

THE MORE-THAN-DIGITAL SCRAPMAP: EXPLORING THE GENERATIVE POSSIBILITIES OF QUALITATIVE DIGITAL DATA

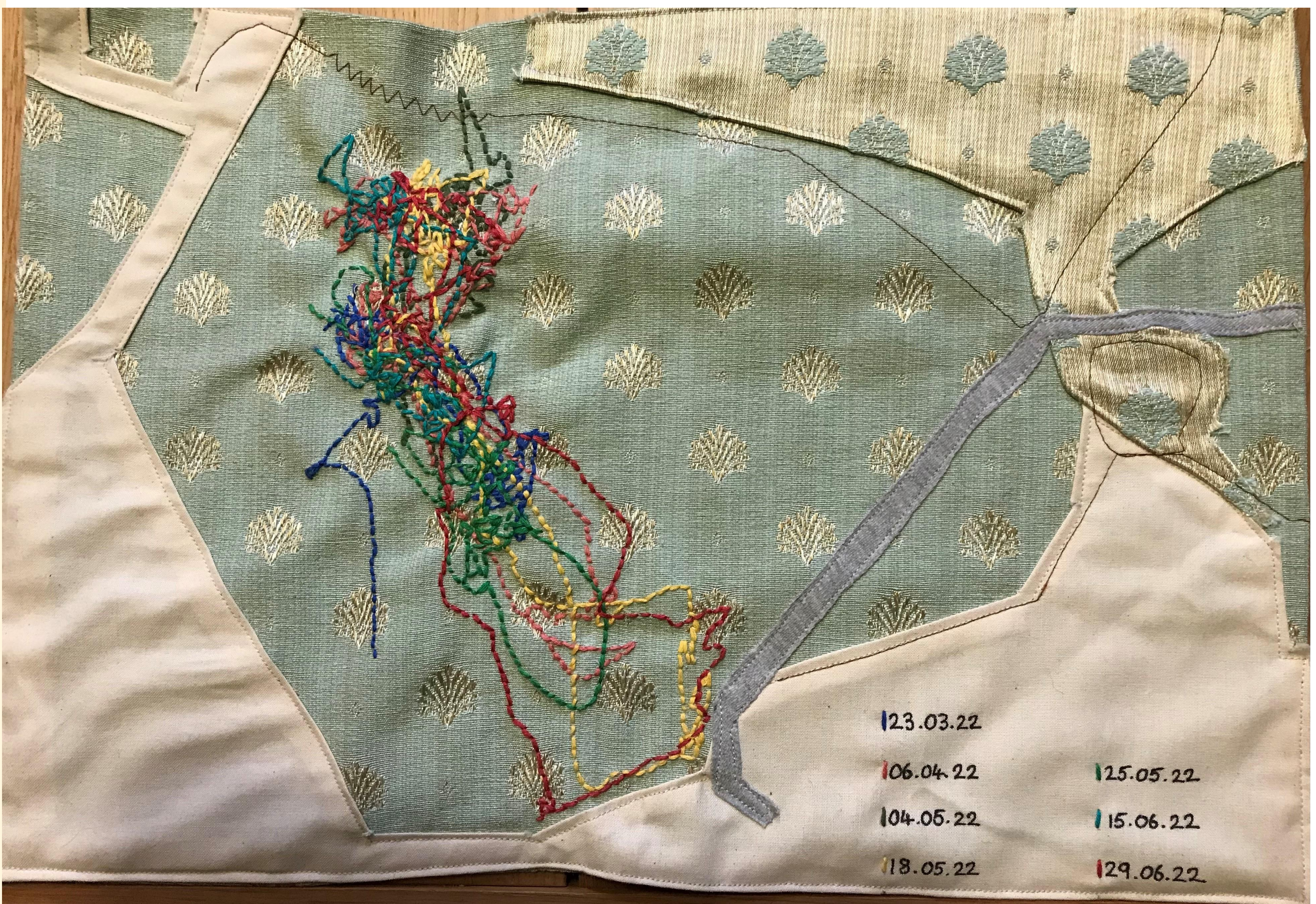


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From nature entanglement via digital abstraction to material artefact...

The map is made from assembled/embroidered fabric and is a material exploration of the practice of researcher wayfaring (1) in a qualitative research context, over the course of seven separate visits to one forest school site. Each colour represents a different visit.

PLEASE TOUCH



CONTEXT

- This project is a playful exploration into the qualitative research possibilities afforded by digital data, the notion of researcher positionality and the validity/usefulness of researcher-generated qualitative data arising from a forest school study.
- Forest school is a long-term outdoor woodland-based children's education programme which encourages curiosity and independence, with an emphasis on learner-initiated learning (2).
- Posthuman childhood and education scholars may draw upon new materialist ideas to enable them to look beyond traditional humanist theories of education, play and pedagogy, often in outdoor contexts (3).
- New materialism addresses the theoretical neglect of *matter* and considers ways in which such supposedly inert material stuff (such as the trees, rocks and earth that make up the forest school) may be imbued with both meaning and agency. Hillevi Lenz Taguchi notes that viewing learning events as a materialised, embodied reality "makes knowing just as much a matter of the body and the material as it is a matter of understanding and thinking through discourse/language" (4 p.40).

AIMS

- Building on the principle that "all matter can be understood as having agency" (4 p.4), the researcher is left in a position of deep entanglement both with the forest itself and with the notion of objective data.
- I wanted to find a way to track the agentic power of the forest school site upon me as a researcher. I also wanted to explore the theoretical edges of data generation and engagement.
- The data engagement process aimed to generate new ways to view the forest school experience (and extend my understanding of my own embodiment in the research process).
- Tim Ingold's definition of wayfaring (1) resonated very strongly with my own experience of inhabiting the forest school space, both in terms of making my own in-the-moment decisions about who to follow and observe, and in terms of watching the children's activities within the space. I decided to trace my own wayfaring line over a series of seven engagements with forest school.

METHOD

The study took place over the course of seven separate forest school sessions. These were my instructions:

1. Walk the map wearing the watch. Turn on when you leave the base camp tarpaulin, turn off when you return back. Then don't think about it in between. You are recording not making; however you are generating a line as the GPS system makes its digital track.
2. Download the map via Bluetooth which links to the fitness app, which generates a shareable map trace in the form of a data file. Download this .gpx file.
3. Open the GPS/Ordnance Survey mapping website and upload the file.
4. Download the generated map route and open in Microsoft paint.
5. Print the map route on the same scale as the scrap map fabric.
6. Position the paper map on the scrapmap.
7. Trace the map route onto dressmakers' paper.
8. Pin the map and sew along the lines. You decide how big the stitches are. Repeat from Step 1.

DISCUSSION

- This process was a data transmutation – moving from visceral nature entanglement via digital abstraction to material artefact. Dynamic engagement with the data revealed new aspects of my own mutually agentic relationship with the forest site.
- The physical sewing process caused me to consider again and again how the forest school site, rather than being an inert landscape or backdrop, acted agentially upon me. In other words, the physical setting – the living matter-stuff of bushes, veteran beech trees and muddy patches, as well as the undulations of the sloped site itself – acted powerfully upon me.
- Specific places and features caused me to spend extended time in them, and this became materially apparent as I struggled by hand to place stitch upon stitch in the same place on the fabric of the map.
- This project extended my understanding of a key concept underpinning the debate about the nature of post-positivist data (5): everything I do with the data (including the initial generation) does something to it. Data is always dynamic and fluid. Data is a trace of something that *was* (created in a different medium). Thus I consider this project to be a playful metaphor for all researcher engagement with data.

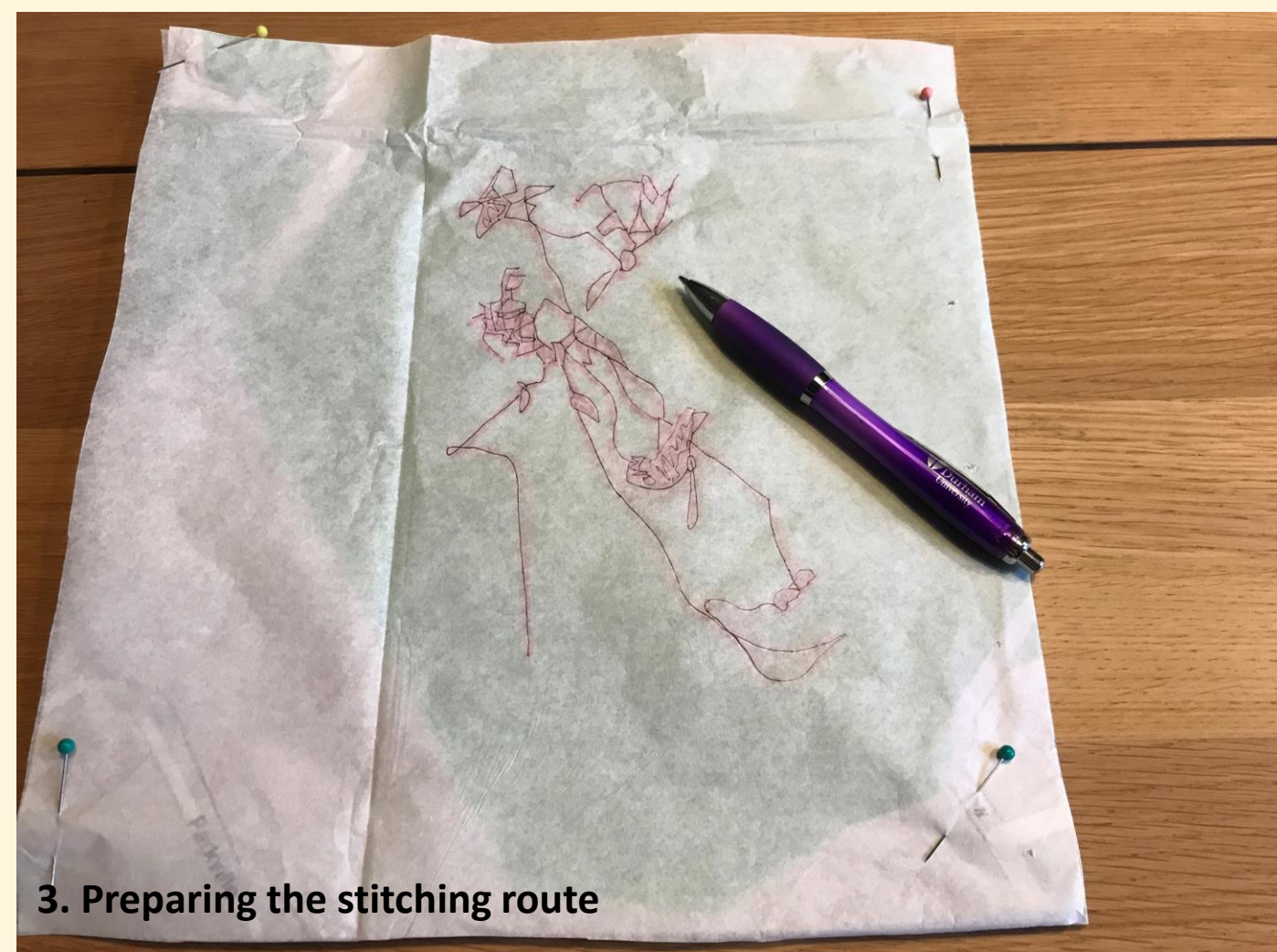
PROCESS



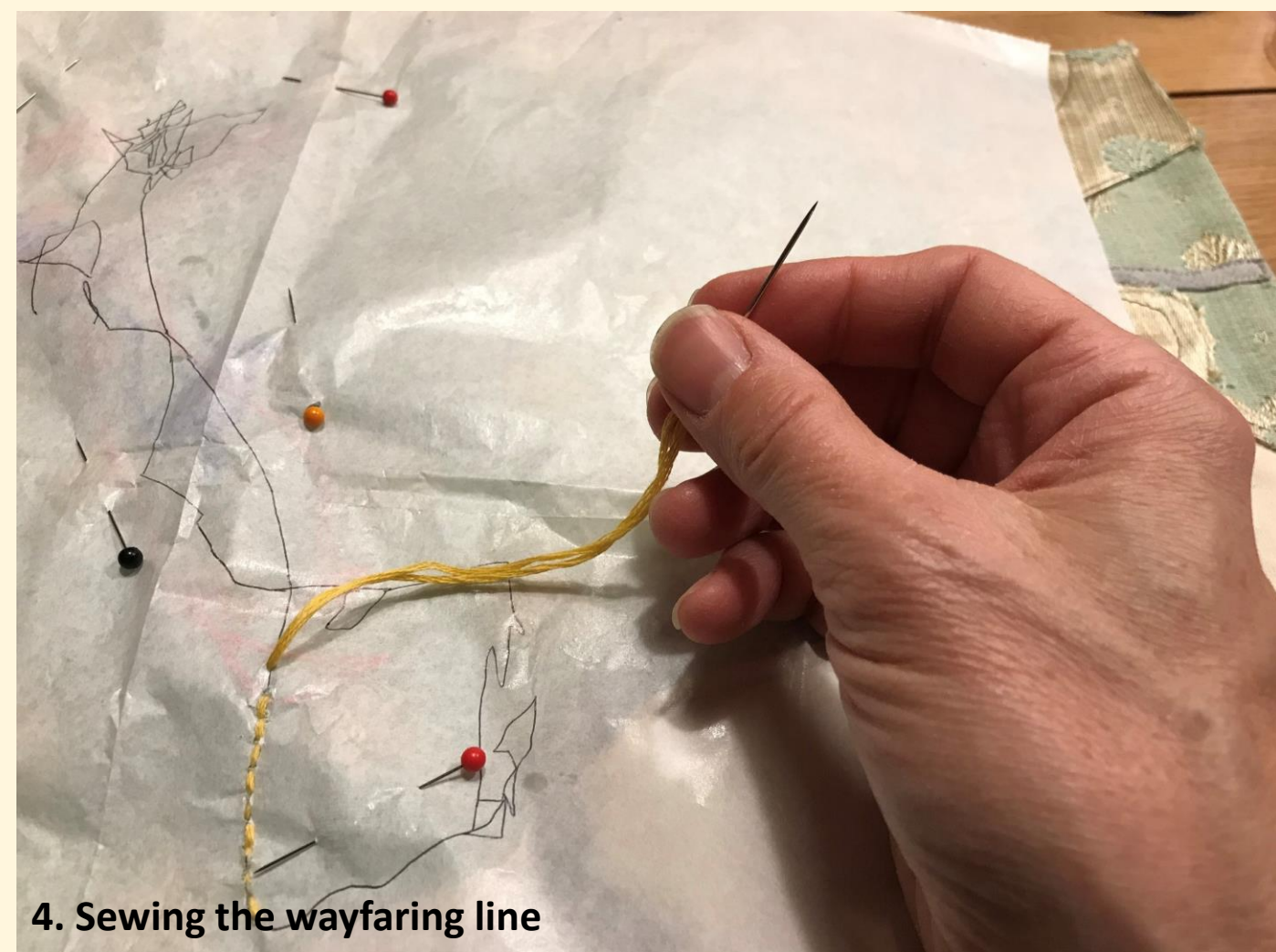
1. Generating the GPS wayfaring line



2. Transferring the wayfaring line onto paper



3. Preparing the stitching route



4. Sewing the wayfaring line

REFERENCES:

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4. Lenz Taguchi H. Going Beyond the Theory/Practice Divide in Early Childhood Education: Introducing an Intra-Active Pedagogy. 1st edition. London ; New York: Routledge; 2009.
5. Ellingson LL, Sotirin P. Making Data in Qualitative Research: Engagements, Ethics, and Entanglements. 1st edition. London New York: Routledge; 2020.