeau (1984): "spatial practices…secretly structure the determining conditions of social life" (p. 96).

The propped up suitcase was not necessary to share a certainly meager meal. Perhaps the suitcase improvised as a kitchen table to remind the family of past sanity in a present insane world. Roxbourgh (2010) wrote: "The table is the place where we know, without doubt or exception, that what lies at the base of this universe is One who receives and feeds us with the food of life" (p. 2). In contrast the families in the slums studied by Cottam (1999), never ate together at a table. There was a lack of plates, lack of food and lack of space.

The understanding of the kitchen table as a specific place can be found in Gullestad's (1984) study titled: *Kitchen Table Societies*. The kitchen table was used for what Gullestad called "moral discourse". The women in the case study used the place of the kitchen table to "reconcile two different worlds – hearth and home and going out" (Gullestad, 1984, p.255). Values were exchanged at this place, and personal and social identities were confirmed and reaffirmed. It was a place where conflicts and solidarities were aired. It was in some cases a place where life situations were shared and where the individual could find support in existential crisis.

Oldenburg (2012) included the kitchen table in a description of a new trend in library culture: "Carrels and cubicles are being replaced with 'kitchen' tables conducive to conversation" (p. 295). Remember also that Oldenburg's third place movement to find a place in-between public and private, and domestic and civic was named the kitchen project in Russian.

But I have not found any specific studies on the kitchen table as a place of common space. I propose, though, that the concept 'kitchen table' is accessible to a large number of people and does not need explicit defining. In the 1980's there was a The Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press. Thompson (2002, 2003, 2004) spoke of *The Hestian Trilogy* as "Kitchen-Table Feminism" (Private communication, May 24, 2013). The title *The Kitchen Table: A collection of poems about life, nature, time and ageing* (2010) by Lucille Kuechenmeister is an example of this general understanding. On the Internet in National Poetry Week in 2012 there was a call for poetry on the kitchen table "because it is the most used and symbolic kitchen item". A web log included a haiku poem titled Kitchen Table Tears. Another web log posted by Tarkersley (2011) spoke of a mentality that was instilled in a generation in America: watching situation comedies led the blogger to believe that "all of life's trials were usually resolved in 30 minutes or less around the kitchen table". In the beginning of the literature review I referred to Tuan's emphasis on the human capacity to attach meaning and symbolism to the

world around us. The references above are included in this literature review to emphasis the everyday understanding of a symbolism that is attached to the kitchen table.

In 2012 in an online magazine of women's creative arts and activism, *Her Circle*, K. Robinson wrote:

> Another thing for which I'm thankful is the kitchen table…My kitchen table (pictured in detail) with the paint, glue, marker and indentations from my children growing, creating, learning and discovering at it fills me with gratitude. At one time, my husband and I considered refinishing the table once the children were grown. Now, we cherish the marks. They remind us of the stages of our children's lives. We revere the table itself, and give thanks for its solid-footed presence, its offerings as a place and space where we are nourished, fight, make memories, dream and…(para. 1)

Robinson presented Joy Harjo's poem "Perhaps the world ends here" in this tribute to the kitchen table. I have included the poem in the Appendix. It is an example of how the concept kitchen table is easy to place, to literally understand, and at the same time heralds a deeper meaning and symbolism, widening into a deeper reference of experience of space.

I would like to introduce the kitchen table into the academic field as a theme that can be studied, reflected upon and from which we can learn more about space and place.

3.10 Summary literature review

Our relationship to space and place is rich and complex. We use our senses and our bodies to discover space and place. We attach feelings such as of security and freedom to space and place. We can also experience insideness and outsideness in our relation to place. Public and private spaces fulfill different functions. These spaces can be seen as dualisms. On further examination they interact with each other and cannot be easily placed as opposite and absolute poles. Third spaces, which are neither exclusively public nor private, have been shown to be valued. These common spaces can be of educational value. Domestic spaces can also be classified within dualism as an opposite of civic spaces, but upon closer examination contain both public and private elements. Literature and poetry has described domestic spaces extensively. The kitchen is usually associated with a private domestic space but has also civic and public dimensions. The kitchen table incorporates these many dimensions. It is at once an

object and a symbol that evokes a specific mood, but has not been specifically scrutinized as common space in the study space and place.

4. Methods and methodology

4.1 Qualitative research

My question about my relationship to common space was considered in this paper. I chose to undertake an interpretive qualitative research to study the phenomena of common space at the kitchen table as experienced by myself and, possibly, by others. The perception of reality in a qualitative research project is based on the idea that "meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world" (Merriam, 2002, p. 3). Common space can be understood as a space that has been given meaning by a group of individuals. If this were the case, the above definition of reality, which serves as a backdrop for the type of research being undertaken, would suit the theme well. Although it contains elements of phenomenology and autoethnography, I believe that this study can be classified as having a basic interpretive design.

Interpretive qualitative research includes several characteristics. Merriam (2002) described three elements: researchers strive to understand "the meaning people have constructed about their world and their experiences", "the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis", and "the product…is richly descriptive" (pp. 4,5). In this study I have addressed the meaning of my experience of common space, I have held interviews, taken photographs and have analyzed this data from my subjective point of view, and I have attempted to add to the readers' understanding of the data through my descriptions of situations around the kitchen table and the kitchen table "itself".

In addition, elements of other designs can be found in this study. Hein & Austin (2001) described three kinds of data used in the design of phenomenological research: "a. the researcher's self-reflection on experiences relevant to the phenomena of interest, b. participants' oral or written descriptions of their experiences of the phenomena, and c. accounts of the phenomenon obtained from literature, poetry, visual art, television, theater, and previous phenomenological (and other) research" (p. 7). Many of the main sources that I used in my literature review, and in the discussion that followed, are pure phenomenological studies of space. I can see that some of the data that I have presented would fit under the category of data collected within a phenomenological study. Phenomenology is also described

as trying to "penetrate the layers of meaning of the concrete by tilling and turning the soil of daily existence" (van Manen, 1990, p.119). In my presentation of the research question, I referred to this activity. I was trying to synthesize my experience of my profession with an experience of space, and then to present the results in a form accessible for other social workers. I have repeatedly practiced bracketing, in which "the phenomenological researcher makes every effort to suspend or set aside his or her presuppositions, biases and other knowledge of the phenomenon obtained from personal and scholarly sources" (Hein & Austin, 2001, p. 5). The "small life-worlds" that are described in phenomenological studies (Flick, 2010) can also be found in the kitchen space examined.

I have used elements of autoethnography in this study. I have touched on an ethnographic study by presenting a partial representation of an intentional community and including elements of the community's ethos in the study. I have related my biography to this community and its ethos. The study was not intended however to explore my relationship to the community, but rather to focus on my relation to the phenomena of the kitchen table and the ensuing common space.

I have made an effort not to emphasize feminist studies or direct this study into the intentions of a critical qualitative research. I feel however that critical qualitative research would be a logical next step if the study of common room within residential social therapeutic settings were to continue. I will mention this again at the end of this study.

4.2 Methodology explained autoethnographically

There have been various kinds arrivals. The kitchen table was standing there, but I first had to use it, I then philosophized over its use, before I arrived at seeing the table as a place. My arrival at this table was preceded by an almost purely ideological decision to once again try to glue knowledge and life into one piece.

Life in the kitchen can often induce crisis. It was more often a challenge – I found it only rarely to be boring. I tried to impart meaning to the world around me by living it. I tried to endow everyday routines with metaphor. For example, I used the metaphor of throwing a piece of pottery: each day a new throw- practice makes perfect- sometimes it turns out ok. My epistemology, better described as a gut feeling, was that I personally had to collect as many

bodily and practical experiences as I could in order to be able to grasp the concepts that regularly were visiting me. I felt I wanted to train my body to perceive.

When I arrived at the table, a common space in an intentional community, I could not speak the language fluently and I was unfamiliar with the work. My first purchase was a pair of rubber boots. The fact that I did not own a pair already labelled me an outsider. I lived life like watching a foreign film, constantly trying to read subtitles, often tripping up on events because I had not read accurately enough or fast enough.

But stories of the pioneers of this community circulated. I loved the stories. Some of the stories were about Tilla König, the wife of the founder of the community, Karl König. She was a pioneer in her own right. One memorable anecdote about her was that at the beginning of each week she would go into the garden to pick a bouquet of flowers, one flower for each member of the large extended household under her care. This story had already a moral weight to it when I heard it. It was not an instruction of what I should do. It was a legend. This was how things were done previously, (in the golden age), by the pioneers, (our heroes). I was impressed.

I delved deeper into the ethos of the community. The ethos changed not only how I saw my surroundings, but influenced my reaction/action to what I saw. An unironed tablecloth invited me to iron it, in the ethos of stewardship and "a reverence for details".[5] I was no longer an observer, the stranger. I was an observer with an agenda. Scary. Maybe agenda is too strong a word. I was an observer with an intention of maintaining an ideal that I had created in my own imagination through hearing stories. I felt it was a vision that could be communicated through practical activities. My daily actions were influenced by my ideals.

When I began the actual research project I was somewhat aware of this give and take of finding and creating. If I correctly understand a partiality of radical reflexitivity in Garfinkel's ethnomethodology[6], I had already mapped the world I went out to discover with the community's ethos. The theme the kitchen table stood in a way pristine and unoccupied, but every time I advanced it I was lifted out of the situation by my ideals. A hoovering philosophy about what it could mean threatened to replace my observations. I was in the process of

---

[5] This concept appeared in the curative education course held July 5, 1924, by R. Steiner (1985). *Heilpädagogischer kurs*. Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag.

[6] as explained in Hart (1998) and by Liberman(2012).

building a mythology around the table and the process influenced how I was treating the table as a physical object. I felt obligated to maintain the table, to wash it, to decorate it, to invite people to come and visit me in this place. I was creating a common space by researching this space.

At the same time I found myself trying to figure out how I could communicate my meanings onto paper. I felt that a lot of the virgin research had been done too long ago. I feared that the categories in the analysis would anyway just mirror my convictions, and be useless.

In some parts of the following research this is still probably true. My preconceived conviction of the meaningfulness of the small influenced my choice of topic and the angle of approach I chose to use. On the other hand, perhaps this attitude helped make visible a relatively invisible object and environment, the kitchen table and common space.

4.3 Methods

In this research project I have interviewed young adults with special challenges. I have conducted interviews with care workers employed within the field of social therapy. My goal for these interviews was to better understand the significance of common space within a residential social therapeutic setting. I invited the interviewees to talk about the kitchen table. The kitchen table was chosen as a focus both because of its physicality and because of its symbolic value. The kitchen table can be understood as a visual aide for the abstract concept of common space. I have included photos and photo images in the research. I have also included autoethnographic texts as a research method for this project.

I used recent memory and distant memory; both of them are personal. I am remembering. In the interviews I was trying to activate other people's memories. I found it surprisingly difficult to introduce the theme. I was already deeply involved with the literature, I was filled with ideas and I was buoyant. I was conscious of this, so when I introduced the theme I tried to tone down my enthusiasm in the name of objectivity. A possible disadvantage of my carefulness was that I probably introduced the theme too distantly. The "results" of the interviews (I place the word in quotation marks because it is a contrast to the word findings which would be an ideal outcome of an interview) were toned down at the most. In some cases the theme held only for a few moments and then branched out into other topics. One of

the new topics became crucial to my understanding the theme and will be presented later. But overall I felt the danger that the theme would die in my hands when I brought it out into the open. At the same time I felt I was prohibited from reviving it.

4.3.1 The student interviews

I conducted two student group interviews. The participants in both groups were enrolled in youth guidance programs, which included living in a boarding school. One student interview was conducted with three young adults with special challenges; these young adults were living in a boarding school within a residential social therapeutic setting. I was well acquainted with the participants in this group. The interview was conducted within the school program in a half an hour time slot, which was usually allotted to taking up wishes and making plans for the week. I was introduced as a guest for this half an hour, and I formally asked the participants for permission to ask a few questions and to record our talk. They verbally agreed to this. I explained and read the letter of consent out loud to the participants; I had formulated the letter with this specific group of young adults in mind ("Samtykke" in appendix). The letter was signed at the end of the interview. I was helped in this process. A fellow staff member accompanied me during the half hour; afterwards we exchanged our impressions. It was confirmed for me that the interview had not seemed obtrusive, and that the participants had willingly given their consent. One of the participants wrote thoughts about the kitchen table directly into my computer and was willing to have this printed. I will use this student's text as a part of the collected data from the interview.

One week later I sat together with a group of eight young adults with special challenges in another student interview. These young adults also lived in a boarding school in a residential social therapeutic setting. I did not know the participants of this group personally, but I was familiar with the school program they were attending and with some of the staff members. One staff member, with whom I was only acquainted, accompanied me and stayed the duration of the interview. The participants of this group had been asked a week before by a teacher if they would be willing to and had agreed upon being interviewed by me. The school program was changed to accommodate this interview and I was given an hour in the forenoon. I explained and read the letter of consent ("Samtykke"). The letter was signed at the end of the interview. I was assured however by two participants of the group that they were accustomed to interviews, and that it was unproblematic for any of them to "go on record".

These two participants acted as self-elected and accepted spokespersons for the group. One of these spokespersons introduced me to two other students who remained silent. But these students were first asked directly if it was all right that they were spoken for. When they had given their consent, the spokesman told me their names.

Both of these interviews were held as open interviews. I introduced the theme through a rich description of the table that I was researching. After this introduction I asked for their contributions to the theme. I did not use a set of previously formulated questions. The open interviews can perhaps been seen as a weak link in this collected data. I feel though that they were ethically correct in the two situations I described above. In both groups I was keenly aware of my position of being able to influence what was being said. As an example, when we spoke of common meals in one of the groups, a participant said that they didn't always eat what they liked to eat, but that "we just say it's okay, and they (the social workers) believe it". I am familiar with this kind of good willed agreement in my practice as a social worker. I therefore very often just repeated what I had heard. Sometimes I asked a participant to explain to me in more detail what had just been said, but this was when focusing on logistics and the spatiality of the places they were describing to me. The open conversation, I felt, helped me avoid taking on the role of a therapist or a social services worker.

The participants in these two open-ended group interviews will be referred to as students in the following descriptions and discussions.

4.3.2 The focus groups

Two further interviews were conducted with social workers and these interviews will be referred to as focus groups. There were again advantages and disadvantages to this method, which I will discuss below.

One reason I felt a focus group would be useful is because its aim is to place and debate a common theme (Patton, 2002). I wanted to explore common space; I thought that the structure of a focus group could potentially create a kind of verbal image for the visual image of common space and the kitchen table. "[F]inding collectivity is the object of a group discussion" (Thody, 2006, p.139). I had already linked the quality of common space to the possibility of an individual's voice being heard in a both free and secure space (Tuan, 1977). It seemed appropriate that those who use the common space should have an opportunity to voice their feelings about this space to and with the others. I wanted to see what we could find

out together (I planned to include myself in the process). I secretly nourished the hope that a focus group would ultimately result in a research action project; a heightened awareness would encourage attachment and affection to the object and the space. My original intention was to interview students and social workers together. This was not logistically possible and perhaps even contributed to an expanded opportunity for as many single voices as possible to be heard.

I did not want to concentrate on private lives. The form of the focus group however raised the issue of standing for what can go public. Although both groups were small and the group members appeared relatively relaxed amongst each other, recording the conversation raised a threat of permanency, permanency in the written (transcribed) word. I was not always aware of this during these two sessions, but as the conversations developed, I thought I sometimes heard statements that were spoken in a tone of just-for-the-record. These statements were introduced with phrases like: "I would like to say…" or, "it is important for me to make clear that…"

Both focus groups did not take place around a kitchen table. We were not in the kitchen, in one case because we couldn't fit into the room comfortably and, if we could, would stand in the danger of being interrupted. In the other case the focus group was a small part of a longer course and was situated in the course room. This focus group consisted also of participants working otherwise in two separate home units. If we had chosen one kitchen and kitchen table to gather around we would have been in the territory of one group. This observation of territory displays an underlying question I have about how a common place actually functions.

I still do not know if holding the interviews out of the sight of a kitchen table was an advantage or disadvantage. Separated from the subject gave our way of looking at it distance, an eventual objectivity. The distance could make it easier to idealize the subject, build myths around what we remembered as its function. On the other hand, separated, the subject could theoretical, distant and bloodless.

In one focus group I participated as a colleague. We were an established group of care workers and teachers. We were all employed in a residential therapeutic setting. I had invited this group a month in advance to come together to discuss their thoughts about the kitchen table and common space. The discussion was held in the timeslot usually allotted for the

weekly staff meeting. In this discussion all the participants spoke about the same kitchen table and common space that they regularly used.

The second focus group was held within the framework of a 2-day workshop on homemaking. I participated as course leader, and in the focus group, as researcher and facilitator. The group consisted of social workers and social worker trainees. I had not known any of the participants previously, although I was familiar with the institution they were working in. The participants had not worked together as a team for any extended period of time.

4.3.4 The photos

I have puzzled over the use of photos. Using visual aides in research has become more accepted in recent years (Pink, 2007). In a way I wanted to include photos simply for the purpose of reassuring the reader that such a kitchen table existed. But this was essentially also calling for an act of faith on the reader's part. A scene could be constructed. The impression of a photo often belied harder realities behind the scene (Muncey, 2005). In some ways, presenting photos could also work against my intentions. The table could be removed from the reader's imagination, lose its lively and subtle moods, and become fixed it in a possibly impoverished sensory perception. The image could become visual and representative, instead being experienced as multisensory and immersed. Where would the smells be, I would not know if the room was warm or cold and I could not see if anybody moved to or away from the table. Movement was one of the main elements of this space; relationships were essential (Lefebvre, 1991/1974).

I chose to describe various photo snapshots in detail. In this way I could present a moment as a snap shot impression, but the moment could also be saturated with my observations and knowledge about the context of the photo. It would position the kitchen table within a house, so to speak. Some of the photos I included, others were left out and only described. When the photo was not included it was because I felt the frozen image would serve neither the person in the photo or the viewer. The descriptions of these missing photos were included though to highlight some of the aspects of common space that I felt were important. Some photos function more as an illustration to a text, than a presentation of data. The literature review influenced my choice of photographs. Ultimately though, the choice was personal, and I would ask them to be seen mostly as an extension of the auto ethnographic texts in this paper.

I combined photos and text in an attempt to come closer to the essence of the theme. They can be seen as a kind of private/public journal. I believe this method could be seen as an extension of Bachelard´s explorations into space, moving between image, analysis and reflection.

4.3.5 The autoethnographic texts

The themes, common space and the kitchen table, touch the individual relationship to environment, space and other people. Certeau (1984) in his studies on "everyman" comes to the conclusion that everyman is nobody. I found it difficult to address the theme "common" without including myself. I felt that common space would become nobody's space in this study unless I gave my name to the experience; this feeling is a common motive for using the autoethnographic method (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011).

Common space, as focused on in the literature review, was found between private and public space. "Autoethnography clearly raises interesting questions about the boundaries between the 'public' and the 'private', and about what is appropriate self-disclosure in professional contexts"(Long, 2008, p.190). Autoethnographic texts dealing with common space seemed to me as a researcher an appropriate method, potentially highlighting qualities and complexities of common space.

 I would like to address some issues associated with autoethnographic texts: the dangers of an idealized self-representation and selective memory (Ellis et al, 2011; Muncey, 2005).

In this project the danger of idealized self-representation seems most evident. I have idealized a profession and identified myself with this profession. This in turn has influenced my self-representation. The autoethnographic texts though were meant especially to reveal this reflective and, hopefully, self-corrective process. They were meant to present a social worker under construction.

Selective memory is connected to the above issue of representation of self. Muncey (2005) said that we look backwards influenced by what we are occupied with in the present. "The current preoccupation with ideas informs previous experience, just as that original experience becomes the rationale for researching in the first place" (Muncey, 2005, p.3). When I chose the topic for research, I sifted my memory for lived images and situations. My selection and evaluation of those images was influenced by my more recent reflections on the kitchen table as a felicitous space. I have used the word felicity in the title of this research. With this title I

would like to signal the limits of this study. In the autoethnographic texts I selected memories that could transport me into the theme.

Memory is a funny thing and there are good reasons not to rely too heavily on it in research (Patton, 2002). It is incomplete, it is biased, the memory of an event kicks in as soon as an event is past and often changes with the passing of time. This is exactly why I wanted to include it in the autoethnographic texts. Bachelard's (1994) special type of phenomenology relied heavily on memory, and indeed any poetic act is a play between the past and present. If an image gives rise to an emotion or a feeling it is very often through the recognition of something in that image. Recognition takes place in the present, but it is based on a re-cognition, a re-grasping of a thought or event of the past. By re-connecting the present with the past (either a sensory past or an intuitive past) imagery can open to a timeless future. Bachelard associated this future with truth. A poem that touches you flashes through your sensory system like a flash of truth (Bachelard, 1994). I propose that by including memory in the research in the form of text I can connect to some essence of the kitchen table. A memory is something that has survived. By pulling it into the present I am not only showing the reader how my memory has stored and possibly also revamped an impression. I am also revealing a little bit of its future and its truth.

My choice of texts can perhaps seem erratic. In some ways perhaps, it also is. I would like to compare my choice to the movements of an insect on water, tiny feet lifting off and touching the surface of a lake. This is a different mood than the ordered and slower metamorphosis of a plant. But I propose that it is no less organic, and, I hope, authentic. Thompson (2002) encouraged researchers to trust their inner gyroscopes. There is always a center to relate back to and keep you on balance. This I have done in the form of the autoethnographic texts.

4.3.3. Ethical issues

The participants of the interviews and focus groups consented to their conversation being recorded and included in my written thesis. The issue of anonymity was discussed in all groups and found to be irrelevant due to the theme and intention of the study. Anonymity will nonetheless be held.

Age and gender of the participants was partially revealed through the contributions to the conversation and has been kept to afford clarity. The interviews and focus groups were held in

Norwegian. The loyalty to the oral statements is of course limited to my translations. I have sometimes included the Norwegian word if I felt my English translation was not sufficient.

I have analyzed the transcriptions with a focus on attitudes and images, which can add to understanding the kitchen table, the space around it, and common space. My analysis was limited to this interpretation.

Before beginning the interviews I asked myself the questions: What if I find out in my interviews that common space is unwanted? What will I do if I find out that one of the participants is extremely uncomfortable in common space and is being forced to tolerate this space? A result of such findings would be to initiate a re-evaluation of lifestyle forms and help revise the programmes being offered.

Issues such as working and living conditions did not arise. In the focus groups all levels of management were present; had issues arisen, the right persons would have heard. One topic came up in one of the groups that needed extra time to discuss amongst the participants; I was assured that it would be taken up in the following weeks.

4.4 The wholistic paradigm

A wholistic paradigm was used for this research project. This paradigm is increasingly being used in the field of social work (Mosher, 2010; Canda & Furman, 2010). A wholistic paradigm is based on "interdependence, partnership, cooperation, sharing of power, use of strengths, respect for nature, and a belief in the unity of all things" (Mosher, 2010). The wholistic paradigm focuses on connectedness. The social worker gives up playing the role of a person in charge of another person's life, someone who ultimately has control over the other person and his or her situation. The social worker enters the field as a partner, instead of as an expert or one who is hired to fix a problem (Mosher, 2010). Solutions are based on listening and mutual understanding. Social relationships are explored in the context of a whole, instead of being analyzed within the limits of reductionism, which studies fragments and parts (Mosher, 2010; Kumer, 2009). In this paradigm, dualistic assessments of good or bad, rich or poor, healthy or unhealthy are softened into a more contextual question of wellbeing (Kumer, 2009; Grundmann, 2011). The wholistic paradigm also allows for the social worker to reassess the value of material goods and a high standard of living. Personal happiness is

instead measured in the context of interdependence, group and family needs (Mosher, 2010). In the literature review dualism is questioned again and again when examining spaces. Felicity, happiness, is also addressed, especially in the autoethnographic texts.

The wholistic paradigm corresponded well with the two situations where I held interviews and focus groups. When the student entered the program he or she was encouraged to explore the surrounding world as a preparation for the future. This included both nature and the existing social structures. The social worker was trained to see the totality of the student's situation. A network of social services, family and friends supported the student. Finding one's future place in the world was not limited to choosing a workplace or finding a place to live. Instead, the physical, social and spiritual needs of the student formed a basis for finding out how best the individual could establish himself or herself within society. Parallels to the wholistic paradigm were also found in the ethos of the intentional community that I partly presented in the autoethnographic texts.

This paradigm can also be found in my attitude toward choice of topic. I was working out of a conviction that the kitchen table was a meaningful part of a whole.

5. Presentations and Discussions

5.1 The focus groups

5.1.1 Introduction to the focus group presentations

The presentations of the two groups were combined into one report to add to the anonymity of the participants. The themes that arose after the general theme had been introduced were very similar in both groups. I felt it was therefore possible to combine the comments of the participants into a whole without distorting or compromising the thoughts and feelings expressed. One group tended to concentrate more on personal situations (i.e., their private kitchen tables) than the other group and these comments are included, although it is important to note that all of the participants brought their personal point of view into the groups. Concentrating on how their private homes functioned and how their private homes "felt" may have been a result of an imprecise introduction into the theme by me. In one of the groups this was then taken up as a theme in itself; there was an emphasis on the function of the social worker and how it was specifically not the social worker's task to create a home for the persons in their care. The task was rather to provide a place of security until the person could himself or herself establish a home.

The theme of common space was only briefly directly addressed. Common space as a space in-between public and private space was not addressed. The kitchen table was only briefly addressed as a common space within a residential therapeutic setting. In other words the research question only vaguely shines through. I will take this up in the discussion, but present it here in the beginning of the presentation in order to orientate the reader.

The findings were presented with the structure of how the conversation basically flowed in one of the groups, filled in with corresponding comments of the other group. The flow of the conversation, how one subject led to another, was not analyzed. In the analysis I rather highlighted the knowledge of the participants, the perceptions, conclusions or questions that individuals brought to the group.

In both of the groups there was a mood of cooperation and reflection. My role as facilitator was not dominant; the participants in the groups gave each other time and space to express their views and also freely asked each other to say something more if it was felt they had not

understood what was said. There were many pauses in both groups, and few interruptions. Occasionally I asked someone to say something a little louder or finish a sentence. There was very often a mood of general consensus. I did not however leave with a sense that an agreement had been reached on what common space was, what the function of the kitchen table within a residential social therapeutic setting could be, or how the kitchen table in this setting could be defined as a space and place.

4.1.2 Focus groups presentation

The kitchen was introduced as a central place in the house and the kitchen table as having an important social function.

Several participants described the kitchen as a place where you eventually "*ended up*". It was referred to in this context as a less formal place than the rest of the house. Someone described being an invited guest and basically always choosing the kitchen as the place to settle down for a visit. Others described the kitchen as a final point in the context of a party or a larger group of people in the house at the same time. It was a place that invited conversation and a special way of being social.

"You see it in the movies, you see it in real life. People stand and talk in the kitchen."

"It's very often that people end up standing in the kitchen and talking… maybe because it's quieter than where the music is."

The kitchen was also described as the place where "*things got started*", be it activities or conversations.

"People sit a lot of times in the living room, but it starts in the kitchen. And then they say, Should we go and sit down and then they go and sit down. I stand also in the kitchen a lot of times and talk."

The preparation of food was connected to this general function of getting things started.

The kitchen was described as a center. It was described as having the quality of "*density*". It was "*a heart*", "*a light*", "*a nest*", the place "*where everyone gathered*". This attraction to the kitchen as a place was partly explained by the participants to be a kind of instinct:

"It's something that lies within us."

"There's something there that attracts us."

Gathering in the kitchen was compared to gathering around a campfire, or gathering around the original place of the hearth. The hearth in ancient dwellings was *"a kind of kitchen"*. It was referred to earlier times when our ancestors gathered around these centers for company and warmth. It was where a primary need was satisfied, where you received your food. Someone began to color in this picture by saying, *"we are not so…"* then broke off the sentence and began anew. *"It's not so long ago since…"* but then faded out of the conversation. It was a place of *"warmth, contact* [Norwegian: nærheten], *and care* [Norwegian: omsorg].

When I asked specifically again about the kitchen table, there was opposing responses. One aspect of the kitchen table was its function in a conversation; it was associated with a focused contact with a person vis-à-vis.

"The focus is on people and not on anything else."

It was in this understanding also associated with an intimate conversation.

"It's like the kitchen table, even though there's a table between you, it's closer. It's more intimate even with the table in the middle."

Some explanations for this were found in the size of the room. Kitchens tended to be smaller than living rooms, the size of the room determined how close together you sat *"even though there's a table between you"*. The chairs in the kitchen, in contrast to the sofa in the living room, also physically influenced how attentive you were. In the living room it was easier to slouch, or curl up. The kitchen usually didn't allow for this at-ease, but promoted a face-to-face, "upright" conversation. It was mentioned that you could often choose what kind of lighting to use in the kitchen; kitchens often had an extra lamp or a different light, *"not work light"*, that added to its coziness.

But the kitchen as *"the best room in the house"*, the place to gather, either sitting or standing, in order to be in the "*heart*" of the house, was not understood like this by everyone. In both groups, after a good many observations were exchanged that could lead anyone to thinking the kitchen and kitchen table were the ideal location for authentic communication, the conversation was broken into with exasperation:

"I don't know, I'm just not with this!"

"It's really different for me."

These were remarks that introduced the kitchen as a place to *"get out of as quickly as possible"*. You worked there. You went to the living room to relax and be together with other people.

In the kitchen you *"only prepared food there and ate there"*.

It was an important aspect to *"finish the kitchen",* clear it up, clean it up, before moving on.

Some on added that the kitchen table, any table, that wasn't directly being used for an activity or as a place to eat, was *"in the way"*.

"The ideal conversation, where you are free from any restrictions or framework or setting" was best held *"curled up in a sofa"* or sitting on the floor.

"I think, me and you, each on our end of the sofa with our legs tucked under us and each of us with a cup of tea, there, I think, there I can get in touch with you".

Differences in architecture and furnishing played an important role in these preferences. Someone pointed out that the slanted back and long, soft cushions of modern sofas make it difficult to sit in if you have a small stature. Someone else pointed out that they had a tiny kitchen table in a small kitchen and that of course it was not comfortable to sit cramped together in this space. Someone else asked if a person in the group would be willing to sit in the N.N. kitchen. This was dismissed with a huff and the participants agreed that it was an uncomfortable and uninviting space.

The majority of participants in both groups had knowledge of the development of the design of the kitchen. They referred to kitchens and kitchen tables in farmhouses, in the architecture of apartments in the 1950´s, and to the designs of kitchens in the houses of the 1970´s when you should *"separate work from leisure"*. This lead to an agreement that there were as many different starting points in our discussion as there were different architectural solutions to kitchens. People lived in different types of houses and adapted to them accordingly. In this context it was commented on different attitudes to groups of people and needs for privacy, quiet, and time alone.

In both of the focus groups the participants referred to olden times when *"you brought things into the kitchen to repair them"*. In more recent times the kitchen was used like this less often, and in both groups there was laughter when examples were given.

"A friend of mine brought his motorcycle into the kitchen to fix it up. Took it all apart. His parents were away and it was warm there. Boy, when they came home, they didn't like that."

"My husband sometimes has the brilliant idea that he can bring parts of the boat in (to the kitchen) and work on them there."

A few participants referred to the kitchen table as a place where their children did their homework. It was pointed out that the kitchen was often the warmest place in the house *"in a cold country"*.

The pedagogical aspect of the kitchen table was mentioned in one of the focus groups. It was pointed out that there was a difference between working at a kitchen counter or sitting at the kitchen table. In one case your back was turned to the room. You could work side by side with a student, but if the student were elsewhere in the room you could lose contact. Sitting at a kitchen table either side by side or vis-à-vis created a chance to potentially hold uninterrupted contact.

"There are a thousand things that we maybe don't think about but that we teach by doing."

It was also pointed out that it is difficult to have a constructive and focused learning situation in a common room such as the kitchen. The constant or potentially constant traffic in and out was a disturbance.

Both groups discussed doors, free access and safety in common rooms. One person described how they as new staff workers had rearranged furniture in a common room of a collective. When the (more experienced) manager returned, he moved all of the furniture back to their original positions. The new staff workers realized then that their arrangement was cozy, but promoted small groups thereby excluding other groups and individuals. It was also a potentially dangerous space. The furniture was arranged in a way that the residents couldn't exit the room quickly enough (in the event, for example, of fire or violence).

In this context of safety a person spoke of a "*professional handicap*". It was important for this person to always chart a clear escape route in a room, and to not sit with the back to a door. This was especially relevant for gathering in a common room. In the other group, a participant

took up this measure of comfort found in a free path to exit a room. It was emphasized that it was an important social, pedagogical and therapeutic aspect for everyone sharing this space.

In both groups the question was raised about the pedagogical and social implications of the space the students used. Residential space was created for the students with the consciousness that they were enrolled as students for two or three years, a relatively short time in a biography. The school was not a permanent home and was also not meant to be a substitution for home. The quality of spaces and the value of places were nevertheless important in the development of the individual.

"Where will they meet what they should meet in these two years? Where do they meet those elements in life that we would like to send them out into the world with?"

This opened a discussion in one of the groups of how the participants understood their vocation or task as a social worker:

"It is a difficult balancing act. In one way, you Are – then you are also an assistant in learning how to take care of yourself. You're somebody who should teach the other person, train them how to do things, help people, and then you're supposed to be a person, a human being. I don't mean that one thing cancels the other out, but just that, being a social worker the whole time, it can ruin that other part a little bit, in some way. It's a little bit hard to explain. You should always be there. (pause) You can do this balancing act, you can manage to be both things, both a good assistant and a nice person in a way. A nice person where you are, are completely and totally there and manage to be both things."

Two people further assessed working as a social worker like this:

"If I'm totally focused on me doing it this way or that way, and not another way, and if I have to follow a recipe or if I work in a place where there are a lot of thoughts about how to do things and a philosophy that I maybe don't find that easy to relate to, then it can be pretty split, who I am as a private person and who I am as a professional. But if I can put it all together and find a place for everything inside of me, and if I think it's in tune with what I think, then I think I am more there, I am mentally and physically and emotionally there in the same/"

"/harmonious."

"Yeah."

Integrating work with life was described as invigorating.

"If you like to go to work, then it's a good job. Then you don't have to separate enjoyment from work."

"I don't think you use so much energy as you would if you didn't like the job."

"If you don't enjoy it, you use your energy just to get through, yeah, to keep up a façade."

This enjoyment made work itself a place to be.

"If you're not in your place, you know, if you're working and wishing you were at home/"

"/Then you are not in the right place, you are nowhere."

The conversation led to questioning what the social workers´ task actually was. There was a turnover of students, there was the dilemma of not wanting to create a home for them because they were learning to leave home and would move on anyways. At the same time homemaking skills were to be taught, and there was a wish that the students should feel at ease and at home in the school. One of the elements considered important to this conundrum was that everyone as far as possible should participate in creating the common space.

"It has to be inclusive…It can't mean that everybody living there should just sit there and watch only one person busy taking care of things, baking, decorating and organizing and that the others don't take part. That wouldn't be a home, it would be a show window or something… People have to participate, if they want to feel that it is a shared place (Norwegian: felles ståsted)."

But to participate in creating a common place it was necessary to have life-experience and a degree of self-knowledge.

"If you want to know what you want, you have to know who you are."

The students should *"go out and experience the world…go out and discover themselves in relationship to others."*

It was pointed out though that this is a process, not a one time happening.

"For every individual, either it's your child or my child or the child of someone else, I think that the basis for being able to find out who you are or where you should be or how you want

to create a home, it starts in breaking loose. And this basis is something that we give (the students) here."

Somebody made the point that the school could show the *"atmosphere and possibilities"* of a residential community so that the students would have an alternative to choose from. When they moved on they would be faced with many choices. If they hadn't learnt to take choices in the school they were in danger of other people taking choices for them. They would have to find out:

"Do I like having a lot of people around me or do I like to go to my room to be alone? Do I like sitting at the end of the table or in the middle, do I like having a lot of people in the kitchen?"

It was agreed on that what is important for one person in the surrounding environment is not necessarily important for another person. The social worker should hold back personal preferences in order to help the students find their own preferences. The choice of furniture was again discussed and the *"old man sofa"* that was recently removed in one of the places was said to give space for something more suitable to a student's lifestyle. The dilemma remained with the question being raised amongst the participants: Who was ultimately making the choices in, for example, the common room?

There was a longer discussion in one of the groups about what makes a home.

"What do they (the students) associate with home? Is it the food they get? Or the room they have? Or the car they drive in? Or is it the people who live there?"

In this discussion common spaces were also taken up.

"I haven't had my own home. I lived in my mother's home. But it's still my home because I have my own room, my own space in the home which is mine… we don't have so many common areas because I stopped using them. Because I'm happiest alone."

Another person described the difference between a place to sleep and a home.

"I think I will have to find a place and people to have a home. Not only an apartment and so I like to be in my room and that room is the best place in my home. It doesn't work like that for me. It has to be the right people and then it's the right place… I haven't built up a home yet…I actually hate being at home. The kitchen is a given, I have to eat. I sleep badly at night.

I stop in because there are things that have to get done, right? And the living room, I just get restless, if I sit there and watch TV. I found out that outside of the house I can enjoy myself, do a few practical things, I work on cars and I'm in and out of the garage, go out with friends and things like that, that's something else, but the house itself is nothing. I just have it."

Another person added:

"It's important to have people around you...I still haven't actually moved (here)", because a network of friends stayed in another city.

One person described the ultimate task of the social worker as creating a *"safe situation...not necessarily a home but a safe place to be"*. If this was done well *"everything that has to do with mastering life and things they'll do and things they should know how to do and being guided and everything like that will follow. That belongs to it."*

One participant spoke of the signal sent out by sitting at the kitchen table in the in-between times of activities.

"I'm saying that I am here, I am available for you now."

5.1.3 Discussion of the focus groups presentation

The kitchen was a place where things got started and where things ended up. These comments could almost be direct references to Harjo's poem Perhaps the World Ends Here. The first words of the poem are "The world begins at the kitchen table." Many of the references participants made to the use of the kitchen table, children doing homework there, the intimate conversation, the source of food, are also found in Harjo's poem.

Some participants described the kitchen as a felicitous space. It was the light, the heart of a home. The kitchen table was described as a place where one could settle down for a visit, but also as a common space where skills could be taught or passed on in an informal setting.

Some participants experienced the kitchen solely as a working place. It was a place separate from leisure and comfort, a space to be liberated from. The domestic space Johnson and Lloyd (2004) explore under the title *Sentenced to Everyday Life* can be associated with this experience.

What I would like to emphasize though about the findings in these focus groups are the attitudes the participants generally had towards the social worker profession. There was a

general consensus that the social worker was a helper, standing on the threshold between inside and outside, in order to assist the person in care. Providing security for the person in care and protecting this person's personal freedom were mentioned as central tasks for the social worker. I would like to propose that these qualities are directly related to Tuan's concepts of space and place in their meanings as freedom and security for the individual. There were also issues of exposure, for both the social worker and the person in care. There was a general agreement that too much exposure was uncomfortable, not enough exposure was limiting. Learning to choose was introduced as a skill the social worker would want to impart to the student before and in the process of him or her going out into the world.

The social workers who participated in the focus groups all worked in the domestic sphere. They were teachers of domestic skills, "*when to empty the garbage, how to hang up clothes*", but they were teaching these skills with the perspective of sending the students "*out into the world*". Their expertise was often being shared informally in the common space of the kitchen and other common spaces. Along with these skills I propose they were also teaching a general social-ability. They were helping the students find out what they preferred, if they "*liked a lot of the people in the kitchen*" or not, and what made them feel at-ease. The social workers also expressed a hope that the students would, when they went out into the world, find a place where they "*belonged*". Inherent in this wish, I would suggest, was the hope that the students would experience insideness in their future new life situations.

One of the participants described coming to work both as a professional (public) and a private person. Respecting these two identities simultaneously was described as a balancing act. Is this balancing act another description for standing on the threshold, being in the space of the in-between, between public and private space? The social worker is, I believe, involved in a complex activity between public and private spaces. This issue was not directly addressed in the focus groups but I find it important to mention in the discussion. As social workers we enter daily into the domestic and private spaces of other people. We are hired to do this. That is to say, we enter private spaces in our public role as a social worker. We often have public laws and regulations guiding us when we make decisions that have a direct influence on the private lives of the persons in our care. This "hybridization" of the public and private can, I propose, be seen as an essential part of the social worker's profession.

"Hybridization" was named in third places. It also can be seen in Thompson's "double helix of everyday life" introduced briefly in the literature review. (See also appendix.) Thompson wrote *The Hestia Trilogy* (2002, 2003, 2004), encouraging hestian and hermean principles to be employed in tackling everyday life. "Men and women in every walk of life experience daily the tug between their domestic and civic roles, rights, and responsibilities" (Thompson, 2004, p. 61).

Hestia is the name of the Greek goddess of the hearth. She is not found in physical representations, unlike the other gods and goddesses. She is withdrawn from the public eye. She is both the protector of the hearth and the flame itself. Domesticity is her domain. Thompson described Hestia as a metaphor for stability, security and protection. In domesticity Thompson understands care, concern and community. She contrasts these qualities with the realm of Hermes, Hestia's nephew. Hermes domain includes control, consumerism and competition. Hermes is found in the metaphor of the bridge. The public world is the world of contacts, traveling, commerce, exchange and networking.

Thompson suggested going beyond gender specific spaces by combining the qualities of Hestia and Hermes – both of these realms not being gender specific- to create a new "humanism". Hestian qualities should not be assimilated or compromised; they should have as equal an influence in our everyday lives as the hermean qualities already have. Thompson's described how she thought these two qualities could be joined in the model of the double helix. The double helix is two parallel lines that spiral into one another to intersect to then separate and intersect a second and third time; a complex network arises.

According to Thompson (2004) hestian qualities are: cyclical, interior, subjective, personal, and private (not gender specific!). They involve having a domestic role, domestic responsibilities, and a goal of sustenance and nurturance. Hestian time is subject to constant interruptions and biological demands; human life has its own rhythm. Hermean qualities are: linear, exterior, objective, public, fixed, and precise. Hermean time uses calendars, clocks, and impersonal scheduling. The civic role and civic responsibilities are hermean and include an exercise of control, with goals of dominance and governance.

> One strand of the helix would be hestian, and the other strand would be hermean. Bridges form across the two strands suggesting that neither is completely independent. Seeing the outputs as an entwined double helix further illustrates the complexity with which we are faced in everyday life. In any case, the notion of

two hermetically sealed spheres can give way to two interdependent systems. Why not begin to think of the double helix of everyday life so we no longer follow a single pathway (from x to y) as though it were the only pathway? Feminist theorists have encouraged us to be suspicious of either/or thinking and to consider adopting a both/and perspective. Conceptualizing life's intertwined Family/State, private/public, hestian/hermean, domestic/civic, homeplace/marketplace concerns as a double helix may be one way to take feminist theory beyond gender and toward a new humanism for the new millennium. (Thompson, 2002, pp.147-48)

This extensive description was included to perhaps better understand what the social worker was describing by being professional and also personal. "Hestian space ends at the threshold of the homeplace, but 'homelike', hestian spaces are created in otherwise public (hermean) spaces such as day care centers, kindergartens, schools, shelters, and hospitals. The common element is 'care' and a 'caring community'" (Thompson, 2004, p. 57).[7]

I would like to further suggest that the communality and communal experience mentioned in the literature review takes place in this space of "life's intertwined…concerns".

5.2 The student interviews

5.2.1 Introduction to the interviews

Again, I combined the data of the two interviews into one presentation to add to the anonymity of the students. In both groups we sat in colorful light filled rooms. In one of the groups we sat in a large circle with a small, decorated table in the middle. In the other group we sat around a classroom table.

I felt that all of the students participated in the interviews although some stayed silent. There was in both groups a polite and light mood. I would like to add that there was a mood of general inquisitiveness in both groups. The questioning was not focused around what common space was or what the function of a kitchen table was, but was focused rather on me. What was I doing here, what did I want to hear?

---

[7] The double helix of everyday life: I have both corresponded and spoken with P. Thompson about using the "double helix of everyday life" in this thesis. She has given me oral permission to include this model in my paper on May 24, 2013. Ms. Thompson has however been ill and could not send me the written permission. I therefore am describing it extensively instead of reproducing the drawing of the model in the book. The visualness of it would have been helpful, because, as I told Ms. Thompson, every connection forms a little surface, like a table.

5.2.2 Presentation of the student interviews

In both of the groups the kitchen table was a place to prepare meals.

"We love making meals together!" (Lots of laughter.)

One student said that setting the table was his/her responsibility.

Both groups also regularly ate at the kitchen table.

In both groups cleaning the kitchen was described as the next thing that happened after eating there. In one group it was the kitchen table surface that was washed. In the other group *"only the floor"* was washed. The kitchen is *"nice" "when the dishwashing machine is finished, then its clean and nice and (there are) warm plates."*

The conversation quickly led to the common room, which was considered in one group to be the living room. In one group the living room was given a nickname, which distinguished it from a private living room. It was called The Common [Norwegian: Felleset]. When I asked what kind of things they did in this room the first answer was *"hold meetings"*.

Afterwards other activities were named. Drinking coffee was named a few times. Time together was described as a time of relaxing and enjoying life [Norwegian: å ha det koselig]. It was also a place where they watched films together and sometimes listened to music together. In one group they watched soccer together *"because everybody liked to do that"*. This group also described that when they listened to music together they liked it *"loud"*, but that they also knew that it wasn't everybody's wish. I asked how they made a decision what to watch or listen to. One of the students said they decided together "*with the adults"*. This was corrected by another student who shouted, "*We are adults!"*, and then said to me, *"They say adults but it's the co-workers and us"*. I asked if "these co-workers" also sit in the common room with the students:

"Yes, Yes"

"And do they also drink coffee?"

"Yes, and talk and enjoy life."

One student spoke of retreating into private rooms to be alone. There you could *"do different things, read, listen to music, look at a film, you know, private things."*

Another private activity was talking to a co-worker, one to one.

Washing clothes was also considered private. *"It's private when somebody washes your clothes for you."*

The students in one group said they liked to go to work, and then, when they came home, go their rooms to relax. But they did not want to stay in their private rooms until it was time to go to bed.

I asked about taking care of common rooms and decorating common rooms.

Washing the kitchen floor was included in the house wash, in which all were expected to participate, [Norwegian: fellesvask]

Plants had to be watered every week. The toilets had to be washed.

Tables were decorated *"sometimes"*. *"We have some flowers but it's so boring."* (Lots of laughter) There was also a lit candle on the table sometimes *"because some people think its nice and those who don't like it can forget about it."*

Private guests were either invited into the private bedrooms or were served in the common room.

"There, there is music and conversation."

"Music and conversation."

"and coffee."

"and coffee."

"Right, and tea."

"and tea."

One student wrote for me on my computer:

Kjøkken bord spise på middag og forokst og kveld smat men kan og så malle og tengner å lige olje å vaske betre å sitte på et kjøkken bord

Hjemme hoss mor kan være noen plomster kan være allt ja litt

English translation:

Kitchen table eat at lunch and breakfast and dinner you can also paint and draw put oil on and wash better to sit at a kitchen table

At home by mom there can be flowers can be everything well something

5.2.3 Discussion of the student interview presentation

The students used the word private in a special way. One of the students first used the word in the context of having "time out". Then others, including me, used it when we spoke about different activities. I asked the students what they considered to be private. One group emphasized that it was not necessary to talk about what is private, that they all understood what the word meant. I heard "being private" described by the students as something you had. It was not something that you first had to establish. In the context of this interview "being private" was spoken of as an absolute.

Washing clothes was mentioned in one group as private. Having a talk, one to one, with a social worker was private. When family visited it was also a private activity. These activities in some way all involve the visibility of the individual. And paradoxically, private meant being especially seen.

Sorting and washing dirty clothes with the assistance of a social worker belongs to the student's personal hygiene. Both the student and social worker are challenged to make this type of "being seen" a comfortable learning and living situation. The student is also especially visible in the type of one to one conversation with the social worker referred to in the interview. The individual places him or herself in the center of focus, or is placed there, in order to be seen. When the family visits, the individual student usually becomes the center of attention.

On the other hand going to one's room after work or school to "be private" meant being alone and unseen. It could maybe be best understood as "time out" from social and domestic activities.

Playing music or watching soccer games were neither solely private nor public activities. The students watched soccer together because everybody liked soccer; a common activity was chosen taking into account personal preferences. Some students liked loud music, but placed a civil consideration in front of a personal preference. These are examples of common space being an in-between or third space. The students named the general activity of "enjoying life" (Norwegian: å ha det koselig) in the common room. They could "enjoy life" together with other students, with guests and with the care workers. The care workers also sat down in the common room for a cup of coffee, or a cup of tea, in order to "enjoy life". This was the fluid, unplanned and unorganized space Oldenburg went out to find when he was escaping what Curran (1983) described as the "open order [of newly developed subdivisions]…with a high level of mobility, personal isolation, and independence from communal context" (as cited in Oldenburg, 2012, p. 293). Roxburgh (2010) described hospitality as "a way of being in life *with* others, rather than something we do *to* others" (p. 2, my emphasis). Perhaps in this context the word hospitable can be added to help us describe a quality of common space. Being hospitable, according to Roxburgh, includes crossing boundaries and welcoming the stranger. These elements have already been introduced in the more general descriptions of common space.

On the other hand, a student used the word common almost like a philosophical principle: *"It's not my living room. It's everybody's living room… The living room, the bathroom, the kitchen, everything is common once in a while."* This comment led me back to my research question and my initial pondering over home and common space. Could it perhaps reveal to me how I can understand the changing values and functions of space and place? Just as everything can be common "once in a while", everything can be home, possessed or dispossessed by me "once in a while". The quality of common space would then be dependent on the attitude I or we as individuals bring to the space. Our experience of common space could then perhaps be best seen within the spectrum Relph presented on insideness and outsideness. The same space can be experienced dramatically and essentially different by the same individuals at different points in time. It is a changing and constructed space. Common

space would then have no special quality or characteristic, but perhaps only be a framework for a common experience or experience of communality.

The students spoke of the kitchen and the kitchen table foremost as a place for meals. In the literature review sharing meals was described as an activity that can convey a sense of belonging (Fahlander, 2010). This would indicate the kitchen table's potential for creating a space where insideness could be experienced.

The students also included the function of the kitchen and kitchen table in the preparation of food, which was often a group activity. Perhaps the unconscious mood of this common space was captured in the sentence "We love making meals together!" followed by lots of laughter. This activity could maybe be seen as a combination of leisure (spending time together socially) and work (preparing a meal, often in the context of learning how to prepare a meal).

The kitchen was a space to be cleaned. The kitchen table was an object to be washed. A "nice" kitchen was clean. The student's description included "warm plates" coming out of the dishwasher. This description was, I think, especially Bachelardian. "Warm plates", a poetic image, has the potential to transport us directly into a felicitous space. Its English translation even adds an element of linguistic playfulness. Warm plates and warm place sound very similar.

Two different participants in one group spoke of using the kitchen table as a place to draw or paint. This can maybe be placed in the context of having the possibility to have a private experience in a public space (Baron, 1998). Drawing or painting can activate an inner world. The publicness of a space is not always a hinder to entering into this private world. Indeed, it can sometimes even be experienced as a safe place for this kind of reflective activity.

Finally, a student described the kitchen table as: "everything well something". This is certainly no less poetic than "warm plates". The sentence was set in the context of a mother sometimes putting flowers on the table, and this quiet movement brought the poem of e.e. cummings to mind, already mentioned in the literature review and included in the appendix: Love is a place and through this place of love move (with brightness of peace) all places. The kitchen table as being "everything well something" can perhaps also bring us back to one definition of space examined in the beginning of this paper. Space was defined as dimensions of height, width and breadth "within which all things exist and move". The kitchen table as

"everything well something" is perhaps the closest we can come to defining it as a place and space.

5.3 Comparison of the student interviews and focus groups

The kitchen table seemed to be taken for granted by all of the participants. Only after my introduction to it as a theme did it become visible. In both of the focus groups the kitchen table remained perhaps more of a space and place. It was referred to in terms of what activities happened around or at it. In both of the student interviews the table was referred to more as an object. It was a surface that was washed when the kitchen was cleaned. It was sometimes decorated. Dishes were placed on it for a meal.

In some ways the students addressed the theme of common space more than the participants of the focus groups. They spoke of the common room as a place where they got together to enjoy life [Norwegian: å ha det koselig]. It was different than their private rooms and it was different than work. In this way it could be emphasized that the students named the common room as something between the private and public. It was a fluid, unplanned, and unorganized space (Oldenburg, 2010). The "meetings" that were immediately mentioned in the beginning of the talks with the students indicated also that the common space was a place where everybody had a voice, and where things could be discussed. In one of the focus groups there was a long discussion about the advantages of the kitchen table or a sofa for an intimate conversation, and both focus groups named special types of conversation taking place in the kitchen. None of the students named conversations around the kitchen table or in the kitchen at all.

Common space as an arena for learning was only mentioned by the focus groups. The taught activities though, i.e. the domestic skills that were learnt like cleaning and cooking seemed to be present in the students descriptions of what was done or needed to be done in common rooms.

5.4 The photos

The following section of this paper is presented as a type of journal. It focuses on the kitchen table. It consists of photographs and autoethnographic texts. Not every photograph has a description. Some of the discussions are intermingled with the descriptions. Other

photographs are followed only by a text and function more as illustrations than original data. Some text is even introduced with a blank space, allowing the reader to imagine the scene described. I hope this method of presentation will allow the reader to approach the kitchen table with the questions and issues raised in the preceding pages.

Space for Photo-image #1

5.4.1 Description of Photo-image #1

She's wearing a pink fuzzy robe and underneath the kitchen table, where she is sitting, her feet are tucked into matching fluffy slippers. The kitchen table hasn't seen the likes of this as

long as it can remember, well, at least since school has started. Pyjamas and robes live upstairs in bedrooms, they are essentially private. But now the table and I welcome her in her robe with all its unaccustomed fluffiness and the fact that it is pink adds to our glee. She came into the common room dressed like this because she was sick, she is still sick but recovering and it is wonderful to see her. The robe is tightly belted at the waist and even the collar is folded closely into her neckline, giving her a proper, if not pinched look. Her hair is braided in cornrows, a remnant from her vacation, and it looks all right, but her cheek is swollen and miscoloured. Maybe this is why she is sitting up so straight. She's holding a small bowl filled with chopped up soft-boiled eggs. A spoon is in her other hand. She is looking up at me, waiting for me to take the photograph of her with her own camera that she brought down with her. She wants to know what she looks like. She looks brave. It is in the middle of the school day, some students are outside on the farm, and some others are in the classroom down the hall. We can hear the teacher's voice from here. It's a secret moment. We don't know if someone will suddenly barge in and if they do, what will we say? You will have to speak for me and explain, because I can't talk. My cheek is swollen and my jaw hurts when I move it. I have had an operation and I am still sick. This is why I am here in the kitchen. My robe is pink and fluffy.

5.4.2 Discussion of photo-image #1

This photo-image is unforgettable for me. It is, I think, trembling with the sweet tension of a young person venturing out into a larger arena looking for something, maybe food, but also soul nourishment and company. Hoping for and at the same time dreading discovery. A moment just before you can hear your own voice in a group.

Here the common room and the kitchen table are a gentle buffer. The individual is allowed to come out of the isolation of the bedroom, escape the eventual boredom and loneliness of complete privacy. You come to a place where friends or acquaintances can ask you how you are feeling, but you are not expected to participate in the public space of school and work. The social worker, in an ideal situation, would be flexible enough to care for these special needs within what Thompson called the hermean realm of hours, schedules and shifts.

The robe is something exotic in this situation. A reason for this exoticness is that it is an allowed breach of established rules laid down previously for the common room. No pyjamas. Street clothes are to be worn in this space. If a user of the common room appeared in a robe without a legitimate reason, it would eventually be disturbing the peace. Public spaces often have a list of do-s and do not-s posted at their thresholds. No skateboards, no loitering. These rules are meant to allow the space to be used by a general public, and not, for example by only skateboarders who would impose a threat on non-skateboarders. A common room would ideally function on agreements rather than posted rules. These agreements apply to a specific group of persons. I would go so far as to say that when rules start to be posted in a room the space has been given over in some degree to the public domain. It signals that anybody can walk into the room and orientate him or herself to what is and is not allowed.

In America in my generation we used the expression "your slip is showing". (This was a generation of dresses and full slips adjustable at the shoulder for the length of the dress). This phrase was used when somebody said something too personal. It was a gentle admonishment to keep something for yourself, that I have seen it, I am your friend, but that's a part of you that you don't want to show. In this comment lies an acknowledgement that underneath your public facade, you are under construction.

I associate this image of the bath-robed student with this expression. It is because of the brave vulnerability in the student's face while she is looking at the camera. She wanted to see what she looked like and asked me to take the shot. In some ways the photo carries a mutual acknowledgement between the two of us that, yes, your slip is showing, but you are on your way. As social workers we often know both the private and public faces of the persons in our care. Sometimes we can be of assistance in helping another person discern between what is and what should remain private and what can be allowed into the more public domain. This can sometimes be in the details of a bathrobe or slippers, but is can also extend to a friendly, acknowledging gaze that says, perhaps not now, not like that, but you are on your way.

Many times the friendly gaze of a person has also helped me when my slip was showing.
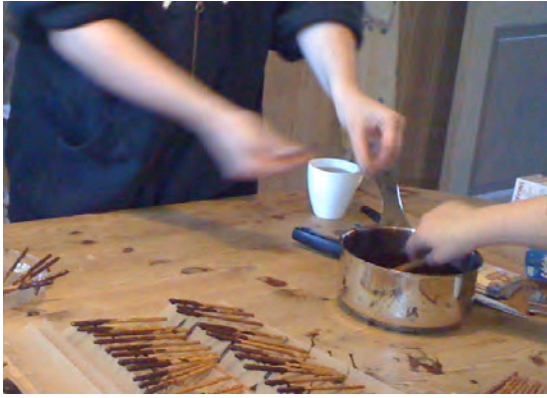
Detail of Photo #2

5.4.3 Description of photo #2

Arms and hands reaching into what is happening on the table. A bowl of pretzel salt sticks, a boiling pan with melted chocolate in it, wax paper and various bowls laid out on the table. The smell of chocolate. The salt sticks are being dipped into the chocolate and laid out to dry. Another pair of hands is forming leaves out of colored green marzipan nearby and these are also being laid out in a row on the wax paper. The guests have already started to arrive, all 45 of them. They are filling the hallway, overflowing into the kitchen; some are looking over the shoulders of those working at the table and are bemused. They assume this will all be eventually something to eat, but what? Further into the photo, past the table and the many hands, sitting and leaning against the refrigerator door, a figure. Turned to the side. Just a moment ago this figure was standing here at the table, looking over the shoulders to see what was happening and was a part of the crazy and happy mood. When my attention focused on the figure, it slipped away to the periphery. I would like to unsee my seeing.

5.4.4 Discussion of photo #2

Lave and Wenger (1990) point to perhaps a different intensity of learning than what is taking place here (i.e. skills or competency), but the concept "legitimate peripheral participation" helps me to understand and define the implications of the learning moment in this photo. The activity in the photo had its genesis as the idea of one person. The idea was shared with a second person, the time and place for the activity were agreed upon, and the necessary

(baking) materials gathered. Food preparations began. The centrality of the place, the kitchen table, enabled others to observe the activity. The magnetizing combination of activity, place, and persons, (and chocolate), encouraged participation. The mood created by this voluntary participation created a further ring of attraction, which both the guests and the solitary student felt drawn to and were included in. There was also an element of anonymity on the part of the student. Remember Baron's (1998) "measures of awkwardness", where the individual can participate in a communal experience with diminished self-consciousness. This photo-image shows a moment of everybody finding his or her place within a common space. We were in a way learning the "craft" of inhabiting the space with a particular type of social-ability (Granata & Lanzani, 2011).

I slipped when I separated myself for a moment to take the photo. By separating myself I broke the magic that the centrifugation of these elements had created. The solitary figure was thrown out into a more distant and isolated periphery (but did eventually come back into the circle again). The party was nice and enjoyed by all.

Photo #3

5.4.5 Text to photo #3

Did I meet Simmel's Stranger?

"Oh I'm so glad you didn't say the dining room table," he said to me and smiled. "My parents are from Italy and everything took place around the kitchen table. The dining room was for Christmas and special times."

I met him by chance. He was passing through the living room still dressed in outdoor winter clothes. I rose from the sofa where I was reading the newspaper to introduce myself. I was a guest and he lived in the house.

When I in return asked him what he was doing he told me about different jobs, different countries, everything south of the equator. It sounded adventurous and exotic compared to where we were standing now. How did he ever land here in Norway?

"The internet does its job."

We talked about the future. I asked him what he was looking for, was it community?

"I don't know what I'm looking for. Yeah, maybe some kind of community… No," he said and smiled. "I'm looking for that in there." He pointed into the kitchen. "You know. The kitchen table."

Detail of Photo #4

5.4.6 Description and discussion of photo #4

In this photo you can see common space being created in an outside environment. Notice at the left the living room chair has also been invited into the garden. There is a public road on the right. Cars passed by during this meal. A neighbor parked the car and joined the meal. A pedestrian leaned over the fence and wished us Bon Appétit. In the evening the furniture was removed and the space of the garden became again semi-private. By semi-private I mean that the path is used by pedestrians, but goes through a garden that is marked by a fence.

Detail of Photo #5

5.4.7 Description of photo #5

Her face is turned to the camera and she is smiling. She is almost lying on the kitchen table, the top of her body resting on an outstretched arm. She waves at the photographer with her other hand. She is wearing a combination of colorful hooded sweaters, several of them, and a scarf. The household's table runner is pushed askew; the daily newspaper is spread out on the table also. There is a plate, cheese, butter on the table, two cups, a cheese slicer, a knife. It is vague whom this is all meant for. There is a white candle in the middle of the table. Luckily it is unlit. There is a teddy bear propped up against it and presiding over the scene. The teddy bear is not looking into the camera, only she is. Oh, but her smile, her smile!

5.4.8 Discussion of photo #5

Bachelard might call this photo-image "felicitous space". Or it exhibits perhaps what Relph would call an insidedness. It is in any case for me a picture of space being inhabited, where someone is at ease and comfortable with the world and oneself. The vagueness of the order of things makes it also a "used" space. Only this one person inhabits it, at least for the moment. A friendly territory was unconsciously marked.

The student's upper body – coyly and jokingly draped over the table to give me, the photographer, an optimal "shot" – creates new boundaries of subject (student) and object (table).

The teddy bear is for me the most significant signal in this photo-image. His position in the center shows that this space has been designated to be a place of relaxation. He is not a metaphor of comfort and security; he creates comfort and security. The teddy bear is a personal possession; he has journeyed from the private bedroom into the common room. He has been placed on the table with humour, the same kind of humour the student showed posing for the photograph. He sends out the message: You can join if you would like to. I'll move over if you want. But only peace loving persons, of course, are really invited. Friendly territory.

A contrast to this photo would be an experience I had of negatively staking out a territory with personal possessions. I began to use the kitchen table as a place for my computer and a few books. While I was working there people came in and spoke to me. I was "available" as it was described in one of the focus groups. As I became more involved in my work though over several days, returning always to the same setup of computer and stack of books, I began to occupy this space as a personal territory. Simultaneously I noticed that fewer and fewer people were coming in to say hello. Some probably stopped coming out a type of respect for my peace and quiet. But I also noticed several students turning on their heels when they came to the kitchen door and saw me sitting in the same place. Perhaps they experienced the whole room as being occupied and not just a corner of the kitchen table. Things got worse socially and I suddenly had the image of a spider sitting in the corner waiting for its prey. I moved my things back into my private room and the kitchen lightened up, became "usable" again for many instead of one, for others instead of just me. The social climate improved immediately.

Photo #6

5.4.9 Description of photo #6

These are the ingredients to cookies. It is early morning. The kitchen table will be used to make the cookie dough. The recipe book is also there. In the introduction to the book there is the suggestion to take out all of the ingredients the night before. Then you can make the cookies in the quiet of the morning without the stress and noise of trying to find things.

5.4.10 Discussion of photo #6

This is an example of the kitchen table being used as domestic space. It has the potentiality of also becoming common space. Ideally not only one person would be making the cookies. In the focus group there was a description of the common space: *"It has to be inclusive…It can't mean that everybody living there should just sit there and watch only one person busy taking care of things, baking, decorating and organizing and that the others don't take part. That wouldn't be a home"*. The smell of the cookies attracted other people a little later.

Photo #7

5.4.11 Description and discussion of photo #7

This photo displays what was spoken about in one of the focus groups. The kitchen table can be a suitable learning place. It has the advantages of both persons having an overview of the room and at the same time, working side by side.

The disadvantages of a learning place within a common space can also be seen. In the background you can see my coffee cup and a newspaper. The leisure space of one person positioned closely to the learning space of another could be a source of confusion for the student and a source of frustration for the teacher.

On the other hand the domestic skills shown here are being practiced within the context of life and not work. The photo was taken after school hours and shows preparations for a surprise party held in the evening.

Photo #8

5.4.12 Text to photo #8

Physicalities of place

I eased it onto its side, resting the weight of it against my hip. Otherwise it might crash onto the floor and scare me. When I got it onto its side, I flipped it over on its back. It felt like a kind of reversed first aid. I let go and stood up to take a good look.

It was unusual to see the kitchen table like this, on its back on the kitchen floor. It reminded me of something. Maybe a giant upturned turtle. But the turtle wasn't floundering; one

massive foot stuck stiffly up in the air. It was dead or maybe stunned, something found on the path in the garden, something that had probably died trying to reach the pond. I had never seen it from this perspective before and there was something touching about how vulnerable it looked lying on the floor. At the same time there was something interesting about its sudden unfamiliarity.

When a table functions well, it is common and hardly noticeable. Now, looking at it from this perspective, the table became specific. I had turned it over to repair it and it became visible.

But this was the kind of day when household tasks were fun. There are certain days in your life when the weather can overwhelm you into believing this. The sun is white and still cool, and the sky, blue and new. On an early spring day like this, when the whole house seems like it is lifted out of its dives, the soul can become brave. It can be swept into a kind of righteous gusto. And to vent this gusto, I open windows. I wash the painted wooden floors with warm foamy soap water. They dry quickly in the cool breeze. Chairs get affectionately wiped clean, even all the way down to the clumps of dust on their woolly felt tabs. It becomes an affectionate deed, like cleaning the feet of a pet, first one foot, stand still, good, then the next. It must have been in such a mood, that, after caring for the chairs' feet, the kitchen table came into my focus in a fresh, springy sort of way. And all of a sudden it seemed possible. I would fix it.

The problem was that the table ends sagged when the table was extended to its full size. The table had two half-moon extensions. They were secured into place, first, by raising the leaf, and then, by twisting a block of wood underneath to support the weight. But the extensions were too heavy, so the tabletop sagged. We tried jacking the ends up with wads of newspaper. Later on we stabilized one end of the table, by simply resting it on top of the radiator.

The table was more practical when it was extended to its full size. The extensions hung down at the ends when they weren't being used and only two people could sit at the table without being in danger of banging their knees. When the extensions were lifted and in place, six to ten people could sit around the table comfortably. The table's form was also more pleasing to the eye in its full size. The tabletop was transformed from a square to a gently rounded rectangle. It was a floating ellipse supported from the base by an unseen foot.

For the moment though this ellipse was flattened out on the floor. The wood was a different color than on top. It hadn't been wiped clean a thousand times. I could see small, circular indentations lining one of the edges, permanent scars in the wood, caused by screwing a manual kitchen grinder into place. And there it was, a piece of chewing gum stuck on the upturned surface also.

There were also unexpected blocks of wood and metal parts screwed on. They all seemed to have a function. But studying them more carefully, I saw that there was a longer story to this than I wanted to hear. Some screws were not the original screws. They were shiny and too long and weren't screwed in all the way. They were also bent, meaning that they were not functioning as planned. The situation slowly started to sink in. To fix this table would involve a major repair. My righteous gusto dissipated. Unfortunately only the "gusto" really disappeared, and I could feel righteous indignation seeping in and taking its place. "Curse this table, curse this construction, why can't somebody fix this? Why can't I fix it? It's wood, isn't it? So there!"

I got up anyway and got hold of a screwdriver. I knelt down again and tightened the screws that could be tightened. I banged at the steel hinges that were bent out of form with the plastic handle of a screwdriver. Then I sat back on my heels and looked at the table anew, this familiar, unfamiliar object, function, place. And I realized I needed to become friends with it again. Just with the way it was, complete with sagging ends.

What was it again? A helpless, upturned turtle. Okay, go for it if that is what it takes for you to become friends with it again. I got up from my knees and examined its base. The base branched out into four solid feet. The curve of the feet stabilized the table. I remembered one of the wonderful qualities of this table. It didn't rock. I got a rag to wipe off the feet. I scraped away the old felt tabs and replaced them with new ones. Soft paws. I put the screwdriver away. Then I went back into the kitchen to help my giant turtle off its back.

I flipped it to its side. The table thunked into place. I pushed the table all the way into place and lifted one end to rest on the radiator. The other end still sagged. When we had guests we would pull the table out from the wall and both ends would sag. But for now it couldn't be helped.

We took the sagging of the table into account. Eggs, pearling beads and pencils were placed on the tabletop in the center so they wouldn't roll off. Guests were ushered away from the

place of honor and assigned "side-seats" when invited to dine. The ends of the table were reserved for insiders. Insiders knew how to use the table. They monitored their beverages carefully. They knew better than to lean. They knew they ran a chance of having a dish slide onto their lap anyway. And they understood that gravity alone determined how much gravy they could have on their plate. The table functioned like this. We learnt how to use the table and didn't trash it. It was still a place.
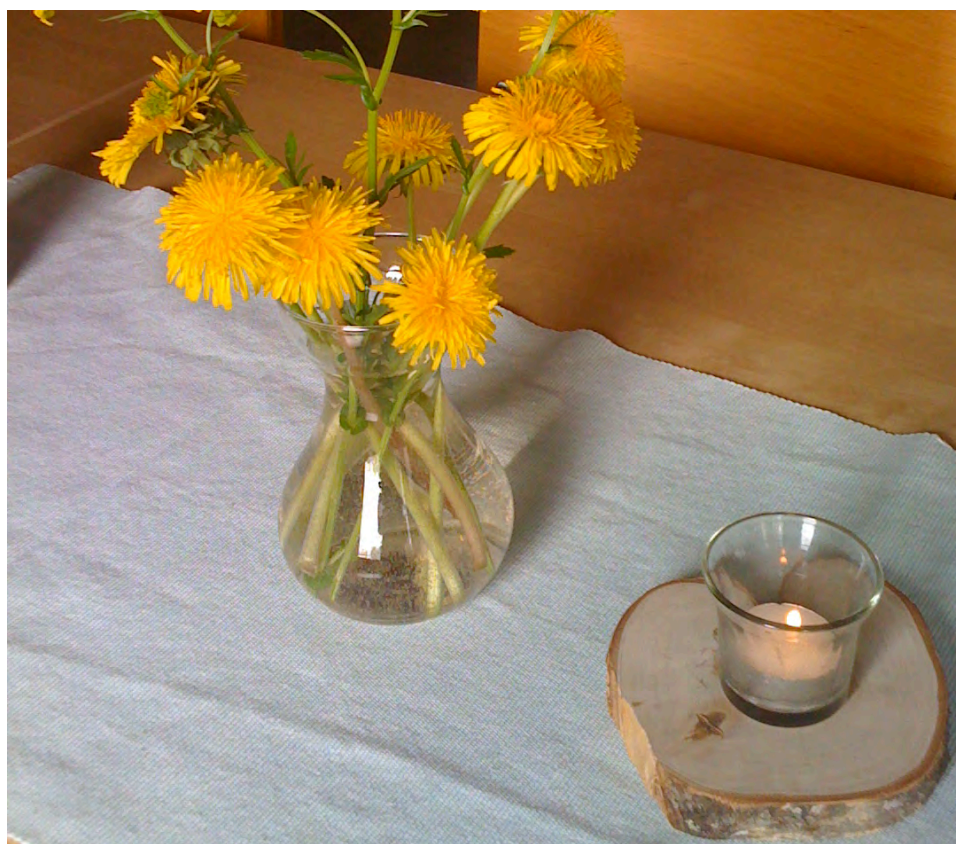

Photo # 9

5.4.13 Description of photo #9

Tables were decorated *"sometimes"*. *"We have some flowers but it's so boring."* (Lots of laughter) There was also a lit candle on the table sometimes *"because some people think its nice and those who don't like it can forget about it."*

5.4.14 Text to photo #9

Spiritualities of space

Any restaurant with respect for itself has a candle and a flower on the table. Any home guide will include candles and flowers on the table as an essential part of the table setting. Especially when we set the table for guests.

Why?

The flame is a symbol for immortality. It is always the same when it appears, regardless of the space of time in between its reappearance. A flame demands presence. It must be attended to so that it does not extinguish. It must also be watched over so that it stays contained.

Our home protects us from exposure. Its walls mark a boundary between an inhabited inside world and the outside world of nature. We acknowledge and invite this outside world in when we place a flower on the table. A flower also demands presence. Its freshness reveals the degree of our attentiveness to the moment. The flower has a season; it belongs to the world of time. It is a symbol of the transient world we live in.

These two symbols of immortality and transience meet on the in-between world of our table.

Questions: Who is responsible for decorating a table that is common space? Does that person follow a tradition of the household, or a family tradition, or decorate a table with personal favorites? Can aesthetic considerations or philosophical "insights" like the one above be discussed and agreed upon? The comment and laughter of the students was wonderfully good willed, but as I mentioned in the introduction to the research question, I still ask myself for what, for whom, why?

Photo #10

5.4.15 Text to photo #10

He who washes the first stone

At Christmastime we heard on the Norwegian new that there were fights in the Church of Nativity in Bethlehem. It happened during the yearly cleaning and preparations for the 6th of January, the Orthodox Festival that celebrates the baptism of Jesus and birth of Christ. Armenian and Greek Orthodox monks went at each other with brooms. The Palestinian police force had to intervene to calm the monks down.

I was sitting at the kitchen table when I heard this, tired after all the Christmas activities at home. I was content; everything had gone well, the guests had left pleased, the Christmas tree

was still standing, fresh and glittering; it was cosy to be at home in a washed and decorated house. The news on the radio left an impression on me. Going at each other with brooms? In a church? In Bethlehem? I thought immediately that the monks must have argued about how things were being washed. Some of the monks were probably not happy about how other monks had done the job. I imagined that first one of them and then afterwards more of them had gotten upset about how sloppily or disrespectfully the tasks were being done. I even agreed with these indignant monks of my imagination. There was too much hurrying. When will people finally understand that a holy task like this requires time and peace of mind?

This is how you can get to know yourself. My ideas of what had happened were just this. My ideas. They had very little to do with what was actually going on in the world. Also this time. What had happened in Bethlehem was provoked by something entirely different. The conflicting monks were not disagreeing on how to wash the floor. They were fighting about who owned the floor. There is a tradition attached to the Church of the Nativity: that which is washed and cared for belongs to those who have executed the task. There is a long-standing dispute between the different confessions about ownership. The church is deteriorating, the steeple and roof sorely need to be repaired, but no one can act without sparking up a massive protest. The one who pays for the repair will automatically be granted ownership of that part which was maintained. During the annual Christmas cleaning a monk swept a stone too many and therewith expanded the territory of his confession. That was when the broom fight began.

It would perhaps be easier to deal with this report by sweeping it away, so to speak, and forgetting about it. Once again an unimportant event was reported and filled my mind with chatter. Once again I listened to a news report and either misunderstood it or misconstrued the facts. Once again there wasn't anything I could do about it. But I was sitting at my dear kitchen table after having guests; I was pleased, pleased with myself and I enjoyed the feeling of being at home. I had to ask myself some serious questions. What am I doing when I wash or clean something? Am I following suit with the monks? Was I marking out a territory, my territory when I prepared the house for a party? And if this was so, what was it like for people, family, and friends to enter this territory? Would I attack somebody with a broom, metaphorically or in reality, if I felt that my territory was threatened? Or an even more serious question: When was the last time I had attacked someone because I felt that my territory been invaded or abused?

We do things with our environment. We intervene or let things go. I can let things go because it's not mine, I don't own it, and it doesn't have anything to do with me. Sometimes I have to let things go; there are situations where I don't have a right to intervene. But there are many instances when I can do something. I can wash, care, and maintain the things around me. I permeate my surroundings this way and a house can become a home. I can also wash, care and maintain things around me without possessing them. I can be motivated to do this because I think it is important to care for my surroundings, or because I want to make the people who enter the house feel comfortable. Perhaps though it is important for me to remember that my activities in the house create a bond between the house and myself. I came to think that I must again and again maintain these bonds and work on holding them fresh and 'clean', attached but not possessive. The monks in the Church of the Nativity have my full sympathy. It's not easy.
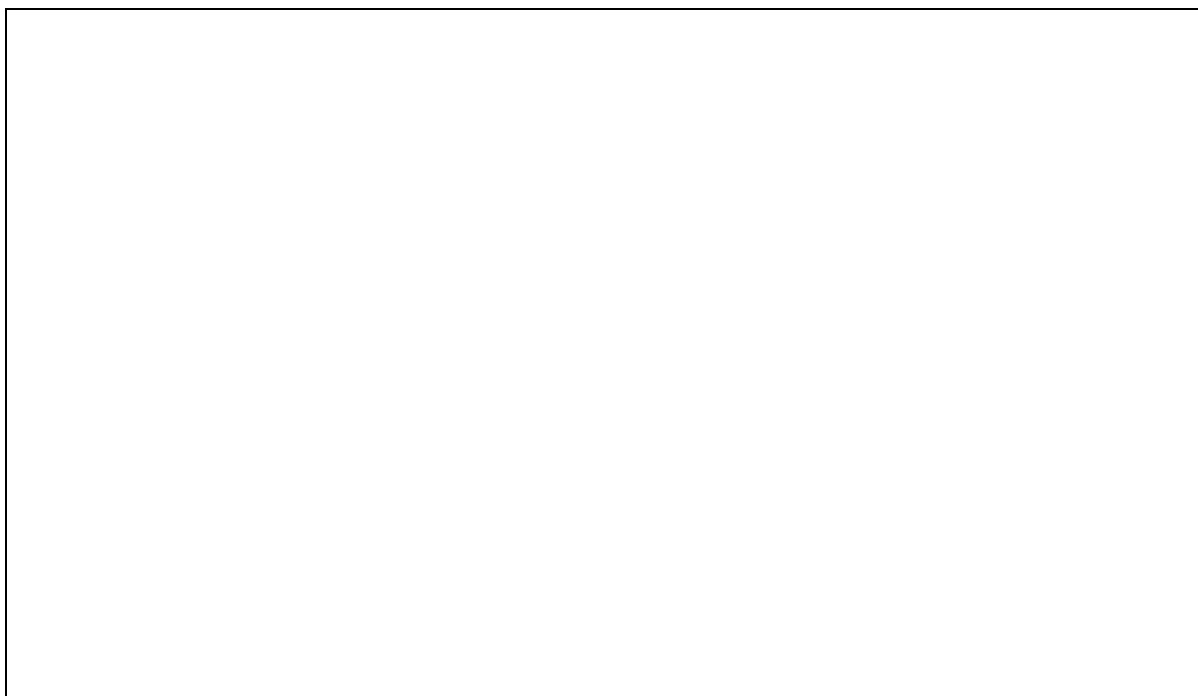
Space for Photo-image #11

5.4.16 Description of photo-image #11

In this photo I can't see a face, only the top of a head resting on folded hands positioned on the kitchen table. I am sitting vis-à-vis taking the picture. There is a large multi-colored

puzzle between us. And that's about all you can see. We have been working on the puzzle for the last half an hour, which is a long time if everyone around you is acting irritated and shouting at you for seemingly nothing. For the last half an hour we have been whispering to each other as we leaned over the puzzle and moved the colored pieces around, settling them into their places. We chose to be here and not to go somewhere else. In the middle of the common room we created a little space of our own.

5.4.17 Discussion of Photo-image #11

This photo-image can remind me of the many possibilities of creating space within space. A complex set of interactions preceded this moment. There were arguments as a result of being too close up and in each other's hair. There was an intermediary action, in this case by me the social worker, to help sort things out. There was the confusion of feeling entitled to the common room and at the same time being ostracized by the group and feeling perhaps isolated. If we had left the room, which in many cases would have been the only reasonable venue, we would eventually have left behind an "occupied space". The room would perhaps have been quieter, but the atmosphere possibly laden with the after images of discipline and inequality (the remaining persons being "more equal" than the one asked to leave). Instead we introduced an activity that could outweigh the previous emotions and lack of space. We created an audio boundary within the room through whispering. Within this boundary there was a private space. Outside of this boundary others could move freely.

This photo-image (supplemented heavily by my memory of the events leading to it) can serve as an example of the rules of common and public space. If certain behaviour breaks with these rules it can lead to exclusion, either enforced or inferred.

But the photo-image is also an example of private space within common and public space. Although boundaries have been established it is probably not experienced by others as negatively territorial or imposing. The activity of the individual(s) is in tune with the space. Many strangers can study together, for example, in a library. A person speaking on a mobile phone in a library might experience private space but would however be imposing on others and their experience of the designation of the common or public room.
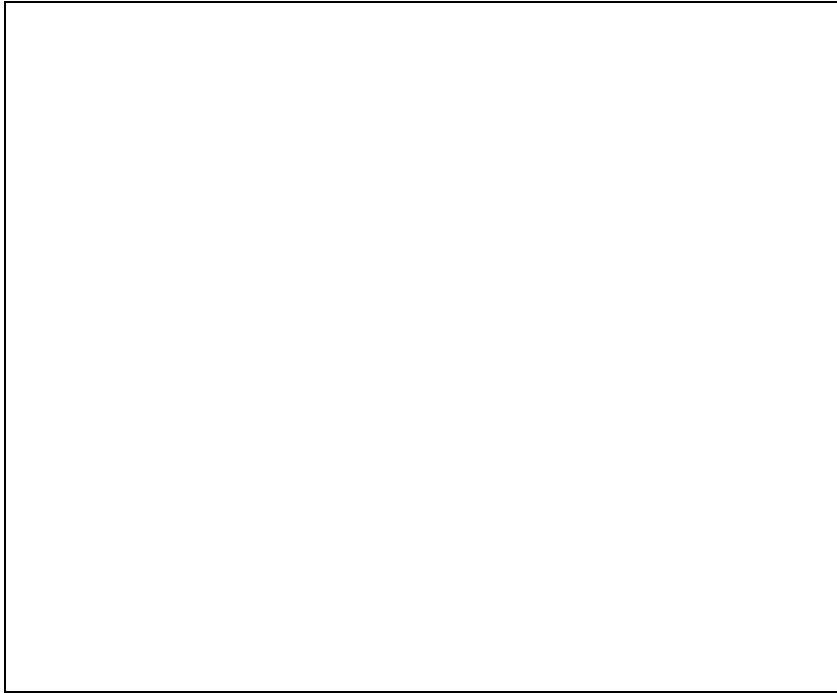
Space for Photo-image #12

5.4.18 Description of photo-image #12

The photo was taken in the daytime but you can see that the little lamp over the kitchen table is on and the room is dark – a shadowed room away from the hot summer sun. Next to the lamp a calendar, the address of the local shop printed on the bottom. It is hung up at eye level with the man sitting at the kitchen table. He is alone. He is wearing a chequered short sleeve shirt. He is an old man, his arms, you can see, are thin and wrinkled. On the table there is a napkin holder, its brass structure formed to say Shalom on the side. It has white napkins folded in triangles in it and next to this there is a small pile of papers. They are bound together with a rubber band. On top of the pile there is a letter opener. Bills opened and stacked together to be paid at the end of the month. A plastic eyeglass case with the name of the optician stamped on it is next to the bills and a small white container of saccharine tablets is also on the table, the kind that doses out one tablet at a time. The man is leaning on his elbows and looking down. In his line of focus there is a newspaper, but he isn't reading it. I can see this because he is holding his eyes shut with his fingertips. His glasses are lying on the top of the opened newspaper and next to them there is a small bottle of eye drops. He has just dosed both eyes with the medicine and after sitting with his head tilted back for a few moments he is

leaning forward and resting. His mouth is in a grimace either from his stinging eyes or because he is crying. Maybe both. His wife took the photo.

5.4.19 Discussion of photo-image #12

Although this photo is taken in an essentially private space (only the man and his wife share it as a common space) I would like to include it under the theme of the centrality of the kitchen table. The line in Harjo's poem:

Perhaps the world will end at the kitchen table, while we are laughing and crying, eating of the last sweet bite.

resounds in this discussion.

The kitchen table carries some of the physicality of this man's biography. But he has also come to this place to rest for a moment. He has come to sit at the table and the table is supporting him. The man and the table could be seen to create a whole in this image. They are for me a place.

The world at a glance can be found in the newspaper. Medicine, bills, the stamped calendar and eyeglass case are eventually artefacts of a periphery of doctors and public services. The napkin holder and the saccharine bottle could hint at a generation, a culture and a lifestyle. Envelopes opened with a sharp blade and the rubber band could indicate habits and time. Things are done deliberately, with system; the calendar is hung at eye level to be used often. This photo-image invites us to see and be moved by space and place. A biography "takes place" in space. Any kitchen table can be a visual artefact, a reminder of this place.

Detail of Space for Image # 13

5.4.20 Text to Image #13

Our neighbor comes by sometimes. He calls in at the front door and stands in the hallway waiting. Sometimes I have been upstairs, close to a window and then I see his car pull up in front of the house. I can usually tell how he is feeling by how long it takes him to get out of the car. Today he is not feeling well at all. He makes his way to the front door and since our doors aren't locked and we don't have a doorbell, he comes in and asks in a normal voice, "Anybody at home?" But usually he just stands in the hallway and looks around to see for himself if anyone is there. Often one of the students rushes to greet him. And very often this greeting is followed by my footsteps coming down the stairs so that I can also greet him. Sometimes I look around from the kitchen door and welcome him. I sometimes have something picturesque in my hand like a wooden ladle that I have just used to stir the soup. .

We always really greet him. Come in, would you like a cup of coffee, pull up a chair. And sometimes he does. At other times he leans on the doorpost and makes arrangements. -Are you home tomorrow? -Is there someone here who would like to help with the fishing nets? -So, you're leaving tomorrow: should I drive you to the ferry?

None of these questions are of course so direct. They are wound into other bits of conversation. I find myself untangling those parts of the conversation that are the friendly communications of a dear neighbor from other parts that belong to the more exotic discourse of a fisherman. I am enjoying the conversation and at the same time mentally making notes.

Diesel motor? The lines? A squall? I try to contribute. -That doesn't sound good. -So, what did you do?

Before our neighbor comes into the kitchen, he takes off his boots and then he shuffles in in his stocking feet. He usually keeps his outdoor clothing on, or he'll unzip the top part of his overalls. He looks impermanent sitting here at the kitchen table. Often he'll say yes to a cup of coffee. I can see myself from the outside in this situation. First sitting down at the table and then springing up when the water is boiling. We continue our conversation - despite my springing here and there, no one habitual flip of a lever, always choices of methods and coffee cans and ways of serving. Sometimes I offer him the choice of a cup: small, large, ceramic, IKEA. I adjust the strength of the coffee to the size of the cup. And then finally I stop springing around and sit down vis-à-vis. I wait. Our conversation rambles a bit, but then it comes. A thought he has had that he would like to confirm. I am not sure I understand every detail. I struggle to make a picture. He draws a layout of the buildings on the tablecloth with a fingernail to show me what he means. He places his hands on the table, swollen, weather-beaten, and then moves them over a section of the table, side-by-side, left, right, left, right. He is showing me the progression of the situation he is describing, the utter hopelessness of it all. I am focused on his hands and on the point he is making. The door to the hallway is open; his cup of coffee is still untouched. I want to understand every word he is saying. Sometimes I can't hear what he is saying. I lean over the table. I want to agree.

5.4.21 Discussion of text to Image #13

The open door to the kitchen provides opportunities for informality. It also makes the participants in a conversation at the kitchen table vulnerable to intrusion. Common space is possibly more often felt than charted out. A person, upon entering the kitchen at the moment in time described above, would probably feel that the kitchen table´s common space had turned into a private space for a moment. There are a few alternatives to what could then happen. Either the third person would turn around and leave. Or the third person would enter and we would go over to a less personal topic. In some cases a third person would enter the room, sit down and take part in the conversation. All of these scenarios could feel "right".

Again I met an element of the third person, the stranger, in this description of how impermanent our neighbor looks, sitting at the kitchen table.

Photo #14 a

5.4.22 Description of photo #14 a

The kitchen is cleaned; notice the sparkle of the floor under the table. Cups are set out for the common coffee cup the next morning. One person will celebrate a birthday. The gold-rimmed plate and a special candle in the form of a rose herald the specialness of the person and the day. In the background you can see a bowl of ice cream. The cleaner/organizer/decorator has

treated herself to this reward. Notice the radio on the windowsill. News of the world streams in late at night informing the social worker of global concerns.

5.4.23 Text to photo #14 a

Can I become a kitchen table? This really was not the initial question I had when I began this paper. But it seems to become more and more of an ideal, a concept that I can understand deep down in me and set as a goal. Almost invisible. All functional. Present and supportive of people's needs, their creativity, personal struggles and conquests. Personal, but professional enough to give people enough space, the freedom to rise and go. Offering safety. A place to tell stories, listening without repeating. A place of knowing that it happened, there was this space, this moment. A witness or caretaker of moments. Representing an in-between, the middle way that is not compromise, but harmony, balance. A place where viewpoints converge to form a whole. Where voices and emotions and memories center to become potent, healing and most human. Stout, ready to take on any task, be anything but remain true, authentic, real. It was the realness of the kitchen table that represented for me the ideal I would strive after. Real and willing to be that which is needed most in a moment of time.

Photo #14 b

5.4.24 Description of photo #14 b

"The place where your deep gladness meets the world's deep needs"…

5.4.25 Text to photo # 14 b

Can I become a kitchen table? The answer is no. The partially syrupy description above is an idealized representation of a complex and challenging profession. The profession calls for instead, I believe, a whole person including all this person's idiosyncrasies and inadequacies. A kitchen table, or the qualities of the table that are described, are merely a part of the whole. It is a place, as e.e. cummings says, *within which all places move, a world in which all worlds live*.

I described the kitchen table in terms of the realness of being there for another person. This realness can be experienced in moments. It is not an established method that, once recognzed and learnt, can be implemented or dosed out in appropriate situations. Neither is realness easily taught. It does not appear when invoked. It appears instead outside *and* inside the schedules, plans and books of the social worker, in moments of intimacy as well as when I encounter the stranger in myself or in another. In large groups of people as well as in a private conversation. As a social worker I have to be prepared for the entrance of realness, but at the same time I should not expect it.

Being prepared and simultaneously unexpectant can also apply to the patterns and laws of communality. It is a moment of realness within a group of individuals: the welcomed but unexpected extra guest.

Instead of asking if I can become a kitchen table, I could rather ask, what part of me can incorporate the qualities of this researched place? Frederick Buechner defines vocation as "the place where your deep gladness meets the world's deep need" (quoted in P. J. Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak)*. Perhaps the question is, how can I give space to the qualities I found at the kitchen table when deepening my understanding of my vocation. This question, I would like to propose, *can* be both learnt and taught.

5.5 Summary of focus groups, student interviews and photos

In introducing my research question I asked what could social workers learn from common space. I wanted to look at the role of common space in the process of finding one's identity and defining one's relationship to the surrounding world. And I asked what are some of the qualities of common space as can be found at the kitchen table within a residential social therapeutic setting.

In some ways the photographs and texts have become like a travel journal for me. I went out to explore the kitchen table and came back with these. Now when I look at the pictures and read the texts they seem dated. Which is also all right. We take photos of special places. Sometimes when we look at pictures other people have taken on their journeys, we recognize places we know. Sometimes we can imagine potential destinations. Sometimes seeing a picture of a place can even help us later on to recognize the place where we are. Maybe by

focusing on the kitchen table as a special place, groundwork has been laid for it to be discovered or rediscovered as a common space.

The student interviews brought me the insight that common space is perhaps more a framework within which common experiences and communality can be felt. This in contrast to common space being a value in itself. I feel this was an especially precious insight because it showed me common space being and becoming. The individual is also being and becoming. Poetry also, as Bachelard described it, allows us to enter a world of being and becoming. Interestingly the most poetic elements of the paper also appeared in these interviews.

I think that it has been valuable for me as a social worker, through the help of the focus groups, to again reflect on the issues of security and freedom. The conversations in the focus groups revolved around the intimate conversation, the warmth of the kitchen and the importance of having a home. The conversations also reaffirmed the knowledge that one of our main tasks is to help the students to a greater freedom; to continue a journey of self-discovery by meeting the world and to help them establish their own homes. As social workers we can house both kinds of insights within us without conflict, much like the qualities of public and private, interior and exterior, domestic and civic can appear together in common space.

6. Conclusion

In this study common space and the kitchen table have been coupled together and tentatively approached as a unity. This has been attempted through examining and comparing literature, listening to people and through a reflective process of writing and taking photographs. I began to research this theme bearing with me the hypothesis that the kitchen table is a poetic object. At the end of this project I feel that the real poetry is yet to come.

The limitations of this study can be found in the title: the word felicity is a value that entered early in my research of the theme and has given the research an intention. Limitations can also be seen in my choice of literature: although I feel my main sources were found within the discipline of human geography, I chose an expansive range of literature. This wide focus could threaten any study into superficiality and generalizations. I feel though, that tackling such a large scope has helped me, and perhaps others, to rightly fathom and maintain the depth of the question and theme. Place and space is existential to our sense of self; our sense of self suffers when it is categorized or strictly defined. Or as the student put it: the kitchen table is everything, well, something. There could have been a section included in the literature review dealing specifically with residential social therapeutic settings. I however did not want to focus on the issues, many of them political, which might naturally arise. I named residential social therapeutic settings in my research question to signal my limited experience with common space in other domains. The methods used in this project also had their limitations: the interviews and focus groups, and the photos and texts, could almost be seen as belonging to two different projects. Again, by including both methods, the project is threatened with superficiality. On a closer look though they can perhaps help the reader form a more concrete understanding of the theme. The interviews alone would be too general, the text and photos alone too specific. Combining them added hopefully to the validity and transparency of the research.

If I were to design this project again I would maybe have the courage to address an image that I am haunted by: more and more individuals wandering around in privatized shopping malls, and, after not really meeting anybody, going home to isolated state run private residences. Or I would focus closer on the creativity of the students in my everyday life and see what more poetry they could create out of the theme. In any case, I encourage further research on the qualities of common space, if only in order to exercise ourselves out of our self-constructed

confines of dualistic thinking. The kitchen table's symbolism and the archetypal table hardly appeared in this study and are themes that would also certainly lead to interesting research.

Concluding the study I would like to encourage social workers to consider the importance of common spaces, third places, the in-between. The students with special needs and social workers who I am familiar with used these common spaces "to enjoy life".

Sennett's description of the virtue of poise or grace made a deep impression on me. It was presented as an alternative to "the fear of exposure" that has created our city walls, our boundaries and our sense of having to protect our privacy. But when we again and again face and come to terms with the paradoxical world around us, we practice holding ourselves in balance, we become poised, we display the virtue of grace (Sennet, 1990).

As social workers we are often confronted with questions of exposure. We strive to protect the privacy of individuals in our care. We expose ourselves as private persons with the intention of making personal connections. We are faced with questions of security, asking ourselves daily how we can maintain an environment in which vulnerability is protected. We are faced with issues of our own security, how comfortable we feel with our tasks and how secure we feel in our professional role. And again and again the quest and the right to freedom is scrutinized. How much freedom is needed? How can the persons in my care grasp their freedom? Where and how can the individual "go out into the world" to meet himself or herself and others? When is freedom an overexposure to the world and only a threatening experience? When do certain freedoms water out into our carelessness or indifference?

Bachelard wrote we cannot remain indifferent to spaces that we have grasped with our imagination. I have tried to grasp the space of the kitchen table by examining qualities of common space. The kitchen table is a place where issues of public and private, work and home, domestic and civic, self and others meet. In some ways I have discovered that this place is a hybridization of all of the elements named above. It has the potential of becoming a common space within a residential social therapeutic setting.

When I presented my theme in the introduction I named that in order to consider common space we assume that we are entities able to move in and out of various kinds of spaces while remaining intrinsically ourselves. By neither dissolving into our environment nor being totally impermeable to the surrounding world we maintain a balance, a poise that could be called being ourselves. If this poise is, as Sennett says, a virtue, then perhaps one of our tasks as

social workers and fellow human beings is to assist each other in practicing this virtue. By finding this balance, learning to live on this threshold, we can perhaps, ever increasingly, become ourselves.

Literature list

Anonymous (2011). *A woman in Berlin.* London: Little Brown Book Group.

Bachelard, G. (1994). *The poetics of space*. (M. Jolas, Trans.). Boston, MA: Beacon Press. (Original work published 1958).

Baron, J. (1998). *Measures of Awkwardness*. (Masters thesis). Retrieved from BASE. (http://hdl.handle.net/1911/17153)

Bernardoni, M. (2011). Urban space and social practices in Istanbul, *Lo Squaderno, 21*. Retrieved from http://www.losquaderno.professionaldreamers.net/

Blunt, A. (2005). Cultural geography: Cultural geographies of home [Introduction]. *Progress in Human Geography 29*(4), 505-515. doi: 10.1191/0309132505ph564pr

Blunt, A., & Dowling, R. (2006). *Home*. In S. Holloway & G. Valentine (Eds.), *Key Ideas in Geography Series.* London: Routledge.

Boling, P. (1996). *Privacy and the politics of intimate life.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Butler, C. (2012). *Henri Lefebvre: Spatial politics, everydaylife and the right to the city.* London: Routledge.

Canda, E.R., & Furman, L.D. (2010). *Spiritual diversity in social work practice: The heart of helping.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Camphill Communities California. (2008). Training in social therapy. Retrieved from http://www.camphillca.org/index.php?page=training-in-social-therapy

Certeau, M. de. (1984). *The practice of everyday life.* (S. Rendall, Trans.). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Cottam, H. (1999). *Zozobra: the tensions of urban space*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Open Research Online. (oro.open.ac.uk/18869/1/pdf159.pdf)

cummings, e.e. (1994). *E.E. Cummings: Complete poems, 1904-1962.* G.J.Firmage, (Ed.). New York, NY: W.W. Norton.

Daniel, M.J. (2004). The artist and teacher-leader: the appearance of Hannah Arendt´s "in-between". (Masters thesis). Retrieved from BASE. (http://hdl.handle.net/2429/15959)

Eames, A. (2012). *The white shadow.* London: Random House.

Ellis, C., Adams, T., & Bochner, A. (2011). Authoethnography: An overview. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/ Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 12*(1), Art. 10, http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs1101108

Fahlander, F., & Kjellström, A. (Eds.). (2010). Making sense of things: Archaeologies of sensory perception. *Stockholm Studies in Archaeology 53.* Retrieved from su.diva-portal.org/smash/…/FULLTEXT01

Farkisch, H., Ahmadi, V., Irfan, A., Surat, M, Fauzi, M., & Zain, M. (2009). Significant[sic] of teritorry[sic] to increase sense of place in behavioural settlements. *E-Bangi Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities, 4*(1), 114-125. Retrieved from DOAJ. (http://pkukmweb.ukm.my/e-bangi/papers/2009/Hero09.pdf)

Grahame, K. (1984). *The wind in the willows.* London: Book Club Associates. (Original work published in 1908).

Granata, E., & Lanzani, A. (2011). New grammars of dwelling. *Lo Squaderno, 21.* Retrieved from http://www.losquaderno.professionaldreamers.net/

Grundmann, M. (2011) Lebensführungspraktiken in intentionalen gemeinschaften. In K. Hahn & C. Koppetsch (Eds.), *Soziologie des privaten* (pp. 275-302). Wiesbaden: Springer.

Gullestad, M. (1984). *Kitchen-table society: A case study of the family life and friendships of young working-class mothers in urban Norway.* Bergen: Universitetsforlaget.

Harjo, J. (1994). *The woman who fell from the sky.* New York, NY: W.W. Norton.

Hart, C. (1998). *Doing a literature review.* London: Sage.

Hall, J. (2012, May 9). Wi-fi 'lingerers' in coffee shops are causing territorial disputes, academic research finds. *The Telegraph.* Retrieved from http://www.telegraph.co.uk

Jacobs, J. (2010). The death and life of great American cities. In A.M. Orum & Z.P. Neal (Eds.), *Common ground?: Readings and reflections on public space.* New York, NY: Routledge. (Originally published in 1961).

Jerram, L. (2006). Kitchen sink dramas: Women, modernity and space in Weimar Germany [Abstract]. *Cultural Geographies, 13*(4), 538-556. doi:10.1191/1474474006cgj374oa

Johnson, L. & Lloyd, J. (2004). *Sentenced to everyday life: Feminism and the housewife.* Oxford: Berg Publishers.

Kearsley, G. (2011) Situated learning (J.Lave). *The Theory Into Practice Database.* Retrieved from http://tip.psychology.org

Kingston, K. (1998). *Clear your clutter with feng shui.* London: Judy Piatkus Publishers.

Krasner, J. (2010). *Home bodies: Tactile experience in domestic space.* Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press.

Kumar, J. (2009, May 20). Bohm, Jung and the new health paradigm. Jung Seminar Final Paper. Retrieved from http://www.academia.edu/734935/Bohm_Jung_and_the_New_Health_Paradigm

Lacas, D.M.K. (1998). Alternative, single family housing, multi-family housing and mixed-use housing for Richmond City, suburbs [Abstract]. Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/2429/7933

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1990). Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The production of space.* (D. Nicholson-Smith, Trans.). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing. (Original work published 1974).

Liberman, K. (Institute of Logic & Cognition, Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou, China). (2012, February). Ethnomethodology: explaining two Paragraphs by Harold Garfinkel. Retrieved from www.youtube.com/watch?v=6cBChObsKOw, posted April 19, 2012.

Mackinlay, E. (2009). Singing maternity through autoethnography: making visible the musical world of myself as a mother. *Early Child Development and Care, 179*(6), 717-731.

Manzo, L. Beyond house and have: toward a revisioning of emotional relationships with places. *Journal of Environmental Psychology 23*, 47-61.

McQuire, S. (2003). From glass architecture to big brother: Scenes from a cultural history of transparency. *Cultural Studies Review, 9*(2), 103-123. Retrieved from http://repository.unimelb.edu.au/10187/2139

McNeill, P., & Reillo, G. (2005). The art and science of walking: Mobility, gender and footwear in the long eighteenth century [Abstract]. *Fashion Theory, 9*(2), 175-204. doi: 10.2752/136270405778051338

Merriam, S. B. (2002). *Introduction to qualitative research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mosher, C. (2010). A wholistic paradigm for sustainablity: Are social workers experts or partners? Critical Social Work, 11(3). Retrieved from http://www.uwindsor.ca/criticalsocialwork/archive-volumes

Muncey, T. (2005). Doing autoethnography. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods 4*(3), Article 5. Retrieved November 2012 from http://www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/4_1/pdf/muncey.pdf

Neal, Z. (2010). Introduction. In A.M. Orum & Z.P. Neal (Eds.), *Common ground?: Readings and reflections on public space.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Nissen, S. (2008). Urban transformation: From public and private space to spaces of hybrid character, *Czech Sociological Review, 44*(6), 1129-1149.

Oldenburg, R. (2010). The character of third places. In A.M. Orum & Z.P. Neal (Eds.), *Common ground?: Readings and reflections on public space.* New York, NY: Routledge. (Originally published in 1999).

Oldenburg, R. (2012). The "third place project". In P. Nyden, L, Hossfeld, & G. Nyden (Eds.), *Public Sociology: Research, action and change* (pp. 292-297). Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

Olsen, D. J. (1986). *The city as a work of art*. New Haven, CT: Yale University.

Orum, A.M. & Zachary, P.N. (2010). Toolkits for interrogating public space. In A.M. Orum & Z.P. Neal (Eds.), *Common ground?: Readings and reflections on public space.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Ostanel, E. (2012). Home-making practices between resistance and the politics of dispersion. *Lo Squaderno, 23.* Retrieved from http://www.losquaderno.professionaldreamers.net/

Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks , CA: Sage Publications.

Pink, S. (2007). *Doing visual ethnography.* London: Sage Publications. Retrieved from www.amazon.com

Relph, E. (2009). A pragmatic sense of place. *Environmental & Architectural Phenomenology Newsletter*, *20*,3, 24-31. Retrieved from http://www.arch.ksu.edu/seamon/EAP.html

Robinson, K. (2012, November 22). Joy Harjo's poetry-something for which to be thankful. Her Circle: A magazine of women's creative arts and activism. Retrieved from http://www.hercircleezine.com/category/engage/

Robinson, M. (1980). *Housekeeping*. New York, NY: Picador.

Roxburgh, A. (2010). *Practicing hospitality: A study guide*. West Vancouver, BC: Personal use edition.

Sack, R. D. (2004). Place-making and time. In T. Mels (Ed.), *Reanimating places: A geography of rhythms*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate. [Not cited in text, but helpful in envisioning the element of temporality in spatiality.]

Schmidt-Brabant, M., & Sease, V. (1999). *The archetypal feminine*. London: Temple Lodge.

Seamon, D. (1996). A singular impact: Edward Relph´s Place and Placelessness. *Environmental and Architectural Phenomenology Newsletter, 7*,3, 5-8. Retrieved from http://www.arch.ksu.edu/seamon/index.htm

Seamon, D., & Sowers, J. (2008). Place and placelessness, Edward Relph. In P. Hubbard, R. Kitchen, & G. Vallentine (Eds.), *Key texts in human geography* (pp.43-51). London: Sage.

Seaman, M. (2008). Birds of a feather? Communities of practice and knowledge communities. In B. Slater Stern (Ed.), *Curriculum and Teaching Dialogue 10*, 1&2, (pp.269-279).

Sennett, R. (1990). *The conscience of the eye: The design and social life of cities*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton.

Simmel, G. (1971). *On individuality and social forms*. D. N. Levine, (Ed.). Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press. (Original work published 1903/1908).

Suzuki, A., Motooka, N., & Katsura, R. (2012). Comparative study on common space of women's university student dormitory in Tokyo [Abstract]. Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/10083/51764

Tarkersley, T. (2011, June 21) Her life was anything but a sitcom [Web log comment]. Retrieved from http://voices.yahoo.com/her-life-was-anything-but-sitcom-8674253.html?cat=3

Thody, A. (2006). *Writing and presenting research*, London: Sage Publications.

Thomas, L. (2011). *Putzen!?* Dornach: Verlag am Goetheanum.

Thomas, P. (1995). The poetics of thresholds: Chair as a social portrait. (Masters thesis). Retrieved from BASE. (http://handle.uws.edu.au:8081/1959.7/27462)

Thompson, P. (2002). *The accidental theorist: The double helix of everyday life*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Thompson, P. (2003). *In bed with procrustes: Feminism's flirtation with patriarchy*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Thompson, P. (2004). *Fatal abstractions: The parallogics of everyday life*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Tuan, Y. (1977). *Space and place: The perspective of experience*. London: Edward Arnold Publishers.

van Duin, V. (1999). *The art of living*. London: Kate Roth Publications.

van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human Science for an action sensitive pedagogy.* Albany, NY: The State University of New York Press.

Watt, P. (2011). Selective belonging: Fear and avoidance in urban and suburban neighbourhoods. *Lo Squaderno, 21*. Retrieved from http://www.losquaderno.professionaldreamers.net/

Wise, J. M. (2000). Home: Territory and identity. *Cultural Studies, 14*(2), 295-310. doi: 10.1080/095023800334896 [This article was not cited in the paper but was an especially beautifully written and good introduction into reflections on space.]

Perhaps the World Ends Here

By Joy Harjo

The world begins at a kitchen table. No matter what, we must eat to live.

The gifts of the earth are brought and prepared, set on the table. So it has been since creation, and it will go on.

We chase chickens or dogs away from it. Babies teethe at the corners. They scrape their knees under it.

It is here that children are given instruction on what it means to be human. We make men at it, we make women.

At this table we gossip, recall enemies and the ghosts of lovers. Our dreams drink coffee with us as they put their arms around our children. They laugh with us at our poor falling-down selves and as we put ourselves back together again at the table.

This table has been a house in the rain, an umbrella in the sun. Wars have begun and ended at this table. It is a place to hide in the shadow of terror. A place to celebrate the terrible victory.

We have given birth on this table and have prepared our parents for burial here.

At this table we sing with joy, with sorrow. We pray of suffering and remorse. We give thanks.

Perhaps the world will end at the kitchen table, while we are laughing and crying, eating of the last sweet bite.

Letter of Consent

I consent to participating in the group conversation held on Wednesday, February 6, 2013 and that this conversation will be recorded and transcribed.

I consent to the contents of this group conversation being used in the research of Corinna Balavoine for her master studies thesis. This project addresses the theme of homemaking within social therapy.

The participants in the group conversation will not be identified individually, but the name of the institution can be identified in the written thesis. The completed thesis will be available for the general public to read.

I am free to withdraw from this project at any time and without any explanation.

Signature……………………………………………………………

Date, place…………………………………………………

I will use the taped and transcribed conversation as agreed upon above. The recording will be stored on my private computer and will be deleted after my research project is finished.

Signature………………………………………………………..

Date, place…………………………………………………..

Corinna Balavoine, ███████████████████████████ /corinna@balavoine.in

 This research is being supervised by Janne Eldvik, who can be contacted at: janne.eldevik@gmail.com and is a part of the Master Studies programm of the Rudolf Steiner University College, Oslo, Norway.

SAMTYKKE

Det er greit at Corinna tar opp min stemme på bånd.

Jeg forstår at hun skal skrive ned det jeg sier.

Jeg forstår at hun skal skrive et skolearbeid og at hun vil skrive om meg og hvordan hun har opplevd vår tid sammen i ██████.

Jeg kan si nei til dette samarbeid hvis jeg vil.

Ditt navn………………………………………………………….dato…………………………
…………………..

Jeg skal oppbevare vår samtale på min privatcomputer og slette den når projektet mitt er ferdig.

Mitt navn……………………………………………………………..
dato…………………………………………..

Corinna Balavoine, ████████████████████████, corinna@balavoine.in

Dette projektet er en del av Master Studies programmet, Rudolf Steiner Høyskole, Oslo, Norge og er under supervisjonen av Janne Eldvik janne.eldevik@gmail.com.

love is a place

& through this place of

love move

(with brightness of peace)

all places

yes is a world

& in this world of

yes live

(skillfully curled)

all worlds

e.e.cummings

From *E.E. Cummings: Complete poems, 1904-1962*. (1994) G. J. Firmage, (Ed.). New York, NY: W.W. Norton.