

## Interviews

### Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations have been made. All those interviewed were given clear documentation on the aims and intentions of the research and I obtained consent from those participating in face-to-face interviews.

### Planning and Conducting TOMA Interviews

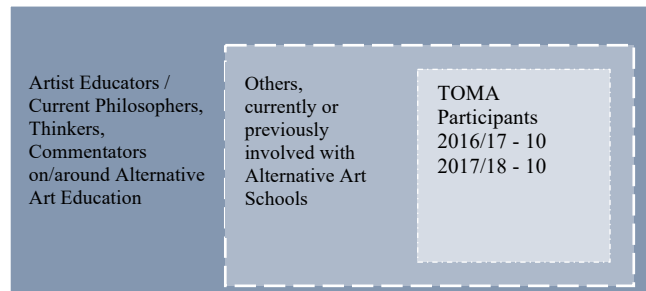
Interviews were conducted in person, in studios, in homes, at Metal Arts, in cafés, and wherever the interviewee dictated. The duration of the interviews was usually sixty minutes some were slightly longer. Each interview was recorded and transcribed after the interview had taken place.

The objective in undertaking interviews as part of the research was to accommodate a variety of dialogical approaches that hold the strategies to investigate participation, employed by each of the three characterisations. The interviews were undertaken at the onset of the PhD and provided preliminary groundwork and introductory observations on TOMA and the alternatives more broadly. The situated TOMA interviews provided the basis for qualitative research and through the data, analysis themes emerged, these themes supported other research findings addressed within the study.

I conducted the interviews after spending several weeks with the first *intake* of TOMA 2016-17, attending crits, artist talks and workshops to gain a rapport and develop an understanding of each of the TOMA participants. The participants became familiar with me and the study I was undertaking, and establishing this relationship assisted me in finding out what kind of questions I might devise. I then developed a set of what I called guiding questions for the TOMA interviews, the intention being that they would give consistency, yet allow for an opening up of the discursive space if required. The guiding questions were also directed by my ongoing conversations with those who had established alternative educational networks, or who had participated in alternatives outside of TOMA.

Three sets of interviews have taken place. One set that interrogates selected artist educators and those who have written on art and education; forms the outer boundary of investigations. The second grouping involves those associated who have instigated or participated in alternative art schools. The third internal set has been interviews with the ten TOMA participants of 2016/17 and ten participants of 2017/18.

**Diagram indicating three domains of interviews that have taken place:**



I captured the interviews on a Zoom H4n professional digital device, using a Tascam DR05x field recorder as a backup. Given the sheer volume of documentation amassed, I elected to send the recordings to a professional transcribing service, Rev.com. Once I received the transcriptions, (usually within twenty-four hours), I scrutinised them whilst listening to the recordings, making any amendments to the translations and listening again for any particular points of emphasis.

**TOMA Interview Questionnaire**

Activating the persona of Vigilant Observer (VO) I elected to use a questionnaire for all of my TOMA interviews. I had considered it important to keep myself focused and to maintain a level of consistency, and also adopt a system so that responses could be analysed through a phenomenographic procedure. This also helped in dictating the length of the interviews, as some artists wished to speak longer than others. The interview questionnaires were sent out to TOMA participants in advance.

The TOMA interview questions were designed to be chronological and elicit a personal journey, moving from pre-TOMA artistic practice to reasons for joining TOMA to the more participatory expectations to emphasise the experience of being with an alternative.

### Alternative Interview Questionnaire

I adapted the questionnaire and used it as a guide when undertaking interviews with others outside of TOMA. The questions asked of those outside TOMA were much more open and in some instances encouraged a more conceptual response. I found on the whole those outside TOMA participation were differently attuned to the educational and alternative context they operated within, and I wanted to capture these *other* considerations of educational systems and frameworks.

If requested I forwarded the questionnaire in advance, this procedure allowed for some to read through and give the questions preliminary consideration and for a small number of others to complete the questionnaire in readiness for our discussion. I observed that this generally elicited more nuanced and insightful responses than just undertaking an interview.

### Being inside the data

After some initial trials, I chose not to use Dedoose or NVivo digital qualitative analysis tools, opting instead to be *in* the research. Applying a physical data analysis system was in keeping with the overarching ethos of the study, one of looking with a critical eye from multiple viewpoints. Setting up Dedoose was time-consuming and presented the data sets in somewhat predictable and unmoveable forms. Undertaking a physical data extraction and analysis technique worked well for my small sample sets. This analogue procedure also allowed me to include other aspects of the interviews such as the drawings of *ideal art education*, and an invitation at the end of the questionnaire.

### Drawing responses

The drawing was introduced at the onset as an alternate form of commentary. It was a prompt on the final section of the interview questionnaires and was another way that I encouraged artists to bring to the fore a personal imaginary. I asked each respondent to draw a vision of their ideal educational space. The act of drawing was fundamental to many of the artists I interviewed, I encouraged these image responses as a record of thoughts, ones that could imbue experiential qualities, perceptions and future possibilities for the alternatives.

## Analysis and Coding of Interviews

Analysis was performed on the data following the seven-step data reduction procedure illustrated below. This was used to identify and compile the significant utterances 'pools of meaning', that came to the fore.<sup>1</sup>

1. Familiarisation by reading through interview transcripts/surveys
2. Compilation of interview responses
3. Reduction of interviewees' responses into central parts of the dialogue
4. Preliminary taxonomy or classifications of similar responses
5. Preliminary comparison of categories
6. Naming of categories
7. Contrastive comparison of categories

## Appendix A

In translating the questionnaires using the phenomenographical approach shown in stages 1-7 above, I formulated a network of associations, which I considered as a form of thinking through mapping. The frequency of responses is shown alongside the pools of meaning in Appendix A. The generated pools of meaning were then gathered to form statements and then applied as areas of contrastive comparisons of categories to support Chapters 02 and 03 of the research.

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<sup>1</sup> Marton, F., 1986. Phenomenography - A research approach investigating different understandings of reality. *Journal of Thought*, 21(2), 28-49.