BOOK ABSTRACT

Written by a geographer-cartoonist, this book proposes the doing of comics as a practice of research in geography. In light of the 'creative (re)turn' in cultural geography and given the growing interest in geohumanities in experimentation with new creative and art-based methods, the book starts with a focus on 'narrative geographies' and embraces a cross-disciplinary, geocritical, and relational approach to comic book geographies. The theoretical and methodological proposal of the book involves scholars working in the social sciences, humanities, literary geographies, mobilities, comics, literary, and urban studies, as well as visual artists, comics authors, and art practitioners. Comics are valuable objects of geographical interest because of their spatial grammar. The 'geoGraphic novel' is a product and practice of research that has the power to assemble and disassemble new spatial meanings. It allows geographical issues emerge, can compose geocentred stories, engages wider and non-specialistic audiences, promotes geo-artistic collaboration, and works as a narrative intervention in urban contexts. Through a practice-based approach and the internal perspective of a geographer-cartoonist, the book provides examples of how to conduct geoGraphic fieldwork by embracing a disparate set of qualitative, mobile, visual, and creative methods, from walking to creative writing, from interviews to autoehnography, from ethnofiction to photography and observational drawing. Through a processual approach, reflections on key concepts in geography such as assemblage, mobility, public space, fieldwork, positionality, and reflexivity emerge from the analysis of the ideation, composition, and dissemination of geoGraphic narratives.

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Figure 1.1. Assembling the comics page as an architectural building. TAMassociati, Pantaleo, R, Gerardi, M and Molinari, L 2019, *Architettura della felicità. Futuro come sostanza di cose sperate*, BeccoGiallo, Padova, p. 63. Reproduction by permission of the authors.

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Preface. Constellations of urban comics

The geography of my relationship with comics is one with deep roots. As a kid, I remember waiting with my brother Davide for the next issue of *Mickey Mouse* to come out, particularly in the summer when the issues of the comic book marked the passing of time. As we grew up, the never-ending wait became less exciting. I became a teenager and, apparently, I had more serious things to deal with. If I were asked to trace a map of my comic book geographies, that period would be a big 'black hole', very similar to that drawn by Charles Burns in his graphic novel to represent the terrifying metamorphosis of becoming an adult. Yet, I remember the precise coordinates of the moment in which I met comics again. It was Christmas 2006, when my cousin gifted me with *Babel Vol. 2* by French cartoonist David B. At that time, I was a first-year BA student of Literary Studies at the University of Padua and this was the first comic book I read as an (almost) adult. A series of unforeseen events followed that gift. I bought *Babel Vol. 1*, of course, then the Italian translation of David B.'s autobiographical graphic novel, *Epileptic*, and from that moment on, I knew that comics were extremely serious. I liked the idea of exploring new types of narration, searching for the relationships between graphic novels and literature, between images and words, fiction and reality. A fragmentary collection with works by international cartoonists, like Chris Ware, Paul Karasik, David Mazzucchelli, Will Eisner and Joe Sacco, and Italian authors like GiPi, Manuele Fior and Gianluca Costantini started to grow on my shelves. My friend Gilda finding an online ad from an Italian website specialising in comics and criticism led to me starting to work as a journalist and reporter for LoSpazioBianco.it ('the white space'). I was fascinated by the underground comix scene, where I eventually met Claudio Calia, a graphic journalist and friend, who coordinated the Sherwood Comix festival. Thanks to him, I had met Guido Ostanel and had started to collaborate with the publishing house the BeccoGiallo, often selling their 'comics of civil commitment' at a stand during festivals such as Komikazen, BilBolBul, the Treviso Comic Book Festival, and BeComics, before becoming an author myself. All this happened while I was pursuing a Masters in Literary Theory and Criticism and then a PhD in Human Geography. With my supervisor Tania Rossetto constantly pushing me to value my interest in comics even from an academic point of view, I started to gradually merge my interest in comics with my academic research and practice. Not by chance, during the first year of my PhD I was also a student at the 'Scuola internazionale di comics. Academy of visual arts and new media' in Padua. Not by chance, only a couple of months later, in October 2014, I met Juliet J. Fall and Jason Dittmer during a conference on 'space and gender' in Bologna. What came afterwards can be partially found in the pages of this book. Yet, if the disciplinary background from which I came to write this book will be exposed in the chapters, through theoretical and methodological references, I needed to make clear from the beginning that much of the impetus that led me to write this book comes from the many people, relations, and dialogues I had over the years outside academic boundaries.

Comics as a research practice: drawing narrative geographies beyond the frame is not a book that contextualises comic book geographies within a broader dialogue between media and geography. Neither is it a book where you will find a diachronic perspective on the long-lasting relationship between comics and the city, nor does it propose a history of the entanglements of geographical thought and comics. You will not find the accurate analysis of how fundamental works in the history of comics have represented urban space and geographic themes throughout the pages. I am sure there are more authoritative works that will help you to do this. *Comics as a research practice* is a book about how to bring comic book geographies into practice. This book suggests using comics as a research practice to compose counter-narratives by assembling and disassembling geoGraphic narratives in public space. The book hopes to let theoretical and methodological reasoning emerge from empirical examples by proposing creative interventions to read cities differently and activate processes of narrative place-making. What you will find, then, is a set of case studies that hope to stimulate further experimentations with urban comics, together with some initial attempts to *do comics* integrating qualitative, mobile, ethnographic, mapping, and creative methods of research. You will see, then, interviewees becoming characters, walk-along interviews turning into plotlines, buildings speaking for themselves through it-narration, maps unfolding through creative practices, banal places becoming central narrative chronotopes, and transport means revealing themselves as archives of memories, practices, affects, and relations. Sometimes, you will find auto- or ethnofictional vignettes, short excerpts from fieldwork journals, original photographs, and comics pages. Do not trust them more or even less than you would trust a well-written theoretical paragraph in the book.

Chapter 1, *Introduction: enacting comic book geographies*, provides readers with a very brief introduction to the cross-disciplinary, processual, and practice-based approach proposed in the book. Here, readers will find a short introduction to comics as doings, to what a geocritical approach to comic book geographies implies, and to the core concept of the 'geoGraphic narrative' as a product and practice for creative geographical research. The empirical part of the book that follows is divided into two sections with two chapters each: *Part One. Assembling comics for creative interventions in urban space* and *Part two. Moving comics from representation to practice*. In *Part one*, I focus on two urban comics projects that were realised through geo-artistic and transdisciplinary collaborations. Chapter 2, *Comics as assemblages: building urban stories in the public sphere*, presents a site-specific comics installation realised by Mónica Bellido Mora for the geo-artistic exhibition *Street Geography. Drawing cities for a sustainable future*, which took place in Padua in 2018. The chapter explores the opportunities and limits of research-art collaborations and presents comics as 'narrative interferences' in public space. With the train station of Padua as a site of artistic intervention, the chapter further explores assemblage, mobility, it-narration, and the interaction between human, non-human, and elemental forces in urban contexts through the insertion of photographs and short autofictional paragraphs. Chapter 3, *Doing urban comics: ethnoGraphic strolling across 'peripheral' neighbourhoods*, revolves around the process of ideation, composition, and dissemination of the comic book anthology *Quartieri. Viaggio al centro delle periferie italiane* (2019) that I co-edited with Adriano Cancellieri. First, the chapter focuses on how scholars from different disciplinary backgrounds (sociologists, geographers, anthropologists, urbanists, and others) collaborated with cartoonists to realise five comics stories about five peripheral neighbourhoods in Italy (Palermo, Rome, Bologna, Padua, and Milan); second, it retraces the disparate methodologies that Cancellieri and I embraced during fieldwork in the Arcella neighbourhood in Padua, from go-along interviews to walking and mapping practices. Finally, it analyses the stylistic and narrative choices I made for the graphic realization of the comics story, playing the role of both the geographer and cartoonist. The analysis continues in *Part two* with a focus on comics, mobility studies, and the geohumanities. Chapter 4, *Graphic mobilities: mobile practices, bodies, and landscapes of movement in comics*, proposes 'graphic mobilities' as a potential field of interest within mobility studies, by understanding the comics language as an intrinsically 'mobile grammar'. The chapter analyses some examples of graphic narratives on the move by contemporary comics authors, from Erin Williams to Jon McNaught, Nick Drnaso, Chris Ware, and Adrian Tomine, to see how mobile chronotopes, landscapes of movement, bodies, and everyday mobile practices are both represented and performed in comics. The chapter also illustrates an encounter between graphic mobilities and the geohumanities and introduces the creative geoGraphic narrative that is at the centre of the final chapter. Indeed, Chapter 5, *Doing comics on the move: an autoethnographic account of geoGraphic fieldwork*, focuses on the short geoGraphic novel *Lines* that I realised as a post-doctoral fellow for the international project PUTSPACE. The chapter moves into exploring the practice of doing comics by presenting many pages from the original comics story *Lines*, following the aim of the project to analyse 'public transport as public space in European Cities'. Chapter 5 also explores the activities, methods, materials, and practices that were used to conduct geoGraphic fieldwork; it makes the process of composition explicit, showing the geographical reasons for some specific narrative and stylistic choices. The book, as a whole, is an assemblage of episodes, references, vignettes, facts and fiction, memories and thoughts:

> What emerges is an ethic of theory-as-assemblage, i.e. as a constellation of singularities that holds together through difference rather than in spite of it, and that cultivates a provocative and fertile common ground.
>
> McFarlane, C and Anderson, B 2011, *Thinking with assemblage*

[ABSTRACT
This first chapter introduces readers to the cross-disciplinary, geocritical, and practice-based approach to comic book geographies proposed in the book. The chapter explores the 'narrative geographies' of comics starting from recent research on the exchanges between 'pages and places' in literary geographies, and between art and geography in the geohumanities. Two entangled perspectives for *enacting* comic book geographies emerge: *comics as doings* are creative outputs and narrative interventions to be used in urban contexts and engage wider audiences; the practice of *doing comics* is a creative, narrative, and graphic practice to conduct geographical research if combined with other qualitative methodologies. Furthermore, the chapter introduces the key concept of the 'geoGraphic novel': an hybrid creative-research genre that makes use of both the intrinsic spatial peculiarities of the comic language, and of creative methods to conduct, represent, and disseminate geographical research.
Keywords:
literary geography, geohumanities, practice, geoGraphic novel, comic book geographies, urban comics]

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1. Introduction: enacting comic book geographies

Comics as a research practice: drawing narrative geographies beyond the frame explores the doing of comics as a creative, narrative, context-based, and mobile practice for conducting research in geography, and intervening in urban contexts through art-based interferences in comics form. Starting from an cross-disciplinary perspective (McCormack 2005, p. 119) and a transdisciplinary research practice, the book responds to the call for a 'commitment to resolute experimentalism' (Dewsbury et al. 2002, p. 440) in geographical research, and proposes comic book geographies as a prolific laboratory for conducting creative methodological experimentations in urban spaces. The book speaks especially to those working in the geohumanities and in urban and literary geography, and, more in general, to all those cultural geographers that are interested in experimenting with creative methods for the narrativisation of cities, maps, places, and everyday mobile practices. The book is also meant to move beyond disciplinary boundaries and speak to scholars working in the interdisciplinary fields of mobility, spatial literary, urban, cultural, and visual studies. Anthropologists exploring visual methods, sociologists, urbanists working with narrative approaches to urban contexts, art-practitioners interested in exploring the possibilities and limits of research-art collaborations, and even comics authors particularly attentive to the representation of space could be equally engaged by the practice-based approach of the book. The book also attempts to engage with a less specialistic readership; students at different levels who would like to start practicing cross-disciplinary spatial thinking. For this reason, theoretical and methodological reasoning in the book is explained through practice-based examples and concrete case studies that show how to ideate, compose, and disseminate urban comics. Finally, through the insertion of coloured images, such as photographs taken during fieldwork and original comics pages, along with several autoethnographic and ethnofictional excerpts, readers have access the research process from a narrative and internal perspective, and are invited to engage actively with comics as means to activate geographical thinking. Readers of this book have an active role to play since they are asked to take part in the process of meaning-making, and of assembling and disassembling urban narratives.

Comic book geographies in practice

As John D. Dewsbury et al. suggest 'enacting geographies' means to propose a serial logic of the unfinished that would be able to recognise, undergo, and embrace, rather than define and explain, the ongoing, exceeding essence of the world and, therefore, the unfolding essence of research itself. This book starts with the suggestion of accepting that 'the world is more excessive than we can theorise' (p. 437), and invites geographers to embrace a kind of spatial thinking that focuses on processually registering experience and presenting research, rather than on steadily representing fixed thoughts:

> We want to work on presenting the world, not on representing it, or explaining it. Our understanding of non-representational theory is that it is characterised by a firm belief in the actuality of representation. (Dewsbury et al. 2002, p. 438)

In this light, representations are no more interpreted as 'veils, dreams, ideologies, as anything, in short, that is a covering which is laid over the ontic', rather as practices that constantly (re)present the world. Following this suggestion, recent research in comic book geography has demonstrated that even comics can be 'taken

seriously' (p. 438). This book takes a step forward and suggests that comics have to be taken seriously not just as objects of analysis but rather as creative practices to conduct geographical research through the use of disparate empirical engagements with urban comics.

Furthermore, if representations are considered 'as performative in themselves; as doings' (p. 438), the same applies especially to comics. In fact, comics peculiar spatial structure invites authors and readers in a constant spatial effort; provides them with an experience of performative movements across the space of the page; and asks them for constant assembling, disassembling, and reassembling of meanings throughout the narration. As I have highlighted in my previous work on comic book cartographies, 'both the comic author, who composes the comic space by making spatial decisions, and the reader live a fragmentary cognitive and embodied spatial experience that is similar to that of searching for the way through composing and reading a map'(Peterle 2017, p. 45). Writing and reading comics are intrinsically spatial practices that engage geographers in immersive experiences, and spatial thinking. According to Jason Dittmer' seminal manifesto, 'comic book visualities open geographers up to uncertainty, tangentiality, and contingency' (2010a, p. 234) and comics should be explored from both a representational and non-representational angle. Through 'emergent causality', comics propose a construction of meaning that proceeds through the montage of apparently disconnected elements and unrelated parts (p. 235). Recalling Walter Benjamin's constellations of meaning, comics do not compose a single mosaic or vision but rather they activate an emergent, unceasing process of spatial reconfiguration, and composition of meaning. *Enacting comic book geographies* means embracing comics as both an object and practice of research, the double perspective of the author and reader, of the geographer and cartoonist, or researcher-artist. *Comics as a research practice* invites us to cooperate with a relational, non-linear, and plurivectorial perception of time and space; a processual understanding of representation; and a narrative conception of urban space.

Starting from these 'tactical suggestions' (p. 439) and understanding geographical research as a pluralistic, open-ended process of experiencing and knowing space, in this volume I suggest exploring comic book geographies from both a representational and more-than-representational and interpreting comics as an 'emerging field of practice' also in geography (Kuttner et al. 2020, p. 2). Comics offer more than representations of geographical issues; they are 'cultural artifacts, sites of literacy, means of communication, discursive events and practices, sites of imaginative interplay, and tools for literacy sponsorship' (Kuttner et al. 2020, pp. 2–3) that permit geographers to conduct qualitative research differently. Interpreting comics as performative doings permits me to open up comic book geographies to a double perspective that will emerge throughout the empirical chapters of the book: *comics as doings*, and *the practice of doing comics*. Thinking of *comics as doings* means recognising that they act, move, affect, and intervene in the world. Comics create connections and relationships and activate practices that have effects beyond the comics' frame, outside the page, and in the real world. As Ben Anderson claims, there has been a 'range of substantive and theoretical research trajectories coalesce[ing] around the proposition that representations do things – they are activities that enable, sustain, interrupt, consolidate, or otherwise (re)make forms or ways of life' (2019, p. 1120). Given cultural geographers' 'concerted effort to understand the force of representations as they make, remake, and unmake worlds' (Anderson 2019, p. 1120), this book proposes a specific focus on how the intrinsically spatial grammar of comics (Groensteen 2007) has the potential to make, remake, and unmake urban contexts. As Dydia DeLyser et al. say, geographers, 'are working, in multiple ways, with multiple methods, to find geographical praxis that may speak to a world always in the making' (DeLyser et al. 2010, p. 14). I suggest that the *doing of comics* could be embraced as a prolific research practice to explore the unfolding process of building worlds through words and images.

This ability of comic narratives to act on urban spaces is especially intriguing in light of the recent (re)appearance of a so-called 'creative turn' in geography and the declared 'urgency' to experiment with creative approaches and methodologies, especially within the field of the geohumanities (Eshun and Madge 2016; Hawkins 2013b; Jellis 2015). The practice of *doing comics*, thus, represents an opportunity to embrace creativity 'as a mode of critical exploration' (Hawkins 2013a, p. 53). Harriet Hawkins has defined 'creative geographies' as 'modes of experimental 'art-full' research that have creative practices at their heart' and which 'have become increasingly vibrant of late' (2015, pp. 262). As she further argues:

> These research strategies, which see geographers working as and in collaboration with artists, creative writers and a range of other arts practitioners, re-cast geography's interdisciplinary relationship with arts and humanities scholarship and practices and its own intradisciplinary relations. (2015, pp. 262–3)

Following the increasing interest in art-geography contaminations, this volume explores comic book geographies from a processual, often autoethnographic perspective. In fact, theoretical reasoning emerges

here through a series of empirical examples and creative graphic interventions in urban space that I realised either in collaboration with artists, art practitioners, and scholars from other disciplines, or that I drew and wrote myself.

So, why focus on comics in urban contexts? There are several reasons for these creative comics collaborations to happen in urban contexts. Comics and the city are inseparably tied and the close connection between graphic narratives and urban spaces and between the genre of the graphic novel and the metropolis has been widely recognised and explored across disciplines (Ahrens and Meteling 2010; Eisner 1985, 1996). For the purpose of my book, two very recent works analysing the relationship between comics and the urban environment were especially helpful: Benjamin Fraser's *Visible cities, global comics: urban images and spatial form* (2019) and Dominic Davies' *Urban comics: infrastructure and the global city in contemporary graphic narratives* (2019). Both works analyse urban comics as immersed in broader geographical, spatial, economic, social, and urban contexts. These two works interpret comics as tools to understand beyond represent cities, but more disruptively to intervene in the shaping of urban spatialities. According to Davies, 'graphic narrative is able to capture the political forces that solidify into the material infrastructure of contemporary urban spaces' (2019, p. 11). In fact, according to both Fraser and Davies, comics are made of visual and textual elements, of single fragments of space that somehow re-produce urban infrastructures, making them visible, readable, understandable, and, thus, malleable. Mirroring the malleability and contingency of urban space, comics too are openly malleable and contingent in their structure, as Fraser affirms, 'in the right hands, the visual structure of the comics page thus becomes a way of exposing, questioning, critiquing, and perhaps even correcting this systematic urban imbalance' (2019, pp. 6–7). Therefore, in thinking of the city as a narrative space, and of the comic page as a spatial architecture, comics literacy can become an extremely useful tool to continue reimagining the urban and rethinking cities' materialities through graphic representations (Amin and Thrift 2002; Latham and McCormack 2004):

> In presenting and re-presenting urban space, urban comics use their infrastructural form to shift the social and spatial coordinates that shape urban life, a recalibration that can contribute to the rebuilding of a more socially and spatially just city. (Davies 2019, p. 17)

Comics, thus, can be interpreted as partially unpredictable spatial practices and creative interventions that create spatial transgression through the construction of new meanings, or the de-construction of old ones. Comics can be used by geographers as urban interferences that use the same architectural language and spatial grammar of cities; in fact, like cities, the geographies of comics allow for interruptions, transgressions, changes of trajectories, and plurivectorial movements. This book aims to contribute to urban comics studies from a precise practice-based angle that attempts to show how urban comics work from within, when spatial choices are made by a comics author who happens to be also a geographer. Furthermore, rephrasing the title of the chapter by Paul J. Kuttner, Nick Sousanis, and Marcus B. Weaver-Hightower *How to draw comics the scholarly way: creating comics-based research in the academy* (2017), this book suggests how to draw comics the geographically way, and proposes a set of practices for creating comics-based research in geography.

<insert Figure 1.1>

To this end, before presenting the geoGraphic novel as a creative and narrative research practice in geography, I would like to refer to the concept of 'assemblage' as it has been outlined in recent geographical research with a focus on its relationship with comics and urban thinking. Indeed, assemblage helps to further reinforce the connections between graphic narratives and urban spaces. Regardless of how we might interpret and define assemblage, 'as what? a concept, a sensibility, an orientation?' (McFarlane 2011, p. 651), it is certainly because of its incessant mobility, incipient trans-locality, declared pluralism, spatio-temporal relationality, and professed openness to issues of processuality, practice, and performativity that a reflection on this concept recurs in this book. Assemblage could be interpreted as both an orientation, a predisposition of thought on the world, and an object of study in the world, especially when speaking about urbanism and comics. Like comics, cities themselves appear as spaces in-becoming, constantly being assembled and reassembled. As Colin McFarlane affirms, 'assemblage orientates the researcher to the multiple practices through which urbanism is achieved as a play of the actual and the possible' (2011, p. 652). Therefore, a conception of the city-as-assemblage interprets even the city itself as a processual, relational, generative, and emergent montage of past, present, and future times and spaces. The city is no more understood as localised and bounded, one and single, but instead 'as multiple assemblages of actual and virtual urbanisms' (p. 655). Assemblage, thus, is a way of understanding, approaching, dwelling, and

even representing urban spaces. If, as Dittmer affirms, 'the ways in which we narrate the urban are a crucial site of intervention in which we as geographers can work to enable greater awareness of urban assemblages and the complex processes that sustain them' (2014, p. 500), then, what if we use the assemblage of comics as a form to represent and conduct research on urban space? Narrating urbanism in terms of not just as-assemblage but through-assemblage is certainly a challenge. As Dittmer further explains, because most urban narratives adopt the perspective associated with one or a limited number of human protagonists and tend to be linear in form, 'what is needed then are new narratives of urbanism that express the dynamism of the city, that could be able to act back upon our own embodied sensibilities, enabling us to see the city anew' (Dittmer 2014, p. 478). I hope this book can be interpreted as an experimental attempt to proceed in this direction.

A geocritical reading of comic book geographies

Through its hybrid visual and textual essence and spatial grammar, the language of comics inherently asks for a multifocal disciplinary perspective and is a perfect environment for cross-disciplinary research practice (Peterle 2017, p. 44). Moving from visual to urban studies and from the social sciences to the humanities, this book aims to respond to an imperative already inherent in comics' multiple modalities that is 'to think nimbly and creatively across conventional disciplinary boundaries' (Ball and Kuhlman, p. XXI). In terms of positionality, this attempt comes from a cultural geographer working within the geohumanities, which is intended as the 'rapidly growing zone of creative interaction between geography and the humanities' (Richardson 2010, p. 3), and with the intent of embracing 'geocreativity' as an inventive mode for thinking, designing, and practicing geographical research. Therefore, the different chapters in the book embrace some of the strategies of geohumanities such as, 'a proclivity to transgress disciplinary boundaries; to accumulate layer upon layer of transdisciplinary data, and then make connections; to imagine the world as well as describe it; and to produce scholarship, art, poetry, community, and politics (often simultaneously)' through methodologies developed in disparate disciplinary contexts (Dear 2011a, p. 7). If, as Micheal Dear affirms, 'the greatest enemy to academic creativity is disciplinary boundaries', this book is one of the many voices that react to the, 'call for an interdisciplinarity based in the ability to speak simultaneously in many intellectual tongues' through practicing creative interdisciplinary exchanges (Dear 2011b, pp. 11–12).

Despite a proclivity to think across disciplinary boundaries, my positionality is inevitably defined by both the disciplinary and geographical context in which I am working. They influence the way in which I interpret comics and the references I will use in my reasoning. I am sure that visual anthropologists, sociologists, experts in media and comics studies, and even geographers working on the geographies of media and geopolitics would all approach comics from different perspectives (Dell'Agnese and Amato 2016; De Spuches 2016; Dittmer 2010b). Therefore, I will present my geocritical, narrative, and creative approaches in the following paragraphs, giving readers a kind of roadmap to follow the reasoning throughout the book. At the same time, I would like to immediately stress that my geographical positionality plays a significant role in the book. Since I am living and working as both a geographer and comics author in north-eastern Italy, my empirical case studies will be mostly situated in the city of Padua in the Veneto region, except for the one presented in Chapter 5. These geographical coordinates also influenced the network of collaborations I have built over the years in the Italian comics scene; the presence of the BeccoGiallo publishing house in Padua and the trust and friendship established with the editorial board and with many of the authors publishing with them represents a significant starting point for many reasonings and collaborations proposed in the two sections of the book. For this reason, the images from works by some of the comics authors that have deeply influenced my geoGraphic thought – like Eliana Albertini, Claudio Calia, Gianluca Costantini, and TAMassociati – are inserted in this chapter, and the reproduction of their comics in these pages represents their steady presence as points of reference during my research practice and fieldwork activities. Throughout the book, readers will find works by Italian authors that were not translated into English together with internationally well-known cartoonists like Nick Drnaso, Nora Krug, Jon McNaught, Adrian Tomine, Chris Ware, and Erin Williams. I believe Sheila Hones' reflection on the literary geographies of inspiration, creation, and production, but also of promotion and consumption is extremely important even for a processual understanding of comic book geographies, as, in fact, 'an author producing fiction will in practice usually be drawing on a complex network of extended sociospatial relations' (2014, p. 133). The same applies for a geographer-cartoonist. Recalling Hones' words, the event of the geoGraphic narrative is always situated, and its intratextual, intertextual, and extratextual geographies, which means the sociospatialities of its ideation, creation, reception, are equally important to consider for comic book geographers (p. 130).

My critical perspective is inspired by seminal works in literary geographies by Jon Anderson (2014), Marc Brosseau (1994, 1995, 2017), Sheila Hones (2008, 2014), Angahard Saunders (2010), Robert T. Tally Jr. (2011), and Bertrand Westphal (2011), and by interdisciplinary dialogues happening within the Association of Literary Urban Studies (ALUS) (Ameel et al. 2015, Finch et al. 2017), in the open-access e-journal *Literary Geographies*, which is intended as a 'forum for new research and collaboration in the field of literary/geographical studies' – a quote from the journal's website. Of course, my perspective is also situated within a specific geographical and disciplinary context. Therefore, theoretical reflections by Italian scholars working on the relationship between geography and fiction (Lando 1993; Tanca 2019), on comics and literature from an interdisciplinary spatial perspective (Guglielmi and Iacoli 2013; Luchetta 2020; Papotti and Tomasi 2014; Rossetto 2014), and the conversations that have emerged in two thematic groups of the Association of Italian Geographers (AGeI), namely devoted to 'Literature and geography' and 'Comics and Geography', are of great importance for the content of this book. Yet, the aim of this volume is not to provide you with an exhaustive theoretical framework on literary or comic book geographies; my scope is rather to move comic book geographies from representation to practice, from the critical readers' to the author's perspective.

From a disciplinary perspective, thus, the idea of the 'geoGraphic novel' as both a product and practice of research comes from the reforged connections between geography and literature (Sharp 2010) and from broader reasoning on what I call 'narrative geographies'. My focus on narrative geographies starts from the interdisciplinary field of literary geographies and from a 'geocritical' and 'carto-centred' (Peterle 2019, Rossetto 2014) approach not only to texts but also to disparate forms, genres, and practices of space-centred narration. Thus, a 'narrative geographical' approach analyses the entanglements between real and fictional, textual and material spaces; it explores the prolific exchange between the narrative representations of space, place, maps, and mobilities, and the spatial practices that are activated by them; it experiments with narrative forms, textual, and visual storytelling practices as creative ways to deconstruct dominant discourses about cities, places, and spatial identities and to activate the plurivocal composition of spatial-meanings. Moreover, a 'narrative geographical' approach rejects an instrumental use of literature, texts, and narrative or artistic representations and tries to consider both the contents and peculiar forms of different languages, types, and genres of narration to see how they shape unpredicted geographical visions. Narrative geographies are explored through a processual and relational approach (Saunders and Anderson 2016) that reads narrative representations as emergent spatial practices that are situated in space and time and performed in different contexts. In this context, the role of authors and readers is equally important as are their different engagements and positionalities; thus, 'narrative geographies' explore narrative representations as processes, from the moment of ideation to the moment of composition and circulation. A narrative geographical approach, thus, is a critical interdisciplinary perspective for analysing narratives from a space-centred point of view; it is also a creative mode of thinking and practicing cross-disciplinary research, interpreting spaces as archives of stories, and using stories as tools to actualise different spatial meanings to activate new trajectories for spatial action.

<insert Figure 1.2>

Comic book geographies in practice: sketching the geoGraphic novel

In this book, I would like to propose a practice-based approach to comic-book geographies, that realises geoGraphic narratives as part of geographers' research efforts. Throughout the book I refer to comics and graphic narratives considering different formats and genres that use the combination of words and images in sequence to compose stories. Thus, by geoGraphic narratives I mean comics stories that have been written and drawn through aware space-centred and geographical decisions, and whose stylistic choices have adopted a precise geocritical perspective. GeoGraphic narratives can take different digital or printed forms, from comic books to web-comics, and can be displayed as place-based, site-specific artistic installations in different spatial contexts. They can be realised by the geographer alone or in collaboration with other scholars and artists; they can be funded and sustained by academic projects, directed by publishing houses, or appear as 'do it yourself' publications circulated in the networks of underground 'comix'. Finally, in terms of length and genres, geoGraphic narratives can be comic strips, short comics stories, or geoGraphic novels. In Chapter 2 I present a comics story that was designed and installed as a site-specific art-installation in the city of Padua; in Chapter 3 I focus on a comic book anthology that I co-edited with urban sociologist Adriano Cancellieri; in Chapter 4 I focus on graphic mobilities through the geocentred reading of disparate graphic novels and memoirs by contemporary comics authors and finally, in Chapter 5, I present an original

geoGraphic novel I have written and drawn as a geographer-cartoonist, retracing the different phases of my geoGraphic fieldwork practice in Turku, Finland.

Before exploring geoGraphic narratives, let me briefly explain what it means to embrace a geocritical perspective on comic book geographies. Recently, geographers are showing a growing interest in the 'force of representations' (Anderson 2018) and, as a result, we are witnessing a renewed interest in literary geographies and a growth of research in the subfield of comic book geographies. Therefore, the definition of comics as a 'spatial language', which was pioneered by Thierry Groensteen, is a crucial starting point for a geocentred analysis of comics. 'By adopting a geocentred reading, I further aim to stress (similar to Brosseau's approach to literary texts) the importance of a formal analysis of comic narrative organization', that considers the spatial composition of the comic book as a crucial element for the study of the geographies of comics (Peterle 2017, p. 48). As the seminal edited collection on *Comic book geographies* (Dittmer 2014) demonstrates, geographers read comics to explore urbanscapes, postcolonial geographies, geopolitics, and gender perspectives in different spatial contexts. However, it is not just the content but also the form of the comic page that has captured geographers' attention. As Dittmer states, 'comics literacy is understood to work via micro-geographies of the page, highlighting aspects distinct to the form such as plurivectorial narration and simultaneity' (2010, p. 222). Conceived as a 'hybrid art of multiples' (Meskin and Cook 2014, p. 32) which is 'inherently intermedial' (Kimmrich 2008, p. 88) the 'sequential art' (McCloud 1993) has struggled for a long time against being considered as only a branch of, or even worse, a subgenre of other media. Therefore, a geocriticism of comic books recognises that there is a distinctive 'language of comics' (Hick 2008, p. 140) that is made of specific basic units that are intrinsically spatial and contributes to the construction of the peculiar geographies *of* (or emerging from) comics. According to Darren H. Hick, the structural units of the comic language are the panel, the coordination of panels in a sequence, the comic page, the frame, and the balloon (pp. 132–137). The combination of these units as a coherent whole on the page is a spatial process of composition that is constantly re-enacted by authors and readers. Embracing the perspective of comics authors, by engaging with the doing of comics as a research practice, could help geographers start building their own geoGraphic narratives, actively guide readers through the pages, and compose graphic stories that promote spatial thinking through specific stylistic choices.

Comic books have already been considered from perspectives that focused on their representational, non-representational, and processual aspects (Dittmer 2010). In fact, the comics page involves authors and readers in a truly spatial experience, asking them to make spatial decisions about which path to follow and to organise the content from a primarily spatial point of view. Comics, like texts, take place in precise spatio-temporal contexts and can be interpreted as proper 'spatial events' (Hones 2008) that happen every time readers or authors engage with them. Comics are more than mere representational tools and objects of study because they *do* things and are practices to engage with. So far, geographers' explorations of the narrative possibilities of comics have mostly focused on how the reader is invited by the comics page to 'imagine time and space in quite unique ways that other forms of textual consumption do not' (Dittmer 2010, p. 222). Both Juliet J. Fall's recent contributions to comics form (2020a, 2020b, 2020c) and the cartoGraphic essay that I created for the *LivingMapsReview* (2019) move in another direction (see Figures 1.3. and 1.4); they propose geographical and cartographic thinking in comics form, following the many critical works in comics form by cartoonists and academic scholars, from Scott McCloud's works to Nick Sousanis' *Unflattening* (2015). As Kuttner et al. observe, over the last dozen years there has been a significant increase in scholars doing comics-based research: many work in the discipline of anthropology, in health fields under the label of graphic medicine, in history, in the field of education, whereas others are scuttered in many disciplinary fields including scholars in the humanities and creating 'data comics' in the physical and environmental sciences (2020, p. 4). Experimenting with comics as inquiry, as public scholarship, and activism, many authors have also shared their thoughts about the methodologies used for comics-based research (Flowers 2017, Weaver-Hightower 2013, Williams 2012). Yet, this incredibly reach framework lacks the contribution of geography.

<insert Figure 1.3>

Moving comic book geographies from representation to practice means that geographers should start telling their own graphic stories 'rather than studying other's stories' (Cameron 2012, p. 584). This implies the examination of verbo-visual storytelling as a practice, with geographers looking at how comics 'stories transform and (re)create the world' (Cameron 2012, p. 580). Recently, a book series called ethnoGRAPHIC, published by University of Toronto Press, has begun to explore hybrid research outputs in comics form. In

comparison to the emerging hybrid genre of the 'ethnographic novel' (see Chapter 3), the geoGraphic novel is a long narrative in comics form promoting 'geographical thinking through comics' (Fall 2020b). GeoGraphic novels, and geoGraphic narratives of different lengths in general, aim to make use both of the intrinsic spatial peculiarities of the comic language and of qualitative geographical methods to conduct, represent, and disseminate geographical research. Taking inspiration from the domain of comics, geoGraphic narratives can take disparate forms such as, for example, a graphic memoir told from an autobiographical perspective or a reportage inspired by works of graphic journalism. Looking at the composition of the comics story from an internal perspective allows for further reflexivity; geoGraphic narratives could work for auto-ethnographic inquiries on the researcher's positionality in the field. GeoGraphic narratives always produce situated knowledge, where the perspective and body of the researcher-cartoonist is entangled with the research output. As Patricia Leavy affirms, 'fiction writers and qualitative researchers both seek to build believable representations of existing or possible worlds' (2013, p. 21). As Marcello Tanca further observes, there is a prolific relationship between fiction and geography: in his view, fiction works as a process of symbolic territorialisation (Tanca 2019, p. 27) that asks for a deeper geographical consideration. So, what happens if this consideration starts from beyond the frame of the page, when a geographer adopts fiction not just as an object of study but as part of a broader geographical toolkit? Through verisimilitude, and the use of a combination of facts and fiction (Levy 2013, p. 21), geoGraphic narratives could help building a 'critical consciousness in readers' (Fall 2020b, p. 13), helping them to perceive urban, social, economic, and spatial contradictions by actively engaging with comics. Different geographical perspectives can emerge by engaging with the composition and reception of a geoGraphic narrative; as Fall suggests, geographers could make conscious use of narrators' or characters' voices by playing with different points of view in the same story, deconstructing the 'view from nowhere', and 'bringing the gaze back to the level of experience' (Fall 2020b, p. 13). With their combination of images and words, facts and fiction, and through their apparent simplicity, geoGraphic narratives are able to capture readers' attention and to convey complex geographical content in an effective and engaging form.

<insert Figure 1.4>

A geoGraphic narrative is not just a means to represent a stable outside reality or geographical thinking differently. It is also a practice that is able to orient, affect, and move geographic thought in new directions in the very act of its telling (Cameron 2012, pp. 585–588). If a geocriticism of comic books has already illustrated how comics are compelling objects for the cultural geographical study of the textualization of space and spatialization of text (Peterle 2017, p. 44), this book aims take comics as spatial practices seriously. A practice-based approach to the geoGraphic narrative starts from the suggestion of non-representational theory to consider the importance of the material, embodied, sensory, and affective conditions where research takes place (Boyd and Edwardes 2019, pp. 3–4). The aim of this book is not to trace the genealogy of the 'theories of practice', from Bergson, Bachelard, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, and Merleau-Ponty to more recent work by de Certeau, Foucault, Deleuze, Bourdieu, Irigaray, Haraway, Latour, and Nigel Thrift (Merriman 2012, p. 10); rather to observe that these previous reflections have given rise, in recent decades, to theoretical and methodological experimentations in different disciplinary contexts beyond geography, from anthropology and performance studies to the creative arts (Boyd and Edwardes 2019, p. 2). All these efforts are aimed at 'taking practice' seriously, registering the emergent movements, intensities, and encounters by which multiple worlds take place (Anderson and Harrison 2016). Therefore, reflecting on the geoGraphic novel as a research practice means observing it from a processual point of view, considering both the subjective and pre-cognitive, the singular and social, the representational and embodied, and the human, more-than-human, and elemental aspects of doing (and reading) comics. This book aims to contribute also to dialogues happening at the border of geography and the creative arts and the empirical examples presented in the following chapters are presented with that intention. 'Graphic geography' (Bertoncin et al. 2020) takes into account, 'the generative dynamics of skilled practices that are bound to respond to moment-by-moment variations in the environmental conditions of their enactment' (Ingold 2011, p. 2). Following Tim Ingold's efforts in *redrawing anthropology*, doing comics could be considered as another means 'to reconnect observation and description with the movements of improvisatory practice' (p. 2) and, therefore, to redraw geography from a creative, graphic, verbo-visual, and narrative perspective.

<insert Figure 1.5>

If a geoGraphic narration should not be used to merely illustrate an otherwise written text or preconceived geographical ideas, 'but as an inscriptive practice in its own right' (Ingold 2011, p. 2), I suggest that comics allow us geographers to explore some of the potentialities of art-geography collaboration. Hoping to propose a partial reflection on the question asked by Harriet Hawkins et al. regarding 'what might GeoHumanities do?' (2015), I suggest that the *practice of doing* urban *comics* offers 'possibilities for interventions and solutions that twine a reshaping of intellectual landscapes with a doing of work in the world' (Hawkins 2015, p. 216). As I will show in the following chapters, geoGraphic narratives are able to move 'beyond the frame' in different senses. They engage wider and non-specialistic audiences through creative content; in comparison to more traditional academic outputs, they are able to activate relational networks for sharing geographical thinking and research beyond academic spaces and contexts such as museums, public spaces, libraries, bookshops, and cultural events. Finally, they cross disciplinary frames, engaging scholars from disparate disciplinary backgrounds and bringing them into dialogue with art-practitioners. Like urban comics, geoGraphic narratives further cross the borders between urban representation and action. By communicating research outputs in more accessible ways, comics are able to act upon cities (Davies 2019) and involve wider audiences in the processes of urban change. As a geographer-cartoonist, my aim is to experiment with urban comics as artistic interventions in urban space.

If we admit that the construction (both physical and metaphorical) of the global city is connected to image-making, then comics and geoGraphic narratives intervene in the production of urban space and 'represent counter-visual narratives that are able to re-produce contemporary cities by making infrastructural injustice and division visible, as well as creating new collective infrastructures that act as an alternative site of urban planning and resistance' (Peterle 2020, p. 327). Comics can be profitably embraced by geographers to do fieldwork research, narrate urban spaces and social dynamics, and *enact comic book geographies* by bringing geographical meanings and concepts into practice through spatial action, interpersonal collaboration, and interdisciplinary dialogue. The practice of doing comics is a performative and affects-based practice that is able to merge the moment of research with its representation through a process of co-production between page and place (Anderson 2014). Doing comics as a research practice leads to new encounters and the discovery of unpredicted relational geographies of reading and writing (Saunders and Anderson 2016), composition and reception, and interpretation and dissemination that are worth exploring.

<insert Figure 1.6>

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[ABSTRACT

This chapter focuses on the geo-artistic project *Street geography: drawing cities for a sustainable future* as an example of a collaboration between geographers and art practitioners for the realisation of a diffused public art exhibition in the city of Padua, Italy. In particular, it analyses Mónica Bellido Mora's *A station of stories: moving narrations*, namely an original short geoGraphic narrative on the topic of 'mobility', from a processual perspective. The comics story by Mora is a site-specific public artwork created to be installed in the train station of Padua, and realised to engage non-specialist audiences in a geographical discourse on mobilities through art. The comics story works as a spatial experiment, an urban assemblage, and creative intervention in public space. In the human and non-human actors, architectural bodies and the elemental forces have a role to play in the process of ideation, composition, installation, and perception of the story. The ethnographic account is enriched by short interviews, photographs, and auto/ethnofictional vignettes that retrace the crucial moments of this urban assemblage.

Keywords:

Assemblage, public space, public art, mobility, art-geography collaboration, it-narration]

[13.885 words]

2. Comics as assemblages: building urban stories in the public sphere

For a 'street geography': drawing in public space

Before coming to the comics story (or practice?) at the centre of this chapter, let me briefly introduce the geoGraphic context in which it was ideated and realised, namely the geo-artistic project *Street geography. drawing cities for a sustainable future* (SG). This project stemmed from a collaboration between three geographers – namely Tania Rossetto, Mauro Varotto and I – at the Department of Historical and Geographic Sciences and the Ancient World (DiSSGeA) at the University of Padua and the Progetto Giovani Office – Cabinet of the Mayor of the Municipality of Padua. It was aimed to encourage a dialogue between scientific research and art-practice. Furthermore, the close collaboration between the University and the Municipality was a significant attempt to bring geographical knowledge beyond academic boundaries to engage the citizens of Padua in a process of spatial thinking. Indeed, at the foundation of the project, conceived in late 2017 and officially launched one year later, in 2018, lies the idea that academic knowledge should contribute to the conceptualisation and realisation of more meaningful and sustainable cities, becoming a conceptual and practical tool available to academics, students, and especially to citizens. For this reason, SG could be listed among the so-called Third Mission projects of the University of Padua that, beyond research and teaching, place the dissemination of scientific knowledge and the involvement of non-academic local audiences at the centre of their agenda (Peterle 2019, pp. 73–4). With these ideas in mind we geographers, as the scientific committee, indicated *neighbourhoods*, *mobility* and *waterways* as the three keywords at the centre of the project, and of its artistic outputs. In our opinion, these are central geographical concepts for discussing many of the most significant contemporary urban phenomena at both the local and the global level; for SG they functioned also as bridges to invite our audience to link the city of Padua to many other national and international case studies. Furthermore, these were also the key concepts around which three young artists developed their site-specific installations to compose the SG art exhibition. Indeed, the three installations were meant to create a public art exhibition that lasted one month from September to October 2018 and crossed the city of Padua from the north to the south. The exhibition was expected to speak to both a local and external (national and international) public, and its itinerary was developed along the tramline's route to encourage all three installations being visited through the use of public transportation and sustainable mobility.

With the curators at the Progetto Giovani Office playing the role of mediators, the three artist-geographer pairs developed their own site-specific explorations and narrations. Beyond coordinating the project and working as a mediator myself, between the different subjects involved in these collaborations, I worked with Fabio Roncato on the Arcella *neighbourhood*. Here, we focused on the composition of counter-narratives in the area via bottom-up processes of resignification, and realised a visual installation on the advertising billboards scattered in the area titled *At the antipodes there is the Ocean*: in Roncato's words, 'the billboards scattered around Arcella become spatial-temporal gashes that reflect an oceanic vastness that has the potential to bring all of us together in front of the antipodes of our everyday existence'. Displaying the

satellite photograph of a portion of the Pacific Ocean at the exact antipode of the geographical centre of Arcella, the billboards in Roncato's installation were windows that created an immediate connection between the space of 'peripheral' neighbourhood of Arcella – on which we will come back in Chapter 3 – and the Ocean, asking us to rescale our perception of distance. Another pair was composed by Mónica Bellido Mora and Tania Rossetto, who worked on the railway station area, focusing on *mobilities* intended as both means of transportation and practices of movement. In *A station of stories. Moving narrations* – namely the comics artwork at the centre of this chapter – 'The railway station transforms into a place of new relationships and experience, awareness and imagination', quoting Mora's words. Finally, Caterina Rossato and Mauro Varotto worked on the Scaricatore Canal at Bassanello, in the southern part of Padua, interpreting it as a living waterway with its own narrative, affective, and emotional burden. The artwork, a sculpture made of street signs and a back-lit board with a collage, was titled *Distances*, and showed how 'the story of the river flowing away from its headwaters inevitably reflects the story of each of us', thus, creating a connection between the river's path and human existential routes. The exhibition and its related activities, comprising guided tours for citizens, geographers, and educational laboratories for students organised with the Museum of Geography of the University of Padua, lasted one month from the 13th September to the 14th October 2018.

Through exploring one of the tree creative outputs of this geo-artistic project, the goal of this chapter is to focus on comics by moving 'beyond the frame' in different directions. First, we leave the frame of the paper page behind to think about the 'building' of comics as a narrative, spatial, even collective practice that can take place *in* public space (Amin 2008), interacting with its (im)materialities. The example of Mora's story, installed in the physical space of the train station of Padua, invites readers to experience comics 'beyond' the page, and to imagine geoGraphic narratives as concrete stories that can potentially be integrated in physical urban space. As a consequence, in this case study, not only does the author's experience of writing, drawing, and composing the comics story take place in actual urban space but also the resulting reading paths asked readers to move across the space of the train station to recompose the sequence of the panels. Readers had to perform their reading lines and walk their interpretative routes, assembling the story through a physical movement in real space, rather than leaf through pages. Given these premises, to analyse this comics story we need to move between stability and change, order and disruption by 'thinking with assemblage' (McFarlane and Anderson 2011, p. 162). More than exploring what the concept of assemblage means, the chapter will embrace literary geographers' recent invitation to adopt a relational approach to narratives: adopting a relational approach means to 'identify all components that have agency and influence' the composition of the comics story (Anderson 2015, p. 122), including authors, translators, publishers, readers, places, human/nonhuman, elemental agencies, and the relations they activated (Cohen 2011, 2014; Cohen and Duckert 2015). Furthermore, since this analysis is focusing on a site-specific comics story, a relational approach implies to explore the entangled relationship between form, content, and space in Mónica Bellido Mora's *A Station of stories*. As a site-specific art installation, the story developed a close relation with space in many ways: these involve the influence of the spatial configuration of the train station on the narrative assemblage of the story, but also the choices concerning contents, and style. In terms of contents, *A station of stories* was expected to rise questions about how mobility is experienced, practiced, remembered, perceived, and told starting from the train station of Padua as an observational lens that has many characteristics in common with other station in Italy, and beyond. When drafting the project, the railway station was interpreted as a spatial node, where trajectories meet, encounters take place, and means of transport come and go together with people, stories, and mobile practices. Since the beginning, the train station revealed itself as something more than a theatre where events take action, a mere spatial background for highly mobile stories to be staged. Therefore, in terms of stylistic choices, in Mora's graphic narrative the train station is the real protagonist that speaks in I-person of its own experiences. As we will see in the next sections, this narrative choice was inspired by many examples in which non-human entities speak in first person, and especially by the dialogue between the author and the geographers involved in the project, especially with Tania Rossetto and I – who, at the time, were working on a co-authored presentation on it-narrations. *A station of stories* represents a useful example to explore the possibility for geographers to move towards a more-than-human point of view on urban spaces making use of artistic languages, and fictional expedients.

SG was a geo-artistic project that asked to move beyond both academic and disciplinary boundaries to create a collaborative network that involved geographers, artists, curators, editors, fitters, representatives of local associations, shopkeepers, private citizens, school teachers, students, representatives of local authorities, and managers of national transport services, among others. As we will hear from to the voices of those involved

in first person in the realisation of the SG diffused exhibition, the peculiar nature of the project represented a challenging opportunity, not only for geographers. The many different experts that had a role to play in the project were all asked to negotiate their positions, wills, and needs to collaborate. In order to constitute a collaborative network, participants had to go beyond the frame of their usual working schedule, methods, languages, practices, goals, and scope. Thus, in the following paragraphs, attention will be paid to the importance and also the difficulties of *collaboration* in geo-artistic projects. Finally, the chapter will focus on a less visible network that spontaneously emerged from the same exhibition, especially once the three artworks were installed in public space: the audience. Therefore, we will explore the effects of Mora's comics-installation on the community of readers it created, and on the multiple reading paths that were assembled, disassembled, and reassembled around this narrative intervention. The site-specific comics installation by Mora worked as a 'spatial experiment' (Jellis 2015) as well as an 'urban intervention' in public space (Pinder 20008; Schuermans et al. 2012), a public artwork realised to engage non-specialist audiences in a geographical discourse on mobilities through art. Public engagement, thus, represents a final topic that needs to be discussed here, in order to think about the potentialities of comics to act upon public space, by 'drawing cities for a sustainable future' – as the subtitle of SG suggests.

The assemblage of concrete narratives

<insert Figure 2.1>

It was Tuesday 11 September 2018, when the comics panels of 'A station of stories: moving narrations' were assembled in public space. It was a damn hot sunny day, in Padua, with almost 30°.[1] Conversely to what usually happens with the composition of comics, that time blueprints and paper sheets were just a starting point, and building the story was not only an intellectual creative process but a profoundly material one. Doing comics does always ask for a certain level of material and physical effort. After all, tracing lines is a highly bodily practice. Hands and eyes connect to each other, arms, even legs move, and they all often hurt due to the long time spent sitting at the drawing board. Yet, this time, the story was meant to be printed and read on a different scale, and its inscription involved the entire building of the train station of Padua together with its immediate surrounding area. To install the story, six people were involved for more than 8 hours, moving across the square with ladders and huge comics panels, printed on plastic sheets a half centimetre thick. These group comprised the comics author, Mónica Bellido Mora, the editor in chief of the BeccoGiallo publishing house, Guido Ostanel, three representatives of the Progetto Giovani Office, among which the curators Stefania Schiavon and Caterina Benvegnù, and the fitter, Danilo Barato. Six people were collaborating for the assemblage of the urban comics to succeed. Surely the materiality of the building, together with the configuration and organization of its spaces, played a central role in the process of ideation of this artwork. Yet, this influence was much more effective that day, when the material dimension of the train station revealed itself 'as processually emergent' (Latham and McCormack 2004, p. 701), as an unstable matter whose characteristics were subjected to the effects of the surrounding environment. When the surface you are working with is not made of paper but of concrete and metal, its influence on the composition of the story becomes more evident. I guess. Once you have chosen the grain and weight of the paper, its dimension and colour, the sheets usually maintain these characteristics throughout the drawing process, absorbing ink, interacting with colours, causing uncertain oscillations of the traits and lines in a quite constant manner. The texture and grain of the walls and columns of the train station revealed to be less predictable than we expected it to be.
When a story is not meant to be printed out in the form of a paper book, to be stored and preserved on the shelves of a bookcase for most of its time, rather it is going to be exposed to weather changes, to direct sunlight – and the high Italian summer temperatures –, to the water of sudden summer storms or the unexpected rising of the wind, it is impossible to ignore the so-called 'force of the elemental' (Engelmann and McCormack 2018, p. 243). This was a hard lesson to learn. The force of the elemental remains excessive of representational practices and technologies, and it has capacities to generate different conditions in which sensing takes place (p. 243). The narrative of how this comic story was assembled remembered me in a very real, and even physical sense 'that stories matter', that they have meanings, of course, but also 'that they materialize' (Cameron 2012, p. 586). They have their own materiality, can leave a material imprint, and are influenced by the context in which they are performed. In our case, this force exceeded our imagination. We could not predict the way in which the matter of the different surfaces that were selected to host the installation would have reacted not just to our action, but also to that of the elemental. Indeed,

despite the expertise of the fitter, all the efforts to install the story and fix the printed panels on the walls were not enough to avoid unforeseen effects. Due to the high temperatures, the metal walls of the local transport ticket office were scorching. The glow used to fix the panels melted.

The day after, early in the morning, when I came to check the installation, the square in front of the station was quiet. A few people were moving around, some entering other exiting the main building of the train station. A limpid blue sky was designed to convey a sense of surreal calm. 'We made it'– I was thinking. Though, when I turned around the corner, many panels were lying on the ground, at the foot of the ticket office. Some of them had even been stepped by, and shoe prints were superimposed on the coloured drawings and balloons. An unexpected reference to other mobile practices was now imprinted on the panels' surface. Luckily this was the day before the exhibition's opening, and we had time to find a different solution to hang the panels, and reassemble the story.

Comics as geo-artistic collaborations

Exploring the potentialities of artistic languages to promote citizens' participation in the processes of urban change, SG wanted to directly engage the audience in a process of spatial thinking as well as of rediscovery of the meaning and narrative potential of ordinary landscapes. For this reason, we selected three main keywords, namely *neighbourhoods*, *mobility* and *waterways*, that should also be able to stimulate citizens' curiosity. As said, these were the topics of geographical interest around which artist-geographers' pairs had to develop their site-specific installations to compose the SG art exhibition. Once chosen the structure of the geo-artistic project, the sites that should have hosted the artworks, and the key topics, together with the curators at the PG, we co-authored a list of young artists, who had demonstrated a long-lasting interest in landscape, urban space, place making, and spatial storytelling in their artistic projects. The shortlist was realised including especially young local artists that had already collaborated with the PG Office: namely, in Italian 'Giovani' means 'young', and the Office is aimed to help in launching and promoting early career artists through the organization and funding of exhibitions, residencies, and creative initiatives in the city of Padua. Moreover, we preferred to work with local artists that had a personal link with the territory for two main reasons. The first was that they had only a short period of time to understand in-depth the specificities of the sites that were meant to host their artworks: therefore, having a preceding relationship with those places would have been of great help for them to understand local dynamics. The second reason was that, given the small amount of money at the disposal of the SG project and the need to participate in many meetings with the Committee, it would have been easier and cheaper for artists to come to Padua if they would have had a place to stay nearby the city. Despite its office is located in the city centre of Padua, spatial proximity was only one of the several reasons why we decided to involve the Italian publishing house BeccoGiallo – which will play a central role also in Chapter 3 – from the very early stage of this project. BeccoGiallo chose with us one of the three young artists and appeared since the beginning the best interlocutor for the realization of an art-installation in comics form for several reasons. First, BeccoGiallo has achieved national and even international reputation because it was launched more than ten years ago with the very ambitious, critical, and radical editorial goal to publish works of graphic journalism to compose a contemporary history of Italy in comics form. In this scenario, voices of earliest Italian graphic journalists and artists-activists like Claudio Calia and Gianluca Costantini, who have been already mentioned in Chapter 1, represent fundamental tiles in this mosaic, now made of dozens of reportages, biographies, inquiries, interviews, and many other stories told in comics form. Second, because of its specialisation in graphic journalism, BeccoGiallo has always paid particular attention to the narration of real places and cities, often collaborating with emerging young artists. This interest in the narrative translation of reality in comics stories was essential for our dialogue with BeccoGiallo to succeed.

The SG project was certainly stimulated by what is called a creative (re)turn in geography (Eshun and Madge 2016), a restored stimulus to engage with art and artistic products not simply as objects of geographical research but also as tools at our disposal to disclose geographical discourses, even beyond academic boundaries. As geography-art engagements are proliferatingin the geohumanities (Hawkins 2013, p. 53), our goal was to realise a project that could speak in an equally effective manner to both a specialist audience and a wider non-academic public. In fact, SG was inaugurated during the national conference 'Giornate della Geografia', which in 2018 was hosted in Padua: that year, the topic at the centre of the geographical event was public geography, and specifically the role and forms through which the discipline should act and interact, communicate and work with people, experts, and artists beyond academic boundaries (see Rivista Geografica Italiana, 2/2019, pp. 121–158). The interaction between research and art promoted by SG was particularly relevant to the discussion on 'public geography' activated by the conference

(Bertoncin et al. 2019). When drafting the project SG, the scientific committee was inspired by what Harriet Hawkins calls the 'expanding field' of art-geography engagements (2013, p. 53), and by the many creative research projects that include the collaboration between artists and researchers and involve non-specialistic audiences, stimulated by the so-called 'creative (re)turn' in geography (Madge 2014). As Kate Foster and Hayden Lorimer observe, these art-geography collaborations have taken diverse forms that comprise but are not limited to the following combinations: 'geographers look to artists to help their research 'outreach' to communities; geographers have been curators of art exhibitions; artists exhibit and perform at geography conferences, as well as offer papers; university departments host artists' residencies; artists contribute to geographers' research projects; geographers evaluate the social impacts of public art projects; artists employ a spatialized vocabulary to label, describe and explain their work that geographers recognize as their own' (2007, pp. 425–6). In our case, among a wide range of both national and international examples, we were particularly inspired by the work done by the Royal Holloway Centre for the GeoHumanities with the launch of the first round of the Creative Commission in 2018[2]. We were especially intrigued by the opportunity to bring couples of artists and researchers together around a specific topic of geographical interest, activating an exchange of ideas, perspectives, and methodologies. From the geographers' perspective, SG represented a great opportunity to expand our experimentation with creative methods and collaborations, being for the first time actively involved in the process of ideation, realization, and promotion of a geo-artistic project, and becoming more aware of the challenges that have to be faced in these contexts of collaboration with experts from very different fields. In fact, when thinking about an art-geography collaboration, we should take into account that the 'ethics of practice and intention can widely differ, between and within these collaborating cohorts' (Foster and Lorimer 2007, p. 426). Our group, for example, was composed of curators, academics and artists but also of other actors that played a very crucial role in the realisation of the project: the members of the steering board of Centostazioni; the surveyor of the Municipality of Padua, who was in charge to assess the feasibility of the installations; the key-informants encountered during fieldwork, comprising commuters, workers, and members of the associations.

The presence of professional curators and experts that were able to mediate between the University and the artists was especially useful in this context. On the one hand, geographers, who commissioned the work, were expecting an output that should be visible and accessible to different audiences, from academics to students, and simple passers-by. Following this need for accessibility we sometimes run the risk to ask the artworks to become too didactic. On the other hand, the artists had to necessarily adapt their works not only to the needs of the commissioner but especially to the limits set by material conditions concerning the low budget, short time, and often limited space that they had at their disposal. As Mora remembered me in a couple of interviews run in Spring 2020, in her specific case, the access to a very small budget (around 2.000 €) determined the choice of the materials, and the need to mediate between the quality of print and the possibility to realise a quite high number of panels (more than 40) in a big format. The physical form in which the story was printed, then, influenced also the way in which the narrative contents were structured and some important stylistic choices: like, for example, the use of shorter texts to be printed in a bigger font size; the choice to avoid too detailed drawings in favour of more effective and minimalist lines; or the decision to arrange the story in squared panels, mirroring the form of the physical support on which they had to be printed. Furthermore, the relatively small time-window in which the artists were expected to work on the ideation and realisation of their artworks did not allow for a long-term period of preliminary creative research. In Mora's case, she concentrated the ethnographic research on the train station area in a couple of weeks. During this period, she observed how the place changes at different times of the day, collected keywords about the train station and impressions from the people who work in or pass through it. As Mora's words confirmed, both the site-specific conditions and the different actors involved in the management of the single sites and areas of artistic intervention were deeply influencing the artists' choices, and the creative processes that led to the realisation of the SG public art exhibition. This happened for Fabio Roncato, who had to negotiate the price to rent the billboards with the APS Holding, the company that administrates the advertising spaces in the whole area of the Municipality of Padua: only because they agreed on a lower rental price, it was possible to display his posters on many advertising billboards in the Arcella neighbourhood, letting his artwork became a 'diffused art-installation'. Something similar happened also to Caterina Rossato, whose choices were deeply limited by the site where her backlit screen was positioned, and especially by the scarce flexibility of the Civil Engineering Office that is in charge for the management of the riverbanks of the Scaricatore Canal. Of course, a negotiation was needed also for Mónica Bellido Mora, who had to adapt not only the narrative structure of her story but even part of its contents to the requests of Centostazioni, a joint stock company then merged with the Rete Ferroviaria Italiana – Gruppo Ferrovie dello Stato Italiane

(the Italian Railway Network public company) that is responsible for managing the space of the train station of Padua.

Sitting down at the negotiating table

<Insert Figure 2.2>

There is a glass table close to a large glass wall overlooking a huge squared open space, covered by a glass roof. At the second floor of the Centro Culturale San Gaetano, in the historical centre of Padua, the light floods into the room, and creates green light reflections on the table we are sitting around. We are all in a state of restrained excitement. It is 27 June 2018, and we are waiting for two representatives of Centostazioni, who are traveling by train from Rome to discuss with us the artwork of the SG geo-artistic project that concerns their area of interest: the train station of Padua. Their role is critical, since in order to exhibit the comics story in the spaces within the train station and on its external walls, we need their consent. Without it, to install the artwork we will only be allowed to use the area under the direct management of the Municipality of Padua, which means that we will have to place the story along the walkways and the bus shelters in front of the train station. It is a short distance, of course, just a few dozen metres away from the façade of the building but still it would represent a symbolic step behind our intended site, and spatial focus. In the meantime, in the preceding weeks, people working at the Centostazioni Office in Rome have already received a general presentation of the SG project, together with a first draft of the text of the comics story, and image documentation (photographs, drawings, and renderings) gathered by Mora to help them imagine the artwork's visual impact. Beyond presenting the main contents and tone of the comics story, the documentation was aimed to recognise the importance of the railway station as a node of urban and translocal mobility in the city of Padua and, consequently, its centrality as a symbolic space within the whole SG project. Renderings and sketches where sent along to show where the exhibition could be displayed, and in what form.

As soon as they arrive, we know that the time at our disposal is short. Needless to say, they have to take another train in the afternoon to go back to Rome. So, they go straight to the point. 'We like your project' they say, 'and we will be happy to support it. Yet, you have to be aware of the fact that almost the 70% of the internal space of the train station, comprising its walls, billboards, and even the floors, where possible, is considered a commercial surface'. This information, which is easily confirmed by everyone's experience of contemporary bus, train, underground stations in many cities, rescales our vision, drastically narrowing the space available for our geo-artistic installation. We to turn those 'commercial surfaces' into spaces of narrative intervention. In the end, even though we will have to adjust our blueprint, and to reassemble the story according to the narrow interstices they allow us to use, still we have their permission to install the comics story in the train station, close to platform number one, and on the outer façade of the building. When leaving the negotiating table, we are more than happy with what we obtained. Except for one small detail about the story's content. In the first draft of the storyboard, Mora had decided to mention also the lives of those who do not simply pass through or work in the train station but even live within its walls. Yet, Centostazioni explicitly asked to avoid any reference to critical or conflictual themes, like the presence of homeless people or the reference to the suicides that often cause delays, missed connections, and cancelled trains. Needless to say, we were not entirely happy with this part of the negotiation.

Let it speak! The voice of a building

A station of stories offers a useful example to think about the close connection between form, content, and space in the composition of urban geoGraphic narratives. The fact that I was able to witness the process of creation from the beginning, and that I am still in contact with many of the people involved in its realization, makes it possible to retrace with accuracy the reasons for the authorial choices that led to the final art-installation. Firsts, I would like to focus on the non-human point of view from which the story is told. This internal focalisation, and non-human perspective, helps reflecting on how this comic book narrativizes mobility. Since site-specificities played a central role in the composition of the story, let me briefly introduce the train station, and its spatial context. The railway station of Padua is one of the most important rail hubs in Italy and, as many other stations in the country, it can be described as a 'contested neighbourhood' (Mantovan and Ostanel 2015). Here, like in a stage where contemporary urban issues become visible and tangible, immigration complicates more general problems of spatial exclusion, new poverty, and social inequality. Low-priced rents for both private and commercial spaces are particularly attractive for ethnic

shops that function as catalysers for members of ethnic communities, gathering in the public spaces right in front of the station, and spending time in front of the shop windows. The same area has been witnessing for decades issues connected to drug-dealing, and other forms of so-called 'petty crime'. In 2010 the municipality responded to the need for a rehabilitation of the area with a huge physical regeneration project that involved both the building of the railway station as well as the large square in front of it, and provided a new pedestrian boulevard, and added many spaces of consume and leisure. The project aimed also to separate the flux of people proceeding towards the city centre from the students directed towards the new University buildings in the eastern area of the town. Recently, to work on the perception of danger and insecurity in the area, the presence of policemen and military soldiers has become part of that urbanscape. As Tania Rossetto put it in her presentations, held during the guided tours organised along the SG exhibition, 'the discourse of the ethnicisation of public space in the area, tends to produce an over-simplification of the complex mobility phenomena that animate the station' (see Figure 2.8). In fact, today, 'the railway station offers spaces of both transit and encounter, consume and dwelling, work and criminality, leisure and exclusion, assistance, interaction or mere *co-presence* between very different actors' continues Rossetto. The site-specific artwork by Mora was aimed to tell the story of all these complex trajectories, which pass across the train station, and speak to their protagonists: the author worked to transform daily paths, interviews, in situ-observation, and in-depth academic analyses provided by geographers into narrative lines. The train station is a node of fluxes of people moving on different scales, from the international tourists travelling from/to Venice, Milan and Bologna, to local commuters: all these people became part of the story and were also its first potential audience. In contrast to the fluidity of its surrounding social environment, of the fluxes of people, objects, and information circulating across and in front of it, the building is presented here as a 'station of stories', a stable presence over time. A concrete, essential node of intersection, where trajectories and stories meet building narrative lines that were made explicit through the physical presence of the comics-installation.

<Insert Figure 2.3>

In Mora's comics, the material body of the train station becomes a wise narrator that witnesses urban and social change. The perspective of the building speaking in I-person is an example of what Sarah Luria calls 'the power of literary techniques to enrich and alter our sense of geography' (Luria 2011, p. 69). In fact, it gives us the opportunity to embrace an impossible, unnatural viewpoint on urban space, namely the one of a building (Alber et al. 2018) that exceeds human scale both in space and time, occupying with its body a fixed place and a huge urban area for a time window that transcends anthropic lifetimes. As noticed by Luria, 'point of view is everything to a creative writer just as it is everything to making place' (2011, p. 68), and is particularly important when embracing a geoGraphic perspective:

> Whether a story is told from the first person, limited third person, or omniscient point of view determines what can be seen and told and known in a story. This is dramatically illustrated in geography, where the point from which a place is viewed – from the ground or the air, and the infinite numbers of angles within and between those modes – frames the space that is seen. Every view both shows a scene and locates the subject who viewed it, whether omniscient (aerial) or first person (ground, limited to one character). (Luria 2011, pp. 68–9)

Even if the choice for a non-human point of view decentralizes the perspective of the author, nevertheless, Mora's intimate, emotional, and personal experiential burden influences the characterization of the narrator. Thus, the it-narrator is a useful narrative expedient to find a mediation between the attempt to put place at the centre of the comics story, and the unavoidable need for the story to be composed by a human author. Pretending to let the train station speak in first person represents an opportunity to move a step behind our anthropocentric perspective, at least trying to imagine what it would be like to see that place from and internal, non-human, and architectural point of view (Rossetto and Peterle, *under review*). Lars Bernaerts, Marco Caracciolo, Luc Herman and Bart Vervaeck in their *The storied lives of non-human narrators* sustain that it-narrators work through 'a double dialectic of defamiliarization and empathy, human experientiality and the (un)natural' (2014, p. 72): on the one hand, readers naturalize the unnatural, making the perspective of the building closer to their human point of view (Caracciolo 2020); at the same time, they are invited to challenge their anthropocentric perspective, staring at the world as if they were an inanimate architectural body.[3] This same oxymoric movement of both coming closer and distancing ourselves from the building's perspective happens also in *A station of stories*: we empathise with the station's need to remember past

stories; yet, at the same time, we feel a deep distance from her fixed perspective, heavy and static concrete body.

<Insert Figure 2.4>

In Bellido Mora's story the station is characterized as a wise old figure with memories and friends. When I asked Mónica about this choice, reasons that go far beyond the analysis of formal decisions emerged. As Linda McDowell observes, when engaging with interviews as a method of research, 'the purpose is to explore and understand actions within specific settings, to examine human relationships and discover as much as possible about why people feel or act in the ways they do' (McDowell 2010, p. 158). As we have partially seen through Mora's use of interviews with people working in or passing through the train station, and as we will see more thoroughly in Chapter 3 and Chapter 5, interviews represent a crucial tool for translating research materials into geoGraphic narratives. In fact, the composition of geoGraphic narratives often makes use of ethnographic materials, individual stories, and memories that can be easily accessed and collected through interviews. When exploring comic book geographies from a processual perspective, also interviews with authors represent a useful opportunity to disclose the spatial relations concerning the internal space of the story, and the narrative choices that define the structure and contents of comics; but also to explore the relationship between authors and represented places, and subjects. 'Giving importance to subjective aspects, such as authorial feelings and actions during the writing process' (Peterle 2017, p. 128), interviews with authors provide researchers with 'an opportunity to deepen the acts, gestures, decisions, feelings and doubts connected to the comic book writing practice' (p. 141), and to explore connections that sometimes are not accessible through reading the comics story. Following McDowell, when adopting interviews as methodological research strategies, I suggest that 'questions about identification, contacts, interactions, interpretation and representation are important' (2010, p. 158) because they permit us to explore geoGraphic narratives from a processual perspective, and to take into account the story as a complex system of encounters, exchanges, responsibilities, power interactions, and subjective choices. This is why, during the Covid-19 lockdown in spring 2020, I decided to conduct an interview via Zoom with Mónica Bellido Mora, to better understand her relationship with the topic of mobility, the train station, and the comics story she composed:

> MBM: *My approach to mobility is actually close to how I imagine the city itself, as mobile, always connected at both a micro and macro scale. And the station is somehow what makes the city what it is, an interconnected place always on the move. It represents the way we live in it, creating connections.*

Mónica's authorial gaze is deeply informed by her personal urban experience, and her observation of the role played by the train station in the city of Padua is influenced by the comparison with the one of trains and railway transportation in her city of origin.

> MBM: *In Mexico City, I never thought about trains as a means for commuting, or as a constant presence in citizens' daily lives. The car is the principal means of transport and, as soon as you got the driving license and enough money, you buy your own car to feel free to move through urban space. I think this is why I was particularly surprised when I noticed the importance of the railway station for a city like Padova, where you have people who take the train every day to come to work and then come back to their houses. I was intrigued by this place, and I started to observe it from different angles, at different times, listening to the many stories told about it, and languages spoken within its walls.*

The author reveals a personal connection with this specific place. In light of this, the personification of the train station is not only the effect of a set of narrative choices that are part of a composition process, rather it is an effect of a deeper emotional engagement, of a process of 'empathisation' through which the author has started to 'feel with' the building. 'And it looked to me like the big mother of the city' admits Mónica, with a smile on her face. Following Rossetto's suggestion, *coexistence* seems the right term to describe the relationship between the author and its inanimate object of interest, since it allows us 'thinking of human and non-human entities as existing together but not being exhausted by their relations or collaborations' (2019, p. 113). Through allowing the building to speak in first person, Mora does not hope to interpret its own feelings and emotions, rather she represents a relation of co-existence, where the author and the object of her narrative meet, at least virtually, in the narrative space of the comics page. The comics story somehow creates a third space, a virtual space of possibility, where Mora's relation to the train station is staged, and becomes alive. I have discussed elsewhere 'the idea of the comic book as a "space of encounter" and a

"place of mediation" between authors, editors, subjects/protagonists of the story and readers' (Peterle 2017, p. 124). *A station of stories* allows me to add some more examples to the list of the possible encounters activated by comics: encounters between authors and places, human and non-human actors, curators, fitters and the elemental, academics and artists, which we have partially explored in the previous sections, have a crucial role to play in the process of assembling geoGraphic narratives in urban space. After the process of composition, once the story is installed in public space, also readers are invited to enter this space of encounter, creating their own relationship with the comics panels and, thus, enriching the meaning of the narration through their own experience with(in) the train station.

The voice speaking in the story, thus, emerges from the encounter between the train station's fictional perspective and Mónica Bellido Mora's own interpretation. Sentences like 'I was born in 1842, I'm personally very patient, I'm pleased when some of them tell me, I feel like Home, And I ask myself…where would I like to travel?' pronounced by the it-narrator encourage our empathy, as readers, introducing the station's past history, future wishes, and present (imagined) feelings (see Figures 2.3 and 2.4). The graphic narration embeds through this unnatural perspective the information that the author collected during her ethnographic research in the area. At the same time, reminding us of the nature of its architectural body, the it-narrator contributes to readers' defamiliarization and distancing (Bernaerts et al. 2014, pp. 72–3), making the world we know look unfamiliar through the point of view of a non-human narrator. This happens for example when the train station tells us that it was almost completely reconstructed after the second World War, or that its back hurts because of the heavy marble ceilings (panels three and four in Figure 2.3). Here, the reference to the documentary film on the Berliner Philharmonie realised by Wim Wenders as part of the broader collection entitled *Cathedrals of Culture* (2014) is almost evident in Mora's story. Indeed, Wenders' collection tries to answer the question of what buildings would say about us, and our cities, if only they could talk, and comprises six documentary films about six iconic buildings that speak for themselves to help us understand 'what it's like to be a thing' (Bogost 2012). This underlying reference to Wenders in Mora's work is not by case, since when she was starting to draft her story, struggling with the aim to make the train station a living character, Rossetto and I were just working on a paper on it-narration in Wenders' work[4]. Even if indirectly, thus, some geoGraphic and narrative choices for the composition of the story were made through the collaborative dialogue between the artist and the geographers.

The use of it-narrators in urban comics could be further connected to assemblage thinking. According to Colin McFarlane, assemblage thinking does not necessarily suggest geographers to decenter the human, yet, it offers 'a stronger focus on the materialities and histories of human- nonhuman alignments that produce cities' (McFarlane 2011a, p. 660). If assemblages are formed by the interactions between the single components but their meaning cannot be reduced to the sum of the meanings of the individual elements (McFarlane 2011a, p. 653), then I would argue that *A station of stories* is an urban assemblage, whose meaning can be captured if only we take into account all the different human and non-human actors that contributed to its realisation. The story can be interpreted as an urban assemblage in its own right, because its meaning changed over time, through the interactions, collaborations, exchanges, and collisions that happened through (or because of) it between different actors, elements, human and non-human bodies, voices, and matters. When I tried to interview the station, asking it the same questions I asked Mónica, the building looked tired and old, despite its quite recent renovation with new glass insertions, shop windows, and signs. Beyond that new dress, I found the same wise old figure speaking in Mora's story, a huge architectural body where individual trajectories and collective history meet and collapse into one another. In late April 2020, a couple of days after the restrictions caused by the lockdown in the Veneto region were eased, and I was finally allowed to walk across the limit of 200m away from my home, I took advantage of the surreal immobility caused by the Covid-19 pandemic to enter the space of the train station, and ask it some questions. I believe the building was especially grateful for my visit, while its corridors, railways, and platforms being frozen in an unrealistic silence. The following section is an excerpt of that silent conversation.

An interview with the train station

<Insert Image 2.5>

At the beginning, I did not notice you; I want to be honest. Maybe I should have noticed that small group of people coming and going, with its slow rhythms and upturned noses. But, you know, usually many people come and go everyday entering and exiting from my sliding doors. Plus, I am getting older and my eyesight

is no longer what it used to be. Even if I'm wearing these brand-new glasses, I often miss some details. Likewise, my hearing is getting worse, and I could not hear your voices with all those trains whistling, bells ringing, announcements resonating all around my body. I never thought I would have missed those noise but, in these weeks, where trains' and people's circulation have been dramatically reduced due to the pandemic, I couldn't sleep because of the silence. But you want me to speak about something else, sorry. This lockdown has been hard for everyone, even for buildings.

Coming back to 2018, what I noticed first was the young lady, who was spending so much of her time going around my corridors, climbing up and down the stairs, taking pictures and notes as if she was trying to realise an accurate portrait of my architectural shape. She asked questions to Carlo, my old friend, who worked here for decades, and to many other passers-by, whose names I'll never know. In those months, I saw her at different times of the day, and what I found particularly intriguing is that she never came to actually take the train and leave. Most of the people come here to move away, if not to work here. Yet, she was coming to stay, and this was something exceptional. At some point, I asked some friends, who are working in the bars within my walls, if they knew what she was doing, and no one knew her either. She was a mystery to me, and I was particularly surprised, when I saw her on that September morning, with a group of people carrying ladders and utensils. I wasn't scared of them, and they actually didn't hurt me when hanging the panels on the walls. Those panels were so light that sometimes they were tickling my concrete skin, other times their touch felt like a caress on my façade. The day after, I felt like I was wearing an unfamiliar dress, with those coloured panels hanging on my outer façade. I have to be honest, with you, I'm not used to wear narrative dresses. Actually, I'm not allowed to choose for my own skin. Yet, this time it felt different. Maybe it's because I murmured some words in the young lady's ears, during the weeks when she often came to visit me, but, when reading the story, I had the impression she was able to hear some of my words.

Reading paths through public space

At the beginning of this chapter, we have seen how much the elemental was able to influence the process of assembling Mora's story. These forces of the elemental (Adey 2015) were not the only actors whose gestures have caused consequences and activated an unpredictable interaction with the art-installation. As Emilie Cameron suggests, these human/non-human interactions represent an opportunity 'to think carefully and strategically about how, where, and on what terms stories are told (and heard)' but also composed and read (2012, p. 583). At stake here is not so much the biography of the building itself, rather the material practices, relations, and interactions by which stories come to matter (Cameron 2012, p. 578). Since in the previous paragraphs we have focused on the composition process, in the final part of the chapter, I would like to focus on the different practices that have been performed around Mora's comics story after its installation. As said, the narrative of how *A station of stories* was assembled, remembers us in a very real and even physical sense 'that stories *matter*' that they have meanings, of course, but also 'that they materialize' (Cameron 2012, p. 586). So, if comics stories have their own materiality, they are not just influenced by the context in which they are performed but they can also leave a material imprint on it, in a reciprocal exchange between geoGraphic narratives and urban spaces.

<Insert Figure 2.6>

Thinking about a site-specific art installation in comics form means to think about the story as something that has to both originate from and materially become part of the urbanscape that will accommodate it. Through geoGraphic thinking, panels have to be imagined as a new kind of street furniture that performs a narrative function in public space, staging unpredicted creative encounters and interactions between people and places (Hawkins and Straughan 2015). What makes this experimentation with comics in public space especially worth to analyse is the strictly concrete relationship between the narrative architecture of *A station of stories* and the city as a space for stories to emerge (Bredehoft 2006; Labio 2015). As Catherine Labio observes, there is a 'structural dimension of the relationship between architecture and the comics page' (2015, p. 314) that needs to be considered. This structural relationship becomes even more evident when the interaction between comics and architectural space does not only involve the contents and forms of the page, but especially the will to exhibit and install the graphic narrative in a physical space. In this specific case, not only does Mora's story speak about the train station of Padova but the train station itself, with its architectural shape, has deeply influenced the composition of the story.

Following Labio, to appreciate the centrality of architecture in this comics story, and in the realm of comics in general, one must concentrate on what she calls the 'nonreferential' or 'nonrepresentational architectural

features' of graphic narratives, which means focusing on the architecture *of* the comics story beyond the presence of the building within it (2015, pp. 315–6). For *A station of stories*, the structuring of the narration, together with many narrative choices concerning for example the non-linearity of the plotline, and the possibility to follow multiple reading paths, were made to adapt to the materialities of the train station's peculiar architecture. *A station of stories* offers an opportunity to think about the occupation of spaces and the organization of places, which is central for the process of composing comics, in a very tangible way (Groensteen 2007). It has been variously discussed how much the organisation of the comics page is a spatial process in its own right, with authors making spatial decisions that will influence the contents of the story and its plot but especially the reading experience. According to Chris Ware, the experience of reading a comics page could be compared to the experience of both playing music, beat by beat, and looking at the façade of a building, embracing it all at once but also reading it window after window (Ware quoted in Bredehoft 2006, p. 870). Not by chance, Ware is the author of the graphic novel *Building stories*, whose content and form mirror the close relationship between comics and architecture through the realisation of a deeply experimental work (Ball and Kuhlman 2010).

Thinking about comics' architectural features, brings us back to a broader reflection on the process of reception, beyond that of composition, and on the acts of disassembling and reassembling, beyond that of assembling, the comics page. In these processes, readers play an active role, and also 'comics can impact their readers via entering into assemblage with them' (Dittmer 2014, p. 479). In assemblages, suggests Jason Dittmer, heterogeneous objects are juxtaposed in generative ways, and it is through these unexpected juxtapositions that elements assume additional meanings that emerge through their relationship with others (2014, p. 480). In comics, virtual combinations of panels and reading paths are imagined by the authors, in the moment of composition. Yet, readers' assemblages exceed these predictions, bringing unpredictable constellations into being. As Dittmer further claims, 'the ways in which we narrate the urban are a crucial site of intervention in which we as geographers can work to enable greater awareness of urban assemblages and the complex processes that sustain them' (2014, p. 500). Thus, when choosing the language and form of *A station of stories*, we were also working on our message, shaping our urban intervention, trying to predict the reading trajectories of the train station's visitors.

<Insert Figure 2.7>

Since almost every wall within the train station of Padua is thought as an advertising surface with a commercial purposes, the possibility to insert a comics installation that asked people to think that space as a narrative place was particularly intriguing for the main scope of the SG project. Yet, why choosing comics instead of other artistic or narrative languages? The first reason was certainly that comics appear as an apparently accessible and transgenerational artistic language: indeed, thanks to their peculiar mixture of text and images they can easily engage different audiences. Comics looked particularly appropriate even from a site-specific perspective. In fact, the way in which comics ask readers to move across the page creating their own reading paths was particularly stimulating if applied to the space of the train station, where people pass-by, enter, and exit from different directions, composing several crossing lines. The way in which the almost forty panels of Mora's story were displayed and distributed in three different sites of the station, with some of them hanging outside, on the front square façade, and others inside, on the wall close to platform one, suggested that there were different entry points and different perspectives from which both the story and the place could be traversed, experienced, and interpreted. The comics language permitted us to compose the story as an urban assemblage. As George E. Marcus and Erkan Saka clarify:

> The time-space in which assemblage is imagined is inherently unstable and infused with movement and change. […] Whoever employs [assemblage] does so with a certain tension, balancing, and tentativeness where the contradictions between the ephemeral and the structural, and between the structural and the unstably heterogeneous create almost a nervous condition for analytic reason. (Marcus and Saka 2006, p. 102)

Assemblages work with paradoxes, embrace contradictions, bring together movement and immobility, stability and change, tension and balance and, I would argue, the same play between the ephemeral and the structural pertains also comics' spatial configurations. Comics authors attempt to create and convey a stable meaning, among a constant flux of virtual reading trajectories that are inevitably embedded in each comics page: in the end, there is no secure control of the author upon the interpretative pathways that will be performed once the story will be read. Readers are engaged in this dance of alternations, and through drawing their own trajectories they actively take part in the assemblage of the story. 'As Jane Bennett has

persuasively argued, assemblage names an uneven topography of trajectories that cross or engage each other to different extents over time, and that themselves exceed the assemblage' (Anderson and McFarlane 2011b, p.125; Bennett 2010, 2012). Indeed, comics like assemblages 'are constantly opening up to new lines of flight, new becomings' (Anderson and McFarlane, 2011b, p. 126) variously enacted in the spatial event of reading. Thinking *A station of stories* as assemblage means to understand it as a whole, comprising its material and immaterial features, the human and elemental forces, authors, curators, and readers, who re-assembled the story. The interactions of all these elements in specific spatio-temporal contexts permits us to further intend the comics story as constantly emergent process of composition, a relational processuality (McFarlane 2011a, p. 651) and event (Dittmer 2014, Hones 2008), whose meanings, and emergent practices escape author's and curators' control. Even though we organised guided tours with geographers, citizens, and students, nevertheless, many other practices and reading paths emerged beyond our direct control and guide. For this reason, multiple meanings attached to Mora's story will never be registered by this analysis.

Building urban comics in the public sphere
To further explore the peculiarities of choosing comics for a site-specific and geo-artistic installation, I like to quote part of the interview with Guido Ostanel (GO), the editor in chief of the BeccoGiallo publishing house. Ostanel collaborated with Mora during the whole process of ideation, composition, and installation of *A station of stories*. His long-lasting experience in the publication of comics makes him a perfect interlocutor to explore the specific challenges posed by the realisation of geoGraphic projects 'beyond the frame' of the page.

> GO: *We have been working for fifteen years on the publication of comics and realisation of comics exhibitions, yet, this was the first time that we, as editors and publishers, had cooperate with a space that was actually dictating its own narrative rules. Usually, even when we organize an exhibition, we bring ready-made materials within spaces, and display stories whose material and narrative shape is already fixed. This time it was completely different, not only because we had to deal with a space that is not designated and designed to host exhibitions. Given the physicality, specificities, and rules of the train station, we had to discard many of the ideas about the installation that we had sketched in the studio. For the first time, we had the impression that we couldn't control the narrative game.*

As Ostanel further explained, the result of this complicated process of constant adaptation was an atypical comics story, whose stylistic choices and graphic language were deeply influenced by the specificities of the site. The language needed to be very simple and easily readable, with short sentences that had to be accessible for different audiences. Mora had to imagine people passing rapidly through the station, and reading the story from disparate points of entry.

> GO: *Everything, the number, shape, dimension, and position of the panels was set by the configuration of the space of the train station. The story had to necessarily become a mosaic. The plotline was imagined in a circular form, with the story comprised in the temporal frame of a single day. Like a kind of ring-around-the-rosey, readers could move around following the circularity of the story.*

Beyond these fundamental choices that defined the narrative architecture of Mora's comics, according to Ostanel, the most surprising moment in the creative process was the installation of the comics story in the physical space of the train station. For the first time in his carrier, he admitted, readers where there during the composition process. Therefore, accidental readers became unintentionally part of the assemblage, sharing their own opinion on the spot: there where passers-by who stopped by, started to read the story, and ask questions about its presence, duration, meaning, and scope; while others were simply passing by with no interest in what was happening in the space around them.

> GO: *At the beginning, the people working in the train station, who are used to inhabit that space every day, felt a bit disoriented by the presence of a foreign object in their comfort zone. This disorientation came from the fact that they had never imagined the train station as a narrative space, and they had never thought that that highly bustling and mobile working place could turn into a reading space. Yet, after going through the panels, they recognised their own stories, memories, and emotions in Mora's comics, and started to feel part of that narrative. Maybe this is the reason why, one month later, when the comics-installation was dismantled, many of them spontaneously took care of the single panels, bringing them into their personal offices. An informal exhibition was taking place out of our control, beyond our imagination.*

The presence of the story in public space suggested forms of creative, and spontaneous appropriations like the ones recalled by Ostanel. The event of the story took place in different spaces, beyond the predicted

frame of the official SG exhibition, autonomously creating new spatial events connected to it. Once the exhibition was dismantled, also the story was then reassembled in different spaces, in the personal offices of the workers in the train station, in the depot of the Museum of Geography of Padua, in the small headquarter of BeccoGiallo, where panels are piled and stacked surrounded by hundreds of printed comic books.

Even though public art is a highly contested and multifaceted notion and phenomenon (Bengtsen 2013; Hall and Robertson 2001), I consider the comics installation realised during SG as 'public art', especially because of its openness, plurality, and accessibility. In fact, following Martin Zebracki, 'we consider public art permanent or temporary artistic creations on sites outside conventional museological spaces (e.g. museums and galleries) that have open public access' (2012, p. 736). *A station of stories*, likewise the other geo-artistic works realised during SG, was designed to be as much accessible as possible: except for the panels hanging on the wall close to platform number one, whose accessibility was determined by the opening hours of the train station, the main part of the story was displayed in public space and, thus, always accessible to everyone. Furthermore, all the three artistic installations were designed with the specific aim to intervene in the urbanscape of Padua, creatively interacting with the three surrounding areas where they were placed, hoping to stimulate spontaneous processes of creative spatial thinking. Considering the specific impact of Mora's comics installation on the surrounding area of the train station, I would like to recall Gert Biesta's idea of the 'public *sphere*' as an ongoing process of 'becoming public' (2012, p. 684). According to Biesta, the public sphere is necessarily connected with the condition of plurality, and suggests an idea of pedagogy that does not show what people should do, but rather creates forms of interruption that keep the opportunities open (2012, p. 685). *A station of stories* was especially thought as a kind of interruption itself, an invitation to slow down our rhythms, take our time to read something, and listen to other stories, in a space that is, conversely, highly mobile and often simply passed by. A narrative interruption in urban daily rhythms, the comics story was imagined as a creative intervention to start reading public space differently. As Zebracki affirms, 'place and public art are constructed/reconstructed in people's engagement with them' (2012, p. 736): in the same way, the meaning of both the train station and the story were co-constructed, in an ongoing practice of narrative reconfiguration, where comics panels were read through an embodied spatial practice.

From the beginning the aim of the SG art-installation was to inscribe the comics story *in* public space. Interestingly, even though the area surrounding the train station is often stereotypically described by the local media as a dangerous, insecure, and critical one, not a single panel was vandalised or stolen during the entire month of the exhibition. Many spontaneous practices emerged during the reception of *A station of stories*, from people taking pictures of single panels to travellers spending their pause in the train station reading the comics story rather than looking at the shop windows. The idea was not to predict in advance what readership to address, rather to think about the possibility of creating new, and spontaneous audiences. Both the SG materials – comprising a map whose life and afterlives I have described elsewhere (Peterle 2019) – and the guided tours, and laboratorial activities that we organised during the month of the exhibition aimed to engage a varied audience. This audience comprised the scientific community of geographers, students, stakeholders individuated during fieldwork (like associations, neighbourhood committees, shopkeepers and cultural operators etc.), and many unpredicted readers, who accidentally encountered the installation and visited the exhibition just because it was displayed in public space. Readers comprised city dwellers, commuters, passers-by of different ages, whose reaction to the installation and interaction with it were highly unpredictable, and difficult to register.

Beyond spontaneous communities of readers, we had also some precise targets that we wanted to reach with our geo-artistic project. Therefore, in collaboration with the curators at the Progetto Giovani and the Museum of Geography of the University of Padova, we organised different guided tours throughout the diffused art exhibition for the geographers attending the Giornate della Geografia 2018; for the private citizens, who spontaneously decided to subscribe to the free walks we organised in the weekend after the inauguration; for the international STEDE students at the University of Padua; and for the several classes of the high schools, who took part in the educational laboratories we proposed in collaboration with the Museum of Geography. From and educational point of view, the presence of the exhibition was an occasion to create an open connection between art and geography, and to suggest the employment of comics as a prolific educational tool for teaching geography (Peterle 2015; Tabachnick 2009; Versacci 2001). The geo-artistic exhibition became an opportunity to propose a form of attunement to the narrative essence of urban landscape. In fact, during the guided tours with the high schools of Padua, students were involved in a set of creative practices and exercises to see, write, and draw urban imaginaries through the use of a combination of words and images, like in the comics story. In the train station, for example, after having read Mora's story, participants were asked to pick one random person in the crowd, and to compose a short narrative path

simply imagining following his/her travel trajectory. In this way, students became aware of the verisimilitude of the characters represented in the comics story but also of the narrative potential of urban spaces. Through these observational and place-based exercises, students recognised the traits of Mora's characters in those of the people they encountered in the train station. The comics story became a bridge between fictional and public places; a useful tool to read urbanscapes through a narrative lens; a means to creatively contribute, as readers, to the processual construction of the public sphere.

<insert Figure 2.8>

As we will see, the positionality of the researcher will change in the different chapters of the book, and according to the disparate examples that I will propose. Comics as a research practice, indeed, offer a varied constellation of opportunities for geographers to engage with images and words, as authors, readers, or spatial experts within a broader network of geo-artistic collaborations. In this case, I was part of an intricated network of human and non-human actors, who actually contributed to the process of composition of *A station of stories*. Quoting Zebracki, 'various complex events, structures and processes, as well as the behaviour, opinions and experiences of people including ourselves, were brought into' the analysis of the case study presented in this chapter: what emerges is a form of knowledge that is certainly situated (2012, pp. 739–40). If we intend geoGraphic narratives from a processual perspective as ongoing, emerging, always assembling and reassembling narrative practices, we need to focus on the form and content of the representation, but also on the spatial context, elemental forces, materialities, intimate affects, and personal engagements that are inevitably attached to comics stories, and which played a role in the process of 'doing comics'. In the same way, we have to consider the thick network of actors that contribute to the manifold forms that stories take once they are published, read, and circulated. In fact, stories have an impact on both spaces and people, since they do not simply represent, rather they affect, create new scenarios, and *move* people through spaces and across their own emotions (Cameron 2012, p. 581). With *A station of stories*, we hoped to realise an art-installation that should *move* readers physically and emotionally, and be able to 'produce contradictory and ambivalent emotions – emotions that provoke analysis and critique, rather than replace it' (Pratt 2009, p. 17).

When planning the site-specific installation in the train station, we interpreted graphic narratives as emergent possibilities to create new audiences *on the move*, to produce a constantly assembling and disassembling community of readers, based on the simple co-presence of bodies in narrative or public, fictional or real spaces. We imagined the train station as a 'relationscape' in which bodies and their stories are relationally connected and intertwined, and where bodily movements turn into movements of thought that contribute to the creation of space (Manning 2009, p. 15). We know that bodies move, 'they walk, crawl, gesture, run, stumble, reach, fall and embrace', and they do this in manifold ways, moving 'physically, affectively, kinaesthetically, imaginatively, collectively, aesthetically, socially, culturally and politically' (McCormack 2008, p. 1823). More importantly:

> […] we know that by moving in these different ways, bodies can "produce" or generate spaces (Lefebvre 1991, 216; see also Gil 2006). That is, the quality of moving bodies contributes to the qualities of the spaces in which these bodies move. Put another way, spaces *are* – at least in part – as moving bodies *do*. (McCormack 2008, p. 1823)

This generative relation between bodies and spaces can be enhanced by comics stories, especially when they are installed in public spaces. Every time the spatial event of the story happens, through the encounter between the story, the site, and the reader, new bodily movements emerge, following the rhythms of the city, creating new spatial meanings. The assemblage of geoGraphic narratives beyond the page moves the reading path in real space: this opens up to generative possibilities of thinking with comics through the non-representational processes of everyday urban life, rhythms, and aesthetics of movement (Latham and McCormack 2009, p. 260; Sharpe 2013). Through comics' plurivectorial narration, new interpretative lines can be traced through public spaces. Following Tim Ingold, these reading lines can be interpreted through a polyphonic perspective, as compositions that co-respond to each other, and gestures whose parts are not separated components but intertwined movements of body and thought:

> 'The result is not an assemblage but a roundel: not a collage of juxtaposed blobs but a wreath of entwined lines, a whirl of catching up and being caught' (Ingold 2015, p. 7).

Even the architectural body of the train station took part in these movements. If according to Annabel Jane Wharton 'architectural agents' are nonhuman entities, spatial objects that have an effect on their animate environments (2015, p. xiv), this was the case of the train station: indeed, the way in which the comics story

was assembled, by the author, and reassembled, by its readers, was deeply influenced by the train station's 'uniqueness', 'embodiedness', physical shape and materiality, and 'historicity' (Wharton 2015, pp. xvi–xviii). The building's location and spatial context, the way in which its architectural body reacts and keeps trace of the effects of the elemental forces over time, all of these site-specificities were part of the spatial event of *A station of stories*. Therefore, not only do comics contribute to the potential shaping of urbanscapes but also urban materialities and spatial objects can, in turn, shape geoGraphic narratives as well as their practices of circulation and reception.

To conclude, we imagined building comics as a form of dwelling, of taking part to urban assemblages, and of participating in the constellations of singularities that produce cities. The practice of doing comics in public space is a way to witness how cities are lived differently by different actors but also to show, once again, that stories can help us to imagine how cities might be otherwise (McFarlane 2011a, p. 653). Through this lens, comics as creative urban interventions are assemblages with political implications. They involve broader audiences in the process of spatial imagination, suggesting the composition of reading trajectories that trace new lines for 'drawing cities for a sustainable future' – as the SG project's subtitle suggests. If, as McFarlane affirms, 'a conception of the city as assemblage prompts the question of who and what has the capacity to assemble the city' (2011a, p. 668), from *A station of stories* we see how much geoGraphic narratives in public space can lead to new forms of citizens' empowerment. Comics stimulate individual and collective practices of meaning-making, and spatial re-signification. The process through which this comics story 'happened' is a testimony of how geoGraphic narratives can be intrinsically connected with urban architectures, and of their ability to embed the 'eventful, disruptive, atmospheric, and random juxtapositions that characterize urban space' (McFarlane 2011a, pp. 650–1).

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[1] The details and scenes described in this chapter are a re-elaboration not only of my personal memories but also of the reminiscences and thoughts of the other team members, who collaborated in the realisation of the geo-artistic project *Street geography: drawing cities for a sustainable future*. Their memories have been collected in several interviews carried out with Caterina Benvegnù, Guido Ostanel, Mónica Bellido Mora and Tania Rossetto in April 2020. The interviews were originally carried out in Italian, and afterwards translated by me into English.

2 The Creative Commissions were launched in 2018 by the Royal Holloway Centre for the GeoHumanities on the theme of 'Creating Earth Futures'. According to the official website, the commissioning programme was open to any collaboration between creative practitioner(s) and early career academic(s) that was aimed to contribute to the field of global environmental change from the peculiar angle of the arts and humanities. For more information see: http://geohumanitiesforum.org/geohumanities-commissions-2018-creating-earth-futures/. Currently, a second round and joint edition of the Creative Commission on 'Variations on Mobility' was launched in 2019/2020 through the collaboration between the Centre for the GeoHumanities (RHUL) and the Mobility & Humanities Centre for Advanced Studies of the Department of Historical and Geographic Sciences and the Ancient World (DiSSGeA) at the University of Padua. See: https://www.mobilityandhumanities.it/creative-commissions/.

3 The reasoning will be also informed by a couple of papers by Tania Rossetto and I and which are focused on non-human and it-narration as a narrative form that challenges our anthropocentric point of view on urban space. These papers, one focused on a documentary film by Wim Wenders on the Berlin Philharmonic and the other on the graphic novel *Here* by Richard McGuire, have been presented also at the RGS International Conference in Cardiff in 2018. Part of the reasoning is at the centre of a co-authored article titled *Back to Buildings Themselves: The Architectural Geographies of Non-Human Narration* (Rossetto and Peterle, *under review*).

4 The paper was presented with the title *City Buildings as Non-Human Narrators: The Materiality of the Mythical in Wim Wenders' 'The Berlin Philarmonic'* at the conference *The City: Myth and Materiality* organised by the ALUS – Association for Literary Urban Studies and the Institute of Historical Research, 29 May 2018, London.

[ABSTRACT
This chapter retraces the composition of a short geoGraphic for the comic book anthology *Quartieri. Viaggio al centro delle periferie italiane* [Neighbourhoods. Travel at the centre of Italian peripheries] that I have coedited with Adriano Cancellieri (BeccoGiallo 2019). The analysis is proposed from the double perspective of a geographer and comics author; it aims to explore the doing of comics as a research practice that allows geographers to engage with novel forms of urban storytelling, and creative interventions. After providing a theoretical and methodological framework for the doing of ethnographic research in comics form, the chapter introduces the case study, namely a comic book anthology about five peripheral neighbourhoods in five Italian cities: Palermo, Rome, Bologna, Padua, and Milan. Through an autoethnographic account that allows spatial reflexivity, the chapter retraces the immersive process of composing a comics story through ethnographic research methods, walk-along interviews, and cartoGraphic experimentations. Place-based stylistic choices were stimulated by the multi-ethnic neighbourhood of Arcella (Padua) where the fieldwork activities took place: set in an often 'marginalised' area of the city, our geoGraphic narrative became a place for encounters to happen beyond the page, and an opportunity to share interdisciplinary research beyond academic boundaries.
Keywords:
Mapping, enthnography, interview, walking, neighbourhood, chronotope]

[17.816 words]

3. Drawing urban comics: ethnoGraphic strolling across 'peripheral' neighbourhoods

Comics behind the scenes: authoring a geoGraphic narrative

In this Chapter, I reflect on the spatial practice of composing a geoGraphic narrative from the autoethnographic perspective of a geographer-cartoonist. My aim is to give you an empirical example of how comics can become a method for both re-presenting and doing geographical research, influencing the way in which fieldwork is done, and how research results are structured. As a geoGraphic case study, I will focus on the comic book anthology *Quartieri. Viaggio al centro delle periferie italiane* [Neighbourhoods. Travel at the centre of Italian peripheries] (2019) that I have co-edited with Adriano Cancellieri (IUAV). Cancellieri is an urban sociologist, and friend, whose academic work over the years has focused on migration, place-making, public space, and the socio-spatial analysis of multicultural neighbourhoods. His contribution was fundamental in the process of ideation and realisation of *Quartieri* as a collective scientific and editorial project, especially because of his role in the interdisciplinary network Tracce Urbane[1]. Many of the reflections I will share here are certainly sustained by the informal conversations I had with Adriano, and from the suggestions emerged during the several presentations of the comic book anthology we held (together or separately) over the past year. Nevertheless, I will try to propose my own geo-centred and geographical point of view on the experience of composing a comics anthology, and drawing a short comics story, as a research practice. As I will further explain in the next sections, Adriano and I worked on a chapter of *Quartieri* devoted to the peripheral neighbourhood of Arcella in Padua (Italy), the city where we both live and work. The story I will tell in this Chapter, thus, is deeply influenced by my personal perspective, the one of a cultural geographer, who was for the first time involved as both a researcher and comics author in an editorial project, in a close collaboration with an urban sociologist, and in a network of illustrators and scholars from disparate urban contexts and disciplinary backgrounds. This means I will retrace the collaboration with Adriano, but I will especially propose a geoGraphic perspective on the interrelation between the graphic and narrative solutions we have found to tell our research in comics form; on the research methods we have embraced; and on the practical issues we have faced during the ideation, composition, and publication of *Quartieri*. If asked to recall these events from his own experiential point of view, Adriano would probably focus on different aspects.

Even though my story will be partial, I can still tell that in the process of doing comics we were both asked to rethink our usual methodological tools. The peculiarities of the comics language invited us to think, conduct, and present our research differently. As we have seen in Chapter 1, comics-based research is increasing, and 'researchers in numerous disciplines and fields are using comics to enhance their scholarly inquiry' (Kuttner et al. 2020, p. 2). Geographers are using different types of storytelling and creative writing (Brace and Johns-Putra 2010; Cameron 2012; DeLyser and Hawkins 2014; Jacobson and Larsen 2014;

Lorimer 2003; Wylie 2005) as methods for 'researching differently' (Hawkins 2015: 261). Often inspired by anthropologists' experimentations with the genre of ethnofiction (Augé 2013; Sjöberg 2009, 2008; VanSlyke-Briggs 2009), geographers have explored the hybridisation of ethnographic research and fictional writing, while others are experimenting the use of comics to 'think geographically' (Fall 2020a, 2020b, 2020c) or 'cartoGraphically' through their spatial grammar (Peterle 2019). The work *The ethnographic novel as activist mode of existence: translating the field with homeless people and beyond* (2016) realised by Michele Lancione in collaboration with an illustrator is one of the many examples that propose ethnofiction as a research-activist 'mode of existence' (2016, p. 994). Similarly, the ethnographic novel by Andrea Staid and Francesca Cogni *Senza confini. Una etnographic novel* (2018), functions as another example of how the encounter between ethnographic research and the comics language can become a way to engage with vulnerable groups and their stories. Starting from the creative experimentations in visual anthropology, a new multidisciplinary area of interest that focuses on visual methods and representation of research in the social sciences is growing fast (Pink 2003, p. 185; 2006). Beyond geography's disciplinary boundaries, comics-based research is 'an emerging field of practice that attracts researchers with diverse disciplinary and epistemological commitments' (Kuttner et al. 2020, pp. 2–3) are using comics to conduct qualitative research, and 'make sense of the social world' (Weaver-Hightower 2013). This Chapter is a further example of how geographers can take part in this emerging field of practice through cross-disciplinary collaborations.

EthnoGraphic reflexivity: drawing ourselves in the field
Merging ethnofictional methods with the doing of comics offers an opportunity to reflect on the geographies of the field, on our positionality, the relations we establish, the spaces we traverse, and the places we inhabit with our own bodies during fieldwork. If comics stimulate readers' empathy (Fall 2020b, p. 13), entering the field with comics paves the way for empathetic engagements between researchers and local communities: also Adriano and I experienced in first-person how much our comics project stimulated a sincere curiosity on the part of the people we encountered along the research path. As an author-researcher, I collected visual materials during interviews to translate them, afterwards, into drawings. This asked me to constantly reflect on my positionality in the field, especially when I needed to take pictures of the interviewees while they were walking and talking. Following other examples of researchers inhabiting their own comics page (Flowers 2017), I decided that Adriano and I should become characters in the chapter devoted to the Arcella neighbourhood. To become narrative characters does not simply mean to reproduce our faces and bodies as figurative images in the comics story, rather to translate our research and walking paths across the neighbourhood into a narrative plot, making the relations between page and place visible into the comics story (Anderson 2014). Turning ourselves into characters means also to give readers the opportunity to virtually enter the field, replicating our words and actions every time they read the page. Not only different plotlines are performed by different readers but the different spatio-temporal, disciplinary, cultural, and spatial contexts in which readers are immersed constantly create new emerging geographies of the same field observed from manifold angles. This process implies, somehow, the virtual presence of readers in the research field, introducing new voices in the research conversation: in fact, even though readers cannot ask questions themselves to the interviewees, nevertheless unpredicted questions arise, and are stimulated by the replication of dialogues every time a reader meets the comics page. These unpredicted conversations happen beyond the frame of the page, and often take place during open presentations of the comic book on which I will come back in the final part of the Chapter.

<Insert Figure 3.1>

Reflecting on comics' inherent subjectivity, Kuttner et al. highlight the fact that 'many nonfiction comics creators have embraced the inherently subjective nature of comic narratives and taken it a step further by integrating themselves as characters in their work' (2020, p. 11). This choice makes the positionality of researchers visible, deconstructing the 'view from nowhere' (Fall 2020b, p. 5). Furthermore, when turning fieldwork relations with interviewees and key actors into narrative scenes, as an author-researcher I become myself more aware of my bodily presence and gestures in the field: the autoethnographic process activated by the doing of comics becomes a peculiar attunement, a specific sensibility to the geographies of the field (Butz 2010). Representing the researcher-self as a character in the narration gives the opportunity to expose readers to the different moments that are part of the process of collecting information for qualitative research. The drawing practice allows to come back to significant aspects that connect our personality to our positionality in the field, especially when working in urban contexts with disparate informants (Rose 1997;

Kusek and Smiley 2014). Through drawing images that portrait myself in the field, during walks and interviews in the Arcella neighbourhood in Padova, I became more aware of 'aspects of my personality, such as my social skills, my emotional responses to and interest in local events, how I conducted myself and the manner in which I navigated the personalities of others' (Moser 2008, p. 383). This way the doing of comics was a useful tool to better understand how much these positional, emotional, affective and bodily aspects influenced the way people reacted to our questions and, consequently, the data and stories that we collected. Placing our words, bodies, facial expressions, and gestures in the page means to expose our personalities as part of our positionalities in the field. Given the fact that the comic book anthology *Quartieri* was expected to circulate beyond academic boundaries, thus among audiences who are probably less aware of how the process of ethnographic research takes place and of how much situatedness influences research outputs, the narrative choice of turning ourselves into characters is a way to demonstrate that there are no neutral observers and no research is completely unbiased; it is a graphic statement of the fact that each researcher is subjective and, thus, produces knowledges that are necessarily affected, partial, incomplete, never disinterested and, consequently, situated (Moser 2008, p. 384). With no aim to present our research as objective, we avoided translating our gazes into an omniscient narrative voice. Thus, as I will further explain in the following sections, I proposed to use an external element, the map of the neighbourhood, as the leading voice of our geoGraphic narration.

<insert Figure 3.2>

The representation of dialogues into graphic form permits further reflections on the interview as a method. As Robyn Dowling et al. notice, 'while interviews remain the mainstay of qualitative methods, they do not do so in isolation, being used as a supplement or complement to other means of approaching, analysing and intervening in social life' (2015, p. 679). Recently, geographers have been experimenting with new ways for enriching the interview as a qualitative method, through working with auto-reflective and sensory diaries, by using means of representation beyond the textual, like photographs, drawings, maps, and by exploring creative and mobile modes to capture social life as it happens (Dowling et al. 2015, pp. 680–3). Comics as a research practice could enter this conversation, becoming another way to narratively represent but also to think of, and creatively perform interviews in urban contexts: the interaction of bodies during interviews, the alternation of words, silences and laughs, the importance of facial expressions, all these small details are reproduced in the comics page and gain new meanings through the drawing process. Even if not verbalised in the speech bubbles or in the captions' boxes, materialities, affects, and bodily engagements become visible in the comics page. Furthermore, since recent researches stressed how much interviews can be shaped by the space in which they take place, comics allow the relationship between bodies and the surrounding environment to become visible, tangible, audible. As shown later on in this Chapter, Adriano and I decided to run interviews 'on the move', making consciously use of the neighbourhood itself as a methodological tool to gain a deeper understanding of people's individual engagements with the urban environment (Holton and Riley 2014). If we agree that 'the city constructs the interview and shapes the information collected' (Dowling et al. 2015, p. 684), I suggest that comics stories, thanks to the hybrid encounter of words and images, are particularly able to capture the vibes of urbanscapes that influence interviews. The presence of other people, crowds, sounds, colours represent a consistent part of the ethnographic research context that is captured by the comics page. Indeed, even if spatial backgrounds can be partially described in textual form, they find new relevance through images: in comics, characters only rarely float on a white page, and are more frequently located in specific graphic backgrounds, which provide us with relevant information about the context of research.

The field in fiction: narrativising the research process
The fictional and narrative expedients allowed by the composition of a comics story permit us to shape the form of ethnographic materials in order to highlight specific aspects and emotional reactions that emerged during the research process. Working on the emotional charge of the story, comics allow for a more intimate engagement from the audience. It is important to explicit that, even though the contents of the dialogues in our comics story about Arcella have been collected through ethnographic methods of research, nevertheless the story is still ethnofictional at some degree. For example, even if all the encounters in our story seem to happen along a plotline that develops during a single day, nevertheless these interviews took place in different days and at different times. Once storied and assembled together, like urban constellations these interviews assume new meanings: for example, when one interview with an historical inhabitant, who has

been living in the neighbourhood for a long time, is placed close to the one with an association for foreign citizens, migrants and refugee seekers, these two resonate together, probably activating new echoes, and meanings beyond those that we actually recorded during fieldwork. In our comics story, the sequence of words and encounters has been fictionally placed along a route that moves from South to North through the peripheral neighbourhood of Arcella, and thus reproduces an ideal walk that never took place in that specific form, in reality. Yet, this choice was necessary to create a narrative coherence and give a sense to the story – where sense is intended here as both a direction for readers to follow and as a meaning to understand its content.

As VanSlyke-Briggs observes, 'a contemporary movement in the field of ethnography allows for the blurring of genres with regard to what is typically considered academic writing' and gives us an opportunity to experiment with collisions between art and sciences, further challenging the accepted norms of academic discourse (2009, pp. 335-6). These experimentations, allow for a more active role of the readers, who are asked to enter the text through personal connections:

> Although it is impossible to have the readers' experience every step along the way, the researcher embeds the reader within the work and allows the reader self-discovery of meaning through creative ethnography. […] Meaning cannot be permanently set down in text, as every new reader creates an independent meaning and may not construct the same meaning the author intended. (VanSlyke-Briggs 2009, p. 336)

This process of self-discovery permits a closer connection between the readers and the presented research data. In this way, the audience of the ethnofictional story is involved in an ongoing meaning making process. This happens also with *Quartieri*: since when the anthology was published, for example, readers have been creating their own connections and urban assemblages, finding the similarities between the neighbourhoods that are represented in the five chapters of the collection and other peripheral neighbourhoods, located in other Italian cities. In their meaning making processes, readers make connections explicit, bridging their own urban experiences with those represented in *Quartieri*. Presenting the anthology in cities that are not mentioned in the collection, like Pisa, Rovereto, Urbino or Bolzano, to mention only a few, readers made their virtual presence visible. As curators of the anthology we were invited in disparate urban contexts by groups of readers, local associations, bookshops and activists, who wanted to tell their own stories about their own peripheral neighbourhoods. These virtual connections are able to expand the network of stories connected to the comic book anthology, adding new cities to the cartographic mosaic of city maps I have drawn on the cover of the book. Thanks to readers ability to get involved and become part of the dialogue, when I hold the book in my hand I have the feeling that many other cities are part of that constellation of stories, even if that drawing comprises only the five maps of San Siro in Milan, Arcella in Padua, Bolognina in Bologna, Tor Bella Monaca in Rome, and ZEN in Palermo (see Figure 3.3). Of course, we should not forget that the use of fiction as a method has also its own limits: ethnofictional writing rises issues of validity, due to its excessive distance from traditional academic style, and thus of reliability and scientific pertinency. Yet, I believe that we should 'consider ethnofiction' especially because of this apparent limits, and its declared fictional traits, emotional tone, allegorical and metaphoric use of language (VanSlyke-Briggs 2009, pp. 341-2). Ethnofiction is an honest choice, because it does not pretend neither to find any pure truth nor to represent it as a research output even when it assumes a comics form; it is a mimetic choice, because it captures everyday language and the multi-vocal essence of research. The use of geoGraphic narratives brings creative practices and geography, images and words, fiction and facts, stories and testimonies, the re-presentation and doing of ethnographic research together. When drafting *Quartieri* as a creative research project, my goal was to experiment with ethnofictional writing, and embrace comics as a substantial part of my geographical research practice in the Arcella neighbourhood. What follows is an autoethnographic reflection on *Quartieri* from a processual perspective, starting from its ideation to its composition and circulation.

Travel at the centre of a comic book anthology
If representation can be thought of as an ongoing, constantly assembling and disassembling, timing and spacing process of 'worlding' (Dewsbury, Harrison, Rose, and Wylie 2002, p. 438), of composing worlds through words, what happens if we combine images and words through the *doing* of comics? First, we have to admit that, 'at its heart, research is storytelling' (Christensen 2012, p. 232) and, thus, a narrative practice in its own right. In fact, as Julia Christensen observes, as researchers we listen to stories, reflect upon, and interpret them; then, we become ourselves storytellers as we start sharing those stories, along with personal experiences and ideas, with different audiences (p. 232). Yet, what happens if decide to explicitly use comics

to compose the story emerged from our research? In previous Chapters 1 and 2, we have seen how the spatial architecture of comics involves authors and readers in spatial events, taking place in specific spatio-temporal contexts through emerging practices. Nevertheless, I am interested here in what happens when geographers are involved in first-person in the production of comics, when they are asked to use their spatial grammar to conduct fieldwork, and then re-present their research results. In my experience, the use of this particular form of storytelling has deeply influenced the research practice in the Arcella neighbourhood, and profoundly affected how I planned and organized fieldwork activities. As explained in the previous section, the practice of doing comics has also changed my positionality in the field, affecting the way in which my role as an author-researcher was perceived by others, for example arousing the curiosity of many interviewees or capturing passers-by attention when I was taking pictures of small details in the neighbourhood. Even my own perspective, while I was moving, observing, speaking, listening, interviewing, and photographing in the field, was profoundly influenced by the fact that I was expected to reproduce those encounters, experiences, and dialogues in a graphic form (Brice 2018). In fact, 'drawing is a way of thinking', as David M. Ball and Martha B. Kuhlmann sustain in their volume on *The comics of Chris Ware* (2010): indeed, during fieldwork, a voice in my head was constantly remembering me that I needed to imagine those events, walks, and encounters in comics form. Through comics, I saw interviewees as characters, and I felt that recording their visual features was equally important as registering their verbal answers. In the same way, I interviews sounded to me like stories that I had already started to organise in panels, pages, and speech bubbles while there were speaking. Apparently, during fieldwork, I was already inhabiting the space of the comics page.

<insert Figure 3.3>

Storying neigbourhoods
Many of these reflections emerged during the co-ideation of the comic book anthology *Quartieri. Viaggio al centro delle periferie italiane* with the urban sociologist and expert in ethnographic research methods, Adriano Cancellieri (IUAV University of Venice). Published with the Italian publishing house BeccoGiallo, the anthology collects five comics stories on five peripheral neighbourhoods in Italy, namely Tor Bella Monaca in Rome, Bolognina in Bologna, San Siro in Milan, ZEN in Palermo, and Arcella in Padua. Our initial idea was to realise a graphic novel completely devoted to Arcella, an area on which both Adriano and I had been working for a while. Yet, my very small experience as a comic author together with the need for the publishing house to sell the editorial product all over the country led us to change our initial project, and to consider the realisation of an edited collection. In fact, the editor's suggestion to realise a collection of shorter stories about different peripheral neighbourhoods, spread throughout the country in very different urban contexts, was particularly intriguing for us from an urban research perspective: first, the collection of stories permitted us to create an interdisciplinary network of scholars and cartoonists working in the same cities; second, we imagined the anthology as an incomplete mosaic of contemporary Italian peripheries that could speak to a wider audience in the whole country. The inclusion of other cities broadened the spectrum of our potential readers, extending audiences to all those people who could now recognise their own urbanscapes in the five comics stories. This way, the initial project became a collective endeavour, an urban assemblage for which Adriano and I became responsible, as curators.
With the idea of a collection of disparate disciplinary and graphic voices in mind, we decided that each story had to somehow replicate our effort to bring academic researchers and comics authors together. Starting from the network of Tracce Urbane, we involved researchers with different disciplinary backgrounds, from urban sociology to anthropology, urban planning, and architecture. As soon as they agreed to take part in the project, we asked them to collaborate with comics authors, whose names were mainly suggested by BeccoGiallo in collaboration with the online graphic journalism magazine *Stormi*. Preferably both the researcher and the comics author should have a personal connection with the selected peripheral area in their cities, which means an extensive history of research on the neighbourhood, in the case of the researchers; and a previous experience of creative interventions in the neighbourhood, in the case of the comics authors. In our view, this was aimed to facilitate the dialogue about the urban area between researchers and cartoonists as well as to enrich the story with their own very personal experience in the neighbourhood. We did not want cartoonists to be mere graphic translators of previous and ready-made urban researches, rather we hoped to stimulate a dialogue between artists and researchers, composing a comic book anthology that should mirror this collaborative exchange.

Before moving to the geoGraphic research practice that led us to the realisation of the final product of the anthology, and of our specific comics story on Arcella, let me briefly introduce the general blueprint of the collection, and the people involved. From a curatorial point of view, the project was certainly built on Adriano's capacity to read and tell urban social contexts through ethnographic methods, on his profound knowledge of the Arcella neighbourhood, and expertise in contemporary urban phenomena such as urban regeneration, segregation, and migration (Cancellieri 2010; Cancellieri 2014; Cancellieri and Ostanel 2015; Cancellieri and Scandurra 2012; Saint-Blancat and Cancellieri 2014). At the same time, the project benefited of my research works on comics and in comics form, experimentations with creative methods and hybrid combinations of narrative forms and research practices, and collaborations with different comic book editorial projects in Italy. The encounter between our different experiences and disciplinary sensitivities was especially useful when we started to draft our research project on the Arcella neighbourhood, choosing the people to interview, the types of spaces to represent, and what to discard from our comics portrayal. Seen as a whole, our project benefited from the interdisciplinary network Tracce Urbane. As said, Adriano and I were the only researcher duo that comprised, from the very beginning, one member that was also a comic author herself. In all other cases, comics authors were invited to join the members of Tracce Urbane, read their work, meet their research groups and, only then, translate years of specialist works into comics through a collaborative dialogue. In some cases, though, the cartoonists themselves were researchers, like in the case of Giuseppe Lo Bocchiaro, who holds a PhD in Regional and Urban Planning, and drew the chapter on Palermo in collaboration with anthropologist Ferdinando Fava (University of Padua). Fava's long-lasting researches on the 'anthropologies of exclusion' (Fava 2008) in the ZEN neighbourhood have easily met Lo Bocchiaro's personal attention towards a city, Palermo, where he lives and works, and that he had already put at the centre of his researches (Lo Bocchiaro and Tulumello 2014) and comics production. In Rome, urban planners Carlo Cellamare and Francesco Montillo have shared their research-action experience in the Tor Bella Monaca neighbourhood with Alekos Reize. Their thick network of relationships of mutual trust with the inhabitants, provided access to inhabitants' intimate stories of social marginalisation and resistance (Cellamare and Montillo 2020) that were then turned into comics form by the illustrator. Whereas in Bologna Giuseppe Scandurra (University of Ferrara) spontaneously suggested to collaborate with illustrator and cartoonist Mattia Moro, in Milan comics author Elena Mistrello was invited to join a wider research group of people connected to the research-action project Mapping San Siro (Polytechnic Univerisity of Milan), and coordinated by Francesca Cognetti in collaboration with Paolo Grassi and Elena Maranghi (Cognetti 2014; Cognetti and Fava 2020; Scandurra 2015).

<Insert Figure 3.4>

Each chapter was realised in a very original manner both from a processual and stylistic perspective. In some cases, couples worked through a remote collaboration and exchange, while other times researchers asked cartoonists to take actively part in the interviews or in other research activities in the neighbourhood. The result is a collection of five stories that are very different to one another in both their style and content, as well as in the process of their composition. Nevertheless, some common threads spontaneously emerged throughout the collection, creating connections between stories that had a separate origin, because set in distant urban contexts. For example, female characters seem to play a fundamental role in many stories in the comic book collection, with young and old women sharing their intimate experiences as mothers, migrants, members of associations. In the chapter devoted to Padua, for example, we represent our encounters with different women: 84-years-old Maria, who has been living in the neighbourhood for more than 40 years; Odette, who is vice-president of an association for the African community in the neighbourhood; Ferdousi, a young Bangladeshi woman, who barely speaks some Italian words and moved to Padua a couple of years ago with her son and daughter (see Figure 3.4). In our story, their very personal experiences and perspectives become examples of the manifold existential trajectories of the many women who live, work, grow their children, and run their activities in the neighbourhood. In the comics story about Milan, the cartoonist Elena Mistrello becomes a character herself. During her visit in San Siro, she meets a group of teachers and mothers that are part of a strong network of solidarity, mutual help, and cultural exchange created by women of different origins, who gravitate around the infant and primary school Carlo Dolci, and who share a common vision of a multicultural future for the neighbourhood. Finally, in the chapter set in Rome, the personal and intimate story of a single young mother reflects the structural fragilities of Tor Bella Monaca as a marginalised neighbourhood, where informal networks of mutual support struggle to fill in the gaps created by the almost complete absence of the institutions. Her story starts and develops at the margins of a football

ground placed at the centre of the grey apartment buildings of Tor Bella Monaca. In fact, another read thread that appears repeatedly throughout the collection is represented by public spaces, like football or basket pitches, squares, parks and bridges, which seem to be crucial spaces for multicultural and transgenerational encounters in many urban contexts. In Bologna, a small basketball pitch is the place where the story begins, a place of co-existence that brings together the voices of young teenagers with those of old men registering the changes occurred in the neighbourhood while sitting on a bench. During our walk-along interview with Somrat, on which I will come back in a while, he spontaneously traced a geography of the football pitches of Arcella, introducing an unexpected type of space in our preconceived map of the area. As we learned from the interviews, these apparently banal places represent fundamental chronotopes that help to interpret everyday practices, in real space, and to tell inhabitants' stories, in the comics page.

Comics as counter-narratives
From a socio-spatial perspective, the five chosen neighbourhoods represent very different urban contexts: in fact, the collection comprises two Italian metropolises, Rome and Milan, two medium-sized cities, Bologna and Padua, and the very peculiar case study of Palermo. Despite all their differences and local particulars, concerning both the geographical and historical contexts, the five neighbourhoods share the common trait of being perceived as 'peripheral' and 'marginal' from both spatial and social perspectives. This marginality is often a cause and consequence of lower rent prices, which in turn determine a high percentage of foreign immigrants living in these areas. The Arcella neighbourhood, for example, with almost 40,000 inhabitants, is the second largest neighbourhood in the city of Padua, a city of 211,000 residents. It is often referred to as 'a city in the city', as it is spatially separated from the centre by train tracks on the south and bounded by the expressway and the River Brenta on the north. The percentage of foreign inhabitants in the area is around 29,25%. Of course, this percentage is not very high if compared to other multi-ethnic neighbourhoods of well-known international case studies and global cities; yet, it is quite impressive if we consider that the average of foreign inhabitants for the entire municipality of Padua is 16,78% in 2019.[2] All of these traits are easily visible as soon as we walk northward from the city centre of Padua, passing the rails by the overpass Borgomagno to enter the Arcella neighbourhood. Here, the urbanscape is dotted with ethnic shops, densely populated by young university students and inhabitants of other nationalities, all together giving the impression of a very dynamic area, with the tram crossing the main road, and dozens of bicycles moving in all directions. In the last decades, Arcella witnesses an increasing flow of international migration and the presence of many university students, because of the availability of short-term and low-cost rent in the area; from a diachronic perspective, Arcella is also a historic district, whose foundation dates back to the early 13th century with the construction of the Franciscan convent 'Santa Maria de Cella' – which likely gave the neighbourhood its name. The conflicts between 'old' and 'new residents' have been exacerbated by a quite dramatic representation of life in the neighbourhood fostered by local media, which often focus on the perception of insecurity and the problems of criminality and drug-dealing in the area. As Claudia Mantovan and Elena Ostanel suggest, Arcella could be listed among the 'contested neighbourhoods' of Italian cities even though on a medium-sized urban scale (Mantovan and Ostanel 2015): like in the area of the railway station of Padua, that we have explored in Chapter 2, also in Arcella the co-existence between different inhabitants, practices, and uses is often stigmatised by media representations.
Especially the will to move beyond stereotyped narratives of these so-called 'peripheries' was at the basis of our collection of comics stories: in fact, another common trait of these five neighbourhoods is that they all suffer, at different scales, of the stigmatisation process often broadcasted by local newspapers and TV news. This way, negative narratives become deeply rooted in people's imaginaries, and even part of inhabitants' perception of their own identity. Thus, part of my visual research for drawing the comics story was devoted to the newspaper headlines, in order to reproduce them in the page, and give a taste of the rhetoric used to portray the neighbourhood. As I will further explore in Chapter 5, the comics language permits authors to embed various materials like archival documents, visual sources, newspaper clippings, and photographs, without the need to mediate their meaning through explanatory texts. The visual reproductions of these materials can be interpreted as mere fillers, which are part of the design and visual composition of the page, or as integral parts of the narration, which complete and inform the story as much as texts do. As Kuttner at al. affirms, comics multimodality is extremely useful to 'present multiple forms of data and analysis': through the combination of images and words, 'comics affords researchers a strong platform for "thick description" (Geertz, 1970), a chance to simultaneously explore the surface interactions and the multiple layers of meaning behind them' (Kuttner et al. 2020, p. 8). For example, as shown in Figure 3.5, I have decided to draw a newspaper with a typical sensationalist headline ('degradation in the area of Bernina

Street') to give readers a taste of the atmosphere that reigns in the neighbourhood, and that pervades the imaginary of the local community: not by chance, the page is devoted to one of the more contested areas in the neighbourhood, namely the one around Bernina Street. Here, inhabitants guided by a right-wing party contest the presence of many locals (pubs, gyms, associations, clubs) run by people of non-Italian origins, accusing them for the degradation of the living conditions in the area. Yet, in the same comics page, a coloured group of young people walks through the street playing instruments, contrasting the negative representation of the area through their bodies, and cultural activities. Interestingly, also this image promoting for a new hybrid identity for the neighbourhood comes from a research in the local newspapers' archives: the comics page witnesses the co-presence of different, contrasting narratives in the same area.

<insert Figure 3.5>

In fact, in recent years, a thick network of associations, citizen committees, and informal groups born on social media have started to propose a counter-narrative of Arcella. Through this bottom-up process, Arcella is being narrated as a place for cultural events, festivals, and debates to take place, an open and collaborative neighbourhood, increasingly referred to as 'the city of tomorrow', especially because of its dynamic, young, and multicultural identity. This was the context where, as explained in Chapter 2, with Fabio Roncato we worked on the site-specific art installation *Agli antipodi c'è l'oceano* [*At the Antipodes, There Is the Ocean*], as part of the broader geo-artistic project *Street geography: drawing cities for a sustainable future* (SG). Within this broader process of self-awareness embraced by Arcella's inhabitants, SG aimed to share geographical knowledge through artistic language, composing a geographic narrative more accessible and attractive to a wide, non-specialist audience. The same aim to contribute to this constructive urban narrative process, and to disseminate academic specialist thinking through an accessible medium is at the heart of the comic book anthology *Quartieri*. Comics stories permit the co-existence of contrasting narratives on the page. Placing inhabitants' voices at the centre of different narratives that are not imposed from above but composed from below, urban comics represent an opportunity to let submersed stories emerge.

Walk and draw, map and tell! CartoGraphic strolling in Arcella (Padua)
In the previous Chapters, we have already discussed the close relationship between comics and cities (Fraser 2019): as said, the graphic novel as a genre was born in a specific urban historical context in the New York stories drawn by Will Eisner and, for the same reason, also the geoGraphic novel as an hybrid research-genre is particularly useful to narrate urban research. As seen in Chapter 2, not only are comics stories often set in urban environments but the 'spatial architecture' of the comics page also reproduces urban assemblages and rhythms, which involve both authors and readers in proper spatial practices of orientation/disorientation, movement/stasis (Dittmer and Latham 2015). Moreover, as Dominic Davies has recently demonstrated in his volume *Urban comics: infrastructure and the global city in contemporary graphic narratives*, comics 'reveal that the built environments are not static, banal or depoliticised, but rather highly charged material spaces that allow some forms of social life to exist while also prohibiting others' (Davies 2019). Furthermore, they also impact on urban infrastructures through their forms and contents, as well as through the networks of people they bring together to create a community of authors and readers, who recognise themselves in the same conditions of urban inhabitants and citizens. As seen in Mónica Bellido Mora's site-specific installation in the train station of Padua, *A station of stories: moving narrations*, realised for the *Street geography* project (Chapter 2), comics provide us with a constructive and reparative exercise for urban intervention. They represent future-oriented stories that are able to 'recover forgotten uses of urban space' and bring them back to life (Davies 2019, p. 249). Int his case, if cities themselves can be interpreted as spaces constantly assembling, disassembling, and reassembling, then also the form of the comic book anthology, of the collection of short stories about different geographical areas, somehow replicates the 'play between stability and change, order and disruption' (McFarlane and Anderson 2011, p. 163) that characterises both urban spaces, as an object of study, and assemblage thinking, as a mode of understanding it.

Walking with characters
Adriano and I imagined our comics story as a potential site of intervention which could become part of the broader network of counter-narratives, creative interventions, and cultural initiatives in the area. The first step was necessarily a negotiation between our interdisciplinary perspectives: whereas my focus was on the construction of a research path that would resonate, from the beginning, with a potential narrative structure

for the comics story, Adriano was more concerned with the coherence of our fieldwork from an urban sociological perspective. Despite this difference, we shared a mutual interest in social phenomena, especially in the bottom up and place-based processes recently emerged in the area, and in the possibility to integrate comics in our research practice. From the beginning, we knew we were more keen to work on future-oriented visions of the neighbourhood, on its potential social forces: Arcella's past, from the medieval era to the industrial development of the area, and the effects of the Second World War bombing on its urban assets, were not at the centre of our research. Our aim was not even to reveal something 'new' about the area: we preferred the idea of listening rather than discovering. Thus, we did not draw our personal blueprint about how the neighbourhood should be in the future, rather we opened our eyes and ears to different voices, encountering private citizens, shopkeepers, members of the local associations, and single activists to understand how they envision the future in the area from their very different perspectives. For this reason, the first person we interviewed was a boy from Bangladesh, Somrat, whose vision of the future starts from the perspective of a young inhabitant of non-Italian origins (see Figure 3.7).

Our scope was to work as urban mediators, to be interpreted by interviewees more as facilitators for spatial stories to emerge, rather than as experts of the neighbourhood that could offer a specific interpretation of its socio-spatial phenomena. Voices of 'old inhabitants', including owners of historic local shops, elders, and members of local committees and associations, were alternated with those of 'new inhabitants', such as activists and students, young migrants, migrant women, and ethnic shopkeepers and restaurateurs. We also wanted inhabitants' relations with the physical environment of Arcella to emerge during interviews: the scope was to let people as well as streets, squares, parks, private houses, shops, and abandoned buildings speak for themselves. In fact, both human and architectural presences in the neighbourhood find a visual representation in the story, which means they occupy a physical space in the comics page with their bodies. Since the neighbourhood needed to be part of the story, not simply as a spatial background but as an actual character, we primarily collected our ethnographic material on the move. During go-along interviews, we walked around the neighbourhood being guided by various key informants, and embracing step by step, interview after interview, different perspectives on the same area (Anderson 2004; Evans and Jones 2011; Jones et al. 2008; Kusenbach 2003). In fact, this methodological choice was to encourage interviewees sharing their own daily relationship with people and places in the neighbourhood. When walking was not an option, we reached our key informants at work, as in the case of many local shopkeepers: interviewed in their workplaces, they were often interacting with customers while answering our questions, thus, giving us an opportunity to trace their daily rhythms, gestures, and social relations.

<Insert Figure 3.6>

Walking across Arcella, we used mobile methods as a research tool that could help us discover the micro-geographies of place (Holton and Riley 2014, p. 60), and learned how place can be 'used to allow research participants to narrate their lived experiences of everyday' (p. 59). Walking on a street 'means that both researcher and participant are more exposed to the multi-sensory stimulation of the surrounding environment' (Evans and Jones 2011, p. 850) and, thus, the practice of talking while walking permits a more spontaneous set of interactions between interviewees' and their everyday environments but also, I would argue, between them and the researchers. Following Somrat's walk across the neighbourhood towards his favourite place, namely a bridge over the train rails, we crossed many points of interest that were then added to our map of the neighbourhood, like for example the already mentioned football pitches that are spread throughout Arcella. Translated into geoGraphic form, these places have been drawn in the pages of the comics story as meaningful spatial archives, where daily practices take place, encounters happen, and personal stories unfold beyond the main characters. For these reasons, the practice of walking was a methodological tool to conduct our research and became also a narrative thread to develop the comics story: the narrative map of our research process was there, ready to become a plotline to be followed, creating a visible and readable connection between research practice and its representation in the geoGraphic narrative.

Mapping the plotline

When imagining the structure of the comics story, as a geoGraphic author-researcher I knew the plot needed to be structured along a walking path across the neighbourhood: from a geographical perspective, this choice mirrors the research path we followed, mostly by foot, and the methodological choices we made during fieldwork; from a graphic and narrative point of view, it gives the necessary linearity to the narration of a research path that was, instead, made of interruptions, gaps, and interviews that happened in different

moments at different times. The search for a narrative structure is partially suggested by the sequentiality of comics, but also by the need to build a narrative frame around research findings that are not narrative in nature (Kuttner et al. 2020, p. 9): tracing the line of a hypothetical walking path through the neighbourhood permitted me to move from one place to another as well as from one encounter to the other in the story, turning fieldwork interviews with key actors into encounters with characters in the storyline. Following the narrative path of our short 24-pages comics, readers meet different characters, whose stories, little by little, compose a complex mosaic of everyday life in Arcella. The organisation of the storyline along a walk gives readers the opportunity to follow the research process and navigate different areas in the neighbourhood.

Before we began to walk around, our fieldwork practice started from a mapping process. The original map we drafted comprised key actors, key places, and significant types of spaces in the neighbourhood, and functioned like a kind of research blueprint that guided our choices, discussions, and actions during fieldwork. Yet, that initial blueprint was constantly rearranged and, likewise, the same happened with the walking path we followed, and the story we told. We always shared our map with the people we encountered, being ready and open to challenge our initial cartographic projection by adding new points of interest, transforming apparently meaningless spaces into significant places through stories, and exploring new urban centralities according to informants' experiences and practices. This way, our ethnoGraphic research soon became a cartoGraphic process of narrative mapping (Caquard 2013; Caquard and Cartwright 2014), in which different spaces were gradually embedded with content and meaning through both the intimate stories we were told, and the photographs I collected while moving across the neighbourhood. The idea to exploit the narrative power of maps is certainly not new: as Caquard and Cartwright assume, '"internal maps" (Ryan, 2003) appear in films and novels and are used to ground the story in real places, to help the audience follow the plot and to play metaphorical and aesthetic role' (2014, p. 101). Also in our case, the constant presence of the map as a visual rhyme and recurring visual metaphor in the story plays a double role: it helps readers to orientate themselves throughout the narration and the neighbourhood, through narrative and real space; it also metaphorically represents the idea of an ongoing process of research, which has never finished and is constantly enriched, even today, by new meanings and encounters. One of the first things we mapped were landmarks, iconic spaces, buildings, areas that have become of Arcella's spatial imaginations both in and outside the city of Padua. The illustrations of these landmarks in the geoGraphic narrative aims at stimulating a process of recognition and orientation in readers who live in the area, and helping readers in other cities to build a mental (and visual) map of a neighbourhood they may have never visited before. The reiterated presence of the blue tram crossing panels and pages, the bell tower of the church of Sant'Antonino with the statue of Saint Anthony of Padua, the building of the Bingo (see Figure 3.9), the 'Arcella Palace' – an empty building that used to be a school and that is now at the centre of many projects of reuse by associations working in the area–, the presence of religious icons and shrines on the roadside, all together they represent visual clues I have spread throughout the geoGraphic narrative to give readers a glimpse of everyday urban spaces and life in the neighbourhood.

Trough the complementary use of words and images, the peculiar multimodal language of comics is an opportunity to represent the sense of place through composing different layers of meaning: these layers can be accessed according to the attention readers pay to the single visual and textual elements in the story, to their combination in a single page, and the relations they construct throughout the whole composition. Indeed, as we are reminded by Thierry Groensteen, the 'spatio-topical system' of comics (2007, p. 27) works at different levels of linear and translinear relations within a single panel, between different panels articulated in the same page, and between panels in different pages. This cross-panel, associative meaning making is what Groensteen calls braiding, and that was described through different metaphors that include architecture, music, a network, a rhizome, and the 'fourth dimension', to mention only a few (Kuttner et al. 2020, pp. 9–10). Beyond cartographic elements, many other visual clues are disseminated throughout the pages, in order to provide readers with small details of the Arcella's sense of place that are not mentioned in the text: for example, the names on the signboards of the shops and restaurants in boulevard Arcella ('Driving School Arcella', 'Bar Arcella', 'Leather Shop Arcella', even 'Sushi Arcella') function as a clue of the local sense of belonging in the area; a sticker of the C.S.O. Pedro placed on a pole of the traffic light remembers of the 30-years anniversary of this long-lasting occupied community centre in the neighbourhood.

I would like to make some other geoGraphic choices explicit, in order to provide examples of how many decisions about the comics story were made through a geographical, and spatio-centred lens. We know that 'the potential of maps to both decipher and tell stories is virtually unlimited' and that the narrative power of maps functions at different levels, taking a variety of forms (Caquard and Cartwright 2014, p. 101).

Elsewhere, I have also explored the specific potentialities of 'comic book cartographies', observing the map-like traits of comics as well as the comics-like features of maps (Peterle 2019, 2017a): for example, 'comics' alternation between representation and non-representation within and between the panels, between the "visual and the anti-optical", and the choices the author has to make about it, resemble the decisions the cartographer has to make about what is depicted on or discarded from the map and the resulting holes the map user has to fill' (Peterle 2017a, p. 49). Maps can be used in comics to ground the action in a specific location, to deepen the realistic dimension of the story, and to give readers an idea of the geography of the area. Beyond these locative functions that create connections between diegetic and extradiegetic spaces, maps serve also as spatial metaphors, aesthetic elements, and narrative guides that help readers to follow the characters' paths, stimulating, and support narrative processes (Caquard and Cartwright 2014, p. 104). In the short comics story on the Arcella neighbourhood, I have attempted to explore some of these narrative potentials of maps combining them with the specific opportunities offered by the comics language. For example, in the first page of the comics story (see Figure 3.7) the automatic connection between the textual and visual level deliberately leads readers to make a wrong interpretation. In fact, the voice speaking is not the one of the female character, who is drawing the map, as many readers suppose when reading these words:

>They have taught me to be precise.
>You always need to know where you are – they said.
>Start from the centre, draw what's all around, find the limits, what's left outside, beyond the margins.
>They told me that it's always better to start with a few lines, tracing the borders. A first step, to draw a neighbourhood.
>Then the roads, the tramline, the bridges.

Rather, as readers discover a couple of pages later, this is the voice of a cartoGraphic narrator, a map speaking in I-person (see Figure 3.8):

>I'm a map. And I cannot wander.
>Incomplete, fragmentary, partial and even arbitrary.
>Forgive me, but I cannot simply widen and frame, change scale and then zoom in.
>I feel the need to listen to.
>And this is how I began to walk.

<insert Figure 3.7>

As said, since the beginning, our wish was to allow the neighbourhood and its inhabitants to speak for themselves, and to imagine ourselves as facilitators rather than omniscient narrative voices. For this reason, we appear as two of the many protagonists of the narrative, while the story is told by an external, non-human and almost impossible narrative voice (Rossetto 2019): the voice of a map of the neighbourhood that speaks in first person. There are several reasons for using cartocentred fictional writing, and especially for doing it with non-human narrators. As Tania Rossetto observes, 'speaking in the first person, this entity undergoes an anthropomorphising process which creates phenomenological states that are taken by the audience as convincing demonstrations of non-human life' (2019, p. 72); yet, she continues, 'it-narrators are 'both identical and distinct' from humans (p. 73), and it is precisely this distance from our human-centred perspective that was particularly intriguing to explore in my cartoGraphic experimentation. In fact, these fictional expedients permit readers to observe the researchers' positionality during fieldwork without necessarily embracing their point of view on the area. On the contrary, readers are asked to construct their own critical research path, being in the position of observing the research practice while it unfolds and, thus, of imagining other potential walks to follow, and maps to draw. Paradoxically, the use of a fictional point of view unsettles stereotypes, questions the dichotomy between facts and fiction (Leavy 2013, p. 24), making a deeper understanding of the research process, and of actual urban contexts possible: through the fictional lens of the it-narrator readers access a critical consciousness about how research takes place.
Hoping to question some taken for granted perspectives, for example on who tells stories about spaces and places (human or non-human inhabitants?) or who is allowed to circulate stories about the neighbourhood (inhabitants, researchers, spatial objects or even buildings themselves?), I have deliberately chosen to keep the beginning of the story as ambiguous as possible. Therefore, the narrative voice resembles the one of a human female character speaking in first person of her own experience. The first page, thus, has been kept as ambiguous as possible: the reader is easily misled by the female hands that move from one scene to the

other, and is inclined to think that these are the hands of a female protagonist telling her own story. Yet, as said, another apparently silent protagonist is there, at the centre of the page: the map. Only a couple of pages later a splash-page, with two pairs of human legs walking on a cartographic representation of Arcella, reveals its cartographic identity: 'I'm a map,' affirms the narrator (Figure 3.8). This way, though, even the map becomes a character in the narration that needs a sort of characterisation. So, what type of a map is speaking? I decided to stress its provisory, fragmentary dimension, in order to imagine the narrative path like a mapping process: this way, each reader following the reading path, retraces the composition of both a story about but also a cartographic representation of the neighbourhood. Indeed, at the beginning the cartographic projection of the area is incomplete, and the map remains mute and almost still until it is loaded with stories, voices, meanings, and emotions coming from the different encounters made along the research route (see Figure 3.10).

There is a link between the process of mapping a neighbourhood for a research project and that of composing a comics story. Hoping to involve the audience in an active process of reflection on the meaning of neighbourhoods, on the way in which different stories are told by disparate subjects and perspectives, Adriano and I created a story of/about a research process that openly invites readers to complete the narration with their own narratives, inscribing their experience into the map of Arcella (and of other neighbourhoods) while leafing through the pages. Even for those who are not living in the area, the story can function as a trigger to start telling their own stories, tracing their own map and, thus, imagining the cartoGraphic narrative of their own neighbourhood. From a post-representational cartographic perspective, the comics story itself becomes a narrative account of a mapping process (Caquard and Cartwright 2014, pp. 104-5). According to Kitchin et al. and 'moving from a representational to a processual understanding of maps, from ontology (what things are) to ontogenetic (how things become)' (2013, p. 494), our comics story can represent a narrative translation of an unfolding mapping, and research process in the Arcella neighbourhood. Walking and drawing, mapping and telling, step by step we composed an ongoing map of our research practice, stimulating a polyphonic storytelling practice that is partially reproduced in the content and form of the comics story.

<insert Figure 3.8>

Bridging pages and places: visual metaphors and geoGraphic chronotopes

Like the map, many built elements and types of spaces became part of the comics' narrative infrastructure: they are visual rhymes or metaphors that recur throughout the pages creating a sense of connection and linearity: squares, bridges, streets, parks, football and basket pitches, parishes, courtyards, local shops, and restaurants play a central role in both the drawn neighbourhood and real space. Their meaning as places of multicultural encounter, leisure, and business emerged in the stories told by the many interviewees we followed along the research path. These spatial points of reference create individual urban maps that sometimes cross and inform each other in the geoGraphic narrative; they suggest different paths to interpret the neighbourhood from a polyphonic perspective that takes into account citizens of different ages, origins, and culture, all coexisting in the same urban area. The Bakhtinian concept of the chronotope, now successfully used beyond the borders of literary criticism to analyse other narrative forms, like cinema and comics, is particularly useful to read the relationship between time and space in graphic narratives (Bernardelli 2018; Di Liddo 2009; Earle 2013; Smethurst 2000; Vice 2001; White 2010). Even if not explicitly referring to the chronotope, comics author and critic Art Spiegelmann affirms that 'comics represent time spatially' (1999, p. 7), thus, highlighting the intertwined connection between temporal and spatial features in the comics page. As Sue Vice further argues, 'because of its form, the graphic novel has a unique potential for spatializing time within each frame' (2001, p. 47). On a literal level, the chronotope in comics corresponds to the spatial structuring of the narrative flow (time) through the division of the page in single panels (space): each portion of space corresponds to a moment in the narrative sequence. In comics, 'the necessary connection of time and space produces both the narrative and all its intricacies' (Mendes de Souza 2017, p. 3) and, I argue, the chronotope represents a fundamental feature to sustain this relation on both a structural and narrative level. Yet, what is even more interesting from a geographical perspective is not simply the capacity of the chronotope to make the relationship between time and space readable, on a formal and intradiegetic dimension, but also the possibility to embrace this concept from an 'infrastructural' urban perspective (Davies 2019). Chronotopes, indeed, work as bridges that are able to connect intradiegetic architectures and extradiegetic spaces. Through visual echoes and resonances, chronotopes help to organise the narrative flow of time in the page; moreover, on a geoGraphic level, they also create open and visible connections

between comics pages and real places, helping us to orientate ourselves in urban spaces through the reading of comics. Therefore, an aware use of chronotopes in the composition of geoGraphic narratives could help author-geographers in making relations between comics and spaces visibl. For this reason, when drafting our comics story about Arcella, I tried to translate real spaces and landmarks in the neighbourhood into narrative chronotopes: these recurring spaces make the braiding mechanism work beyond the limits of the single comics story; they are narrative threads that create connections throughout the comic book anthology. Through these recurring chronotopes of peripheral Italian neighbourhoods, readers can create translocal associations between neighbourhoods in different cities.

Bridges as visual echoes

The first chronotope that recurs as a visual element in the comics story *Arcella* is the bridge. As said, in Arcella public spaces such as bridges, parks, and football pitches in the courtyards of parishes represent central spaces of encounter: on a socio-spatial level, these spaces are symbolic bridges that bring inhabitants of different ages, ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups together. During our walks across the area, Adriano and I unexpectedly came to know that bridges are not simply seen as spaces of connection and transit, to move from the periphery towards the city centre; rather they are interpreted as public spaces, where especially young people meet and hang out, in Arcella as in many other cities around the world. During our first walk, Somrat, a 13-year-old boy who was born in Bangladesh and moved in the neighbourhood almost two years ago with his mother, Ferdousi, and his sister, Konok, was asked to lead us to his favourite place in the neighbourhood. He did not guide us to a space that could be predictably meaningful for a boy of his age, like for example his school, a park, a friend's house. On the contrary, as shown in Figure 3.6, he unexpectedly guided us to the Ponte Unità d'Italia [Bridge of Italian Unification], one of the newest bridges built to foster the connections between Arcella and other areas of the city that are separated by the rail tracks. Even if not indicated on our preconceived map of the neighbourhood, this bridge rapidly emerged as a meaningful place and iconic presence for many other inhabitants of Arcella. During the walk-along interview, Somrat himself heightened the symbolic value of this specific bridge from both an individual and collective perspective: for him, the Ponte Unità d'Italia is not just one of the many bridges that connect the periphery to the city centre, rather is a place that virtually creates a transnational, emotional, and intimate connection between Padua and Dhaka, because it reminds him of a similar bridge in his city of origin. Translating from what you can read on Figure 3.6:

> S: You can find a bridge like this also in my country, even if that's built over a river and is double-big. And it's precisely in my hometown, Dhaka!
> Here [on the Ponte Unità d'Italia], the *Arce Atlas Gang* have also made a song about this bridge. There, in that part of the bridge [they have filmed their videoclip]!
> A: And why have they chosen to shoot the videoclip here?
> S: I think it's because this is the most beautiful place in Arcella. From here you can see a nice sunset… like from the Colbachini stadium[3]. And you can see also my house!
> It's a nice and bad place at the same time, for some people that go there…

As Somrat affirms, this bridge has become a lived public space, where young people meet, and spend their time together. As a testimony of this collective value, even a videoclip by a rap group from the neighbourhood, namely called Arce Atlas Gang, was set here: while the lyrics speak about local identity but also social marginalisation in the peripheral area, in the videoclip a small group of young people walks along the ramps of the bridge. The video and the ordinary urban practices that take place on a daily rhythm on the bridge acknowledge the iconic value of this place for the young people living in the neighbourhood. Following Somrat, talking while walking with him and his mother, we were able to access part of their individual identity through exploring their relations with places. Walking, their stories were somehow inscribed into place and ideas were put into motion (Pinder 2011, p. 682).

Throughout the narration, the bridge became not only a visual metaphor charged with iconic value but also a visual rhyme to connect Somrat's interview with another one that was conducted in a different area of the neighbourhood, called Borgomagno. Here, another bridge has become a point of reference for the many associations operating in the area, which organise open-air dinners, and festivals under its arches. Even if not happening while we walked and talked through the area with our interviewee, these practices have left their traces in the urban landscapes, and their socio-spatial value was recalled and reactivated by our 'gatekeeper', Pablo (Hoening 2015). Through different spatio-temporal assemblages, the comics page permits the virtual coexistence of different moments, stories, and timeframes, for example, simply juxtaposing the image of Adriano and Pablo walking towards the bridge with the one of a collective dinner that took place along the

same street a few months before our interview. Also, the use of colours makes it possible to distinguish what happens in the present, while the research process unfolds, and what happened in the past, which we could access through Pablo's memories: for this reason, the characters walking in the present are in colour, while the dinner is represented in black and white, like a diapositive coming from the past. To conclude, as Andrea Bernardelli has argued, I suggest the transposition of the Bakhtinian chronotope from the realm of literary analysis to that of narrative studies, more in general, is worth to explore (2018, p. 2) especially because of its intrinsic flexibility. In my view, this is particularly true for scholars looking at comic book geographies from a geocritical, narrative geographical perspective. Whereas Groensteen's interprets comics as a 'spatio-topical system' (2007), following Bernardelli, we can think of comics as an intrinsically 'chrono-topical system', where space and time are infrastructurally interrelated (2018, pp. 2–3). Given the capacity of chronotopes to connect narrative and real spaces, comics as a chrono-topical system are able to create open visual and textual connections between pages and places. This characteristic is worth to explore from a geoGraphic perspective.

Flows of stories along the tramline
Another characteristic of Arcella is the presence of many ethnic shops and restaurants, run by citizens from China, India, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Lebanon, among other countries. These shops are geoGraphic chronotopes in the sense that they work on a double level, connecting the space of the comics page with the real one of the neighbourhood: in the comics page, these particular type of spaces offers a setting for staging multicultural encounters and interviews, giving the opportunity to structure the narration through the alternation of different situations and backgrounds; in real space, they offer significant proximity services to the local community on a daily scale, and in many cases they have also become points of reference for ethnic groups to meet and create networks of solidarity. Furthermore, these shops can be interpreted as chronotopes because they make spatio-temporal connections explicit. In this sense, they are palimpsests, which means spaces that make the stratified changes occurred over time in Arcella visible: here, different temporal layers are preserved in the stratification of space, witnessing the alternation of several spatial uses, people, and goods in the neighbourhood. In fact, local shops are an evidence of the changes occurred in the area in the past decades, when many historical inhabitants of Italian origins who had been running those activities for decades sold them to new inhabitants, who often kept some elements of the original furniture, name, and type of commercial service that is offered – these commercial activities comprise tailor's shops, bakeries, stationary shops, bars, tobacco shops, grocery stores, to mention only a few. One of the many examples about spatial palimpsests in the neighbourhood emerged during an unpredicted encounter with Emiliano Bon at the crossroad between Tiziano Aspetti Street and Arcella Avenue (as the one captured in Figure 3.1): Emiliano, who is member of Zena an important cultural association operating in the area, and has been living in Arcella for over forty years, has many stories to tell about the area and the way it changed over time. Thanks to his diachronic perspective, he is able to recognise small traces of past uses in many local shops, and to tell stories about their origin: for example, he mentioned the painting of a winged horse that is now still preserved on the walls of an Indian restaurant in Tiziano Aspetti Street as a testimony of the 'Pizzeria Pegaso' (which in Italian means 'winged horse') that was once hosted in the same place. These visual clues are narrative triggers for inhabitants' stories to emerge that can easily be inserted in the comics page. These stories, even if absent from the contents of the comics about Arcella, still inform the narration and represented significant points of reference during the process of mapping the neighbourhood.
Beyond local memories, these shops and restaurants represent nodes where urban, national, and even transnational flows of people and goods cross. This happens, for example, for the Indian restaurant Rangoli. On a local perspective, Rangoli stands where there was once a pizzeria, and is located at the corner of two of the main and most heavily trafficked roads of the neighbourhood – the crossroad between the already mentioned Tiziano Aspetti Street and Arcella Avenue that is captured in Figure 3.1. Yet, on a translocal perspective, the restaurant is placed at the crossroads of global flows. As Adriano noticed, watching out of the window of his living room on the second floor of a residential building in Arcella Avenue, located just on the other side of the road in front of the Indian restaurant, during the summer, Rangoli seems to become far more than a merely local place of encounter. As we were told by the restaurant manager, Ranjor, Rangoli is a node in global touristic network, and hosts many buses of Indian tourists travelling to northern Italy that, after a visit in Venice, come to sleep in cheaper venues in Padua. Here, as Rnajor says, they can have a 'truly Indian meal at Rangoli'. These transnational flows of people moving from India to Europe, and then from Venice to Arcella is represented in the comics story through a map tracing these routes at different scales, from the regional to the global one.

Walking just a hundred meters away from Rangoli, along Tiziano Aspetti Street, and a page after in the comic book, the walker/reader meets Junxiao's minimarket, where low-cost household products are available to the many elderly people, students, and migrants living around the area. Junxiao moved to Italy in 2000, when he was only 24 years old. His wife joined him just one year later. The interview takes place while he is moving between the shelves of his shop, with customers entering and exiting the door in search for any kind of product: he looks confident and comfortable, in his shop, and even though we are asked to discard some parts of his interview from the final comics story, to preserve his privacy, he is much more willing to share his very intimate story than we expected. His wife, working as a cashier in the same shop, listens to the interview without taking part in the conversation: the background sound of the cashier accompanies the interview, and even though she did not want to be photographed nor to appear in the comics narration, still I decided to represent her hands and bust in the comics page, as a visual translation of her fundamental presence during our visit at the MiniCasa shop. At the beginning, when he arrived in Italy, Junxiao trained as a metalworker in Treviso, a city almost 60 kilometres away from Padua. He moved to Padua only a couple of years later, when thanks to the help of his brother-in-law he found a space to rent that, less than one year ago, has become the MiniCasa minimarket. Junxiao's family is part of a broad network of Chinese migrants living and working in the neighbourhood. He reports that his region, and his own family, have a long history of migration: his grandfather, for example, moved to France at the beginning of the 20th century and returned to China only in 1996, once he retired. These migratory routes tell both intimate and collective stories, and are connected with familiar and personal contacts, on the one hand, but also with the global circulation and trade of goods coming from cheaper markets in Asia, on the other. Moving across the neighbourhood, streets become narrative lines to discover the stories that can be told by inhabitants and place, and each corner is a potential palimpsest of memories to be discovered and told.

A narrative geographical perspective suggests interpreting spaces as narrative archives, and urban architectures as potential triggers for stories to unfold. Mobility in real space, thus, is easily translated into narrative movement across the comics pages, with walking paths followed during fieldwork becoming storylines to be followed by readers. Yet, as we will further explore in Chapters 4 and 5, also transportation means can become mobile chronotopes, narrative triggers that help the story to proceed. Thinking of mobilities in real space, thus, on an everyday-life scale, existential paths and flows of people in the neighbourhood are traced by the tramline that crosses the city of Padua from north to south, connecting Arcella with the city centre, and physically cutting the area into two parts. Even if moving by foot, during fieldwork activities the tramline accompanied our movements: indeed, the blue tramline is a dominant visual element in the urbanscape of Arcella, and has become a symbol of renaissance in the area as it is a fundamental means of transport that enables inhabitants to rapidly reach other parts of the city by public transport. The tramway further promotes commuting routes not only from neighbouring quarters in Padua but also from municipalities outside the city, and, therefore, has contributed to partially changed the perception of the neighbourhood in the last decade: even if the area is still perceived as marginal if compared to the central and historical part of the city, the presence of the tram has now put Arcella at the centre of many commuting routes, and made it more (rapidly and visibly) connected to other neighbourhoods. For this reason, also in the comics story the tramline keeps its symbolic value as a means of connection and a mobile chronotope: working as a narrative line that guides readers' gazes across intradiegetic and extradiegetic space, the tram helps to move the narration faster from one interview to another, and from the northern to the southern part of the neighbourhood.

<insert Figure 3.9>

Arcella looks like a laboratory between the city's past and its possible urban futures, a bridging space where individual stories and collective history meet. As we have seen, walking along its roads, Arcella is a node where many national and transnational flows cross, a place where things have been changing fast over the last decades, as in many other urban contexts. The neighbourhood is inhabited by new residents but also by historical inhabitants, who have been witnessing all these changes, being asked to adapt to new social configurations. Maria, for example, is almost 80 years old and was born in the province of Padua. She has been living in the neighbourhood for over 40 years, and is the only 'historical' inhabitant whose interview was included in our comics story. She used to work in a middle school as a janitor and, even though she retired almost ten years ago, she is still working there as the guardian of the school building. Indeed, she lives in a small flat at the corner of that same building, from where she can take care of the courtyard when the school is closed. She does not like to move, 'Not even to go to the church' – she confesses. Yet, even if

Maria has been quite immobile in her life, living in the same small corner of the same building for so long, nevertheless, during the interview we have the impression as though the world has unexpectedly entered her living room: indeed, her private space partially coincides with the public one of the school, where today more than 50% of the students are foreign-born. From her small window looking out on the backyard of this middle school, in a medium-size city, Maria has been witnessing many of the local changes that were influenced by global migratory phenomena, and is aware of how the life in the neighbourhood has rapidly changed since the time when she moved in, with her two young children. While telling us the intimate story of her family, Maria often refers to a new perception of insecurity, and deterioration of the historical community in the area. Likewise, many older inhabitants of Arcella share the same impression, and their fears are increasingly influenced by the rhetorical representation of the area as highly insecure and badly degraded in the local media: this local narrative is further exacerbated on the national scale by the political use of fear made by Italian populist Right-wing parties. Elders are as fragile, often isolated subjects living in a marginalised social position, and their inclusion represents one of the many challenges that must be faced to construct a more inclusive future for Arcella. For this reason, Maria's testimony represents a fundamental piece of our comics story, a tile of a partial mosaic that tried to report as many different perspectives as possible. Given the small space of twenty pages that we had at our disposal to narrate such a complex network of flows, stories, memories, and perspectives, the map we drew is inevitably incomplete, partial, and subjective, as the map-narrator declares at the beginning of the comics story.

As we have seen in the previous sections, interviews with different key-actors have been placed one next to the other even though they have no open connection with each other: spatial proximity has often worked as a link to connect stories that share the only characteristic of being told by people that live in the same neighbourhood. Nevertheless, their juxtaposition makes it possible for interviewees to inhabit, at least virtually, the same space, composing new narrative configurations of the neighbourhood in the comics page that can help us imagining possible futures for Arcella's real space. Similarly, in the cover shown in Figure 3.3., maps of very different peripheral neighbourhood placed in such disparate urban contexts, from Rome to Padua, Bologna, Palermo, and Milan, are put near to each other, composing an unpredicted, spatially impossible urban constellation: bringing these cities, neighbourhoods, and stories together, through the comic book anthology we aimed to create new urban assemblages, whose meanings moves beyond the mere sum of their single parts. Probably, the ZEN in Palermo is as distant from the socio-spatial context of the Arcella neighbourhood in Padua as the story of Maria is distant from the one told by Somrat and his family: yet, by being assembled together in the same comic book anthology (on a national scale), or in the same geoGraphic narrative (on a local, urban scale), these stories make new connections visible. The comic book, thus, is a place of encounter between the author, the page, the reader, the interviewee, but also between distant neighbourhoods, disparate stories, and spatial contexts that, otherwise, would probably never be able to meet (Peterle 2017b).

Comic book geographies beyond the frame

Quartieri was a precious opportunity to observe the geographies of dissemination and reception of geoGraphic products from an internal point of view. The possibility to reflect on the unexpected reactions and contexts in which we were invited to present our work and discuss our methods of research provides me with a few considerations about the power of comics to activate urban storytelling practices beyond the frame of the page, and outside the academic context. Following Sheila Hones' proposal to embrace literary geographies not simply as a method of literary interpretation but also as a critical lens to explore the geographies of creation, promotion, and reception (2014, p. 129), I suggest the same applies also for comic book geographies. Through this lens, comic book geographies comprise the socio-spatial conditions in which the comics story is composed, the 'creative geographies of the author' and the way authors narrate themselves (Hones 2014, p. 140): these geographies of composition have been partially seen from an autoethnographic perspective in the previous sections, and will be further discussed in Chapter 5. Nevertheless, I would also like to explore the geographies of reception of *Quartieri*. Indeed, what Hones calls the 'geographies of reception' play a fundamental role in comic book geography, especially if we engage with the doing of comics as a research practice, and consider the geoGraphic narrative as a creative-research endeavour that hopes to engage both specialistic and non-academic audiences. On the one hand, geographer-cartoonists are involved in the process of promotion of their research outputs, trying to engage, where possible, both non-specialistic readers and professional critics. On the other hand, from a spatial perspective, we have to consider that readers conversations happen in both face-to-face presentations and online, in virtual spaces, through the social networks, and the forums of online journals providing reviews,

articles, and interviews with author-researchers. From a strictly geographical perspective, then, even the process of reading and interpreting is relational, in the sense that readers are always placed in specific spatio-temporal contexts that influence their practices, and the circulation of their interpretations. Moreover, interpretation can take place through individual reading and through public encounters, where dialogues, questions, and the sharing of opinions contribute to plurivocal reading practices. Therefore, the geographies of reception, circulation, and dissemination of geoGraphic narratives include both a locational and relational geography and raise 'an interesting spatial dimension to the issue of location and interaction' connected to a specific comics story (Hones 2014, p. 150). Like the process of the text-event, also the geoGraphic novel should be understood 'in terms of a dynamic interaction, a process of engagement across various kinds of distance': namely, the comics narration 'becomes regenerated and renegotiated in the process of being collaboratively written, published, distributed, read, and discussed' (Hones 2014, p. 146). When drafting a geoGraphic research project, geographers should be thinking of these specific geographies of reception.

The comic book as a place of encounter
The verbo-visual mapping process started like a more traditional cartographic projection of Arcella and a collection of disparate ethnographic materials, comprising images and photographs, interviews, oral testimonies, written documents, such as newspaper articles, books, and small publications on the area. The process lasted for months, during which we were constantly asked to question our initial maps through what became soon a process of polyphonic mapping, with voices from different actors recomposing our spatial configuration of the neighbourhood and, thus, the narrative architecture of the story. It was a big effort, as an author-researcher, to be responsible of finding a narrative structure that could bring our comics story as close as possible to our research practice. The editor, on his part, asked us to stick to the facts, avoiding the use of fictional characters to re-elaborate our ethnoGraphic material. This request comes both from BeccoGiallo's editorial identity and from the peculiar form of *Quartieri*: on the one hand, BeccoGiallo is specialised in graphic journalism and, thus, our comics stories should be coherent with the expectations of an audience that is used to read facts, not fiction; on the other hand, a comic book anthology realised by academic researchers in collaboration with comics authors is a quite unique experimentation in BeccoGiallo's catalogue, and the editor wanted our collection to be an opportunity for readers to immerse themselves in the research process, to learn something about urban research methodologies, and to meet actual inhabitants from different geographical areas. If our project was an attempt to bring urban research practices and the doing of urban comics together, this characteristic needed to be visible in the short stories, and to become part of their narrative structure.

In practice, the necessity to put on the page real stories and portrays meant, on a textual level, to transpose the text of the interviews into the captions and balloons of the comics story and, on a graphic level, to assemble the photographs taken during interviews and the visual materials collected during fieldwork into a montage of drawings. This process of 'transposition' of interviews into narrative dialogues and of photographs into drawings, of fieldwork practices happened in real space into a comics story structured in panels and pages, was especially important. In our case, the research practice unfolded together with the composition of the story, as Adriano and I did not have any ready-made research materials that could be easily translated into a geoGraphic narrative. Thus, Adriano was constantly remembering me, throughout the research process, of how careful we should be when using personal and intimate stories, especially because the circulation of the anthology was meant to be wider than the one of a more traditional research output. For example, other inhabitants in the neighbourhood could recognise the characters represented in the stories. Especially for this sense of responsibility and gratitude towards the people we met, the interviewees were also the first ones to have the printed copy of the comic book anthology in their hands, even before it was distributed in the bookshops and officially published. These were moments of incredible pressure for Adriano and me, since we were worried about the way in which interviewees would have reacted to our narrative and graphic choices, to the fact that their hours-long interviews were cut into short dialogues of no more than a couple of pages each. Will they recognise their own story? Will they recognise their face in the graphic portrays? – we asked ourselves. Once again, the potentiality of the medium was far beyond our expectations and these moments almost always turned into deeply emotional encounters, where people laughed laud and almost cried as soon as they saw themselves on the printed pages of the comic book. As Adriano often says, we probably underestimated the emotional value of the fact of reading their personal stories and seeing themselves represented in a printed book. This was especially meaningful for those people whose voices often remain unheard, like the one of Ferdousi, an immigrant woman with a weak social and relational network in the neighbourhood. When we entered her house, she sat on Somrat's bed with the book

in her hands, while her son and daughter started translating the text, performing the translation process that we witnessed during the walking interview in the opposite direction: this time, Somrat was no more translating Ferdousi's answers for us; on the contrary, he was somehow translating our voices for his mother, telling her their own story from another perspective, the one of two researchers. While walking, Somrat helped us to access his mother's perspective; in the same way, with the comic book in his hands, he became a transcultural bridge, filling up the linguistic gap that separated the interviewee from the interviewers, the story from its protagonist. While I was drawing a dedication to Somrat and Konok, Ferdousi offered us a cup of tea with milk, and a piece of cake. The comic book became a 'space of encounter and a place of mediation between disparate experiential, cultural, geographical, and gender perspectives' (Peterle 2017b, p. 141), a bridge connecting people beyond the page. As I have proposed elsewhere, comics work as a 'place of mediation among authors, editors, subjects/protagonists of the story and readers' (Peterle 2017b, p. 124). From a postcolonial perspective, the potentialities of the encounter between the doing of comics as a research practice and postcolonial studies seems to be still underexplored (Mehta and Mukherji 2015): as a space of encounter, comics are able to create new intercultural relations and translinguistic dialogues, they have the power to produce and circulate new postcolonial vocabularies (Peterle 2017b, pp. 124–5).

The geoGraphic event
In the end, if looking back to the process of *doing* comics and *drawing* spaces, the map was actually far more than a mere narrative expedient to build the story. The map allowed the neighbourhood to speak for itself, it made Arcella's relational networks visible; it was a tool for geographical and spatial reflexivity; it became a very emotional, subjective, and plural narrative that brought us to reflect on our own role in the neighbourhood, on our positionality as researchers; it allowed us to question our preconceived projection that soon appeared incomplete. As we walked in the neighbourhood for months, we became visible to the many inhabitants that saw us moving across the roads with our notebooks and cameras: somehow, we became ourselves part of the map. Some of the potential places we have mentioned in the comics story are still 'under construction', at the centre of institutional urban planning projects or claimed by local committees; others, like the occupied building of the social centre 'Berta Casetta del Popolo' ['Berta, the house of the people'] have been already erased from the map, cleared by the police before the comic book was published, and the geoGraphic event of its dissemination took place. Yet, Berta's political scope, urban vision, and social commitment, even if the group is no longer physically present in the building in No. 5 of Callegari Street, is still impressed on paper. Through the comic book, it still finds virtual spaces to be narrated, and shared. This way, the comic book has already become a memory site, a space where narratives of place-making processes are shared, and the contradictions between top-down administration and bottom-up urban change in the area are visible. Paradoxically, a space that apparently does no longer exist in the city is still alive through the presence of the comics story, and especially thanks to the work done on a daily scale by the young volunteers and founders of Casetta Berta in the neighbourhood.

As Van Hulst states, there is research that looks at storytelling as a model of the way planning is done, but there is also research that looks at storytelling as a model for the way spaces are actually *drawn* and urban planning could or should be done (Van Hulst 2012). Proposing *doing comics* as a research practice, I place this particular form of storytelling and reading at the centre of everyday urban planning practices. Our collection of comics stories *Quartieri* inscribes itself within a set of various energies, practices, activities, and projects that are attempting to imagine the future city, often starting from peripheral areas and marginalised groups, not only in Padua but also in Milan, Bologna, Rome, and Palermo, as in many other cities in Italy and beyond. In this sense, my hope is that our anthology and our short comic book story succeeded in questioning and challenging the idea of marginality and spatial segregation often connected to Italian peripheries, bringing these issues once again to readers' attention. The anthology provides a space for an unusual encounter between academic research and urban comics: from this encounter new lines of collaborations have emerged, providing me with the opportunity to introduce comics in my research toolkit, and to propose it in other research projects.

From a dissemination perspective, or what could be called the geographies of the comic book's circulation, the disparate contexts in which we presented the anthology gave us the opportunity to think of the comic book as a relational geoGraphic event that creates new networks of readers, authors, researchers, and ideas. As explained in the previous sections, *Quartieri* helped us to rethink Arcella as a relational place, where local identity is co-constructed at different temporal and spatial scales, through local, national, and international flows of movement. Through the practice of doing comics, from an autoethnographic perspective, the neighbourhood appears to me, now, as a place that is charged with personal experiences, and

emotional meaning: for this reason, the final page of our story shows a visual metaphor representing my emotional attachment, namely a map of Arcella taking the shape of a heart. Arcella is a place at the heart of a city, at the heart of the world.

<Insert Figure 3.10>

The anthology functions as a potential space to allow encounters, stories, and mapping practices to emerge: *Quartieri* presents an incomplete map to its readers, as Adriano and I confess in the *Introduction* to the volume. It is just a starting point for further reflections to be made. Indeed, new encounters happen, relations start, and interpretations emerge through the practice of both composing and circulating the comics story. Considering the geographies of circulation and dissemination, for example, our book presentations took place in bookshops, universities, local associations, and parks as well as in commercial, public, regenerated, abandoned, occupied spaces. More interestingly, readers did not search for a mimetic representation of their own urban contexts in the comics anthology: on the contrary, they spontaneously individuated similarities, common urban features, and remembrances that reminded them of their own neighbourhoods. Therefore, we were invited to speak about the five neighbourhoods at the centre of the comic book even in cities that are not represented in the partial cartographic mosaic I have drawn on the cover of the book. Cities like Bolzano, Trento, Pisa, Urbino, Rovereto, to mention only a few, recognised some traits of their own 'peripheral' neighbourhoods in the comics portrays we realised and, thus, they invited us to join their conversation, to share our ideas, permitting us to enlarge our map of urban peripheralities.

If we admit that the construction (both physical and metaphorical) of the global city is connected to image-making, then comics and geoGraphic narratives intervene in the production of urban space, and they 'represent counter-visual narratives that are able to re-produce contemporary cities by making infrastructural injustice and division visible, as well as creating new collective infrastructures that act as an alternative site of urban planning and resistance' (Peterle 2020, p. 327). In this sense, the geoGraphic narrative is not simply an object of study but a spatial, ethnoGraphic, and cartoGraphic practice that happens every time authors and readers engage with it. As I tried to demonstrate through the example of *Quartieri*, comics can be profitably embraced by geographers to do fieldwork research, narrate urban spaces and social dynamics, and to enact comic book geographies (Dewsbury et al. 2002). Through the composition and circulation of comics, we bring geographical meanings, reasonings, and reflections into practice through spatial action, interpersonal collaboration, and interdisciplinary dialogue. Doing comics is an ongoing, performative, and affect-based practice (Dewsbury 2010) that is able to merge the moment of research with that of its re-presentation, in a constantly unfolding process of drawing spaces for the 'co-production of page and place' (Saunders 2013). Doing comics as a research practice creates new spaces of encounter. Comics activate a prolific exchange between urban creative narratives and spatial interventions, and they draw unpredicted relational geographies of reading and writing (Saunders and Anderson 2016), composition and reception, interpretation and dissemination that are worth to explore.

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1 Tracce Urbane is a network of Italian scholars from different Universities and with different disciplinary backgrounds, among which architecture, urban sociology, anthropology, and urban planning. Tracce Urbane works specifically on urban topics and contexts, often through qualitative, ethnographic, participatory, and creative methods. The group has founded the homonymous interdisciplinary open access online journal *TU Tracce Urbane - Rivista Italiana Transdisciplinare di Studi Urbani - Italian Journal of Urban Studies* (Sapienza University of Rome) available at: https://ojs.uniroma1.it/index.php/TU/index.

2 Annual Municipal Statistics 2019 of the Municipality of Padova. Source: Comune di Padova - Elaborazione del Settore Programmazione Controllo e Statistica su dati dell'Anagrafe available at: https://www.padovanet.it/informazione/padova-cifre.

[3] The Colbachini Stadium represents another significant landmark in the neighbourhood. Placed at the geographical centre of Arcella, it is represented in this Chapter in Figure 3.9.

[ABSTRACT

Within mobility studies there is an increasing attention towards the role of the humanities, and especially of literature in providing representations, practices, and metaphors of mobilities. If literary mobilities show how texts do not only represent but also activate mobile practices, in this chapter I argue the same applies for graphic narratives. Proposing 'graphic mobilities' as an underexplored field in mobility studies, the chapter explores the peculiar mobilities that emerge from comics in comparison to other narrative forms, interpreting the grammar of comics as intrinsically mobile, and the doing/reading of comics as mobile practices that happen through encounters with the space of the page. The chapter moves from the practice of reading to that of drawing graphic mobilities: in the first part, it analyses examples of graphic novels and illustrated memoirs representing bodies, practices, and landscapes of movement in works by Drnaso, McNaught, Tomine, Ware, Williams; in the second one, it suggests staring from the geohumanities to propose a creative graphic-narrative approach to mobility studies, engaging with the doing of comics to conduct research on urban mobilities.

Keywords:

mobility studies, graphic mobilities, gender mobilities, landscapes of movement, geohumanities]

[8.353 words]

4. Graphic mobilities: mobile practices, bodies, and landscapes of movement in comics

The representation of movement in comics

In the two chapters composing Part Two of this book, I would like to make a step forward in the doing of comics as a research practice in the geohumanities, and move 'beyond the frame' in many respects. In Chapter 5, I will present an original geoGraphic novel titled *Lines. Moving with stories of public transport in Turku* (2020) that I have drawn and written myself, as the main research output of a Post-doctoral fellowship for the international research project PUTSPACE. If compared with the preceding Part One, Part Two does not present geoGraphic narratives as outputs of collaborations between the geographer and the comics author, or between the geographer-cartoonist and other researchers. On the contrary, this time, the geoGraphic novel was since the very beginning at the centre of an intrinsically geographical project, and autonomous research endeavour. Indeed, the entire research process and fieldwork activities that took place in the city of Turku (Finland), presented in Chapter 5, was completely designed to collect materials for the composition of a space-centred comics story. As I will further explain, by working alone with no publishing house collaborating in the project's ideation, I experienced a complete freedom of choice in tracing the research path, organizing the fieldwork activities, choosing the tone, structure, style, content, form, and even the format of the comics story. These aspects will be at the centre of the final Chapter in this volume, in order to provide readers with an empirical example of how geographers can profitably embrace the doing of comics as a geoGraphic research practice. In this final section, the doing of comics actually permits me to 'think geographically through comics' (Fall 2020), embracing myself the double perspective of an author-researcher, who poses the realisation of a creative output at the centre of her research practice, output, and scope.

Yet, before coming to this account on how to design geoGraphic fieldwork, Chapter 4 moves a step forward also from a theoretical perspective. Indeed, it suggests thinking of 'graphic mobilities' as a still underexplored field of transdisciplinary research that raises from the dialogue between mobility studies, literary theory and criticism, comics studies, comic book geographies, the geohumanities, and cultural geography. My suggestion is that, beyond literary mobilities, cultural geographers and social scientists working in mobilities studies, and starting from the 'new mobilities paradigm' (Sheller an Urry, 2006), should explore also the peculiar narrative forms and genres, representations and practices of im/mobilities that emerge from comics. In fact, if literary mobilities (Berensmeyer and Ehland, 2013; Frenay et al., 2019; Mathieson 2012; Merriman 2015) affirm that texts permit us to access unpredicted perspectives on mobilities, embracing a mobile perspective in both their contents and forms (Peterle 2019), I argue the same applies for comics. Furthermore, comics' peculiar spatial grammar and the immersive spatial experience they provide their reader with are able to suggest new directions to follow for mobilities studies. The mobilities and mobile trajectories traced by comics are not simply represented in the comics page, rather they are enacted and performed, followed and retraced by authors and readers in their writing/drawing/reading

practices. Comics ask for mobile engagements to be read and performed and, thus, they let new mobile perspectives emerge through the entanglements between personal experiences of mobile practices and the fictional ones, represented in the comics page.

Mobile stories of traveling, walking, driving, sailing, biking, running, cruising, riding, to mention only a few, have always been an effective tool to stimulate memories, emotions, and practices connected to mobility to emerge. Recently, these stories have been also recognized to be more than mere objects of research: creative storytelling and the processes of composing, reading, and performing literary texts are considered now valuable methods to do innovative research within mobility studies. As David McLaughlin affirms, there are 'a variety of ways in which literary geographers can be attentive to the importance of mobilities in forming relations between literary works and the actual world' (McLaughlin 2016, p. 126). Observing the representation of mobile practices, landscapes of movement, everyday movements, and lifelong experiential lines of travel, literary geographers have already explored the connection between textual mobilities and the real world, and the reciprocal co-production of textual and real space mobilities.

Mobilities in and of literary texts have been at the centre of recent studies by scholars working at the intersection between literary, geographical, cultural, and mobilities research: indeed, not only do texts represent mobilities or activate mobile practices, as objects spatially situated they circulate themselves, composing mobile lines within literary networks of circulation. As the literary geographical approach considers also the geographies of creation, promotion, circulation, and reception of texts together with the material conditions of writing/reading practices (Hones 2014, p. 131; Saunders 2010, p. 442), the same happens for a geocritical approach to comic book geographies. In this light, mobilities provide graphic narratives with content, often appearing as central topics of narration; they give birth to specific graphic genres that are constitutively connected to mobile practices, like the travel journals, and reportages in comics form. Furthermore, comics themselves move and circulate, and through their mobilities they contribute to the circulation of ideas, and meanings of mobility. As we will see in the following sections, there are several reasons for extending the debate within literary mobility studies to other narrative forms, including comics and graphic narratives in the spectrum of analysis.

Moving with(in) comics

<insert Figure 4.1>

Mobility operates at multiple spatial and temporal scales, comprising 'a wide range of movements, from the largescale technologies of global travel, to transnational interconnections, to everyday local mobilities – including journeys by foot, road, rail, air, and sea, at local, regional, national and transnational levels' (Aguiar et al. 2019, p. 2). These different mobilities often penetrate literary representations, offering narrative sets, mobile practices to animate characters' experiences, and pathways to organise plotlines. The same happens also in comic books. For example, Jon McNaught's graphic novel *Kingdom* (2018) is organised around an apparently very simple story: a mother decides to bring her son Andrew and daughter Suzie to the Kingdom Field Holiday Park (UK), spending a long weekend on a caravan park on the British coast. Apparently, not much happens in this graphic novel and, likewise, not much is said by the protagonists, whose first dialogue is set in a Burger King placed in a travel plaza. Yet, this is not by coincidence, since the apparent immobility of the narrative plot, where no big changes happen, no drama is shown, is counterbalanced by the fundamental role played by the condition of mobility, and the symbolic travel that the protagonists undergo to reach the coast. Passing through landscapes of movement such as congested roads and motorway service stations, as the ones displayed in Figure 4.1, the two kids move also across time, embracing their own mother's perspective, as she was a child and used to spend her holidays in the same location. To provide readers with an alternated sense of movement and rest, many pages in McNaught's graphic novel, like the ones presented in Figure 4.2, are divided into tiny little panels that fragment the passing of time through the constant fragmentation of space. Panels focus on small, apparently meaningless details of both inorganic and natural elements; they represent immobile billboards, cars, videogames, and smartphone screens; but they show also the slight movements of birds, flies, of blades of grass blowing in the coastal wind. Juliet J. Fall affirms that comics create 'a world built on gaps and voids' that is nevertheless 'visible, material, tangible, encountered, seen, felt' (2020, p. 8): the author of *Kingdom* plays especially with the narrative possibilities offered by these voids, asking the reader to animate the page by imagining imperceptible movements happening in the white spaces between the frames, or in the gutters that separate one scene from the other.

In this apparently immobile place on the British coast, where the mother spent herself a pleasant time with her brother as she was a little girl, a majestic nature with its rhythms, colours, and sounds seems to be the real protagonist of McNaught's story. Yet, when leaving the city behind, Suzie (the little daughter) seems to experience a sort of epiphany precisely when they are driving along a busy motorway. Staring at the landscapes of movement outside the car window, immersed in an endless flow of cars and tracks and motorised vehicles, the little girl perceives for the first time herself as a molecular presence in a broader world. The alternation of mobility and immobilities, of happiness and boredom, of the natural and the inorganic, and the inseparable interconnection between these apparently opposite elements are at the centre of *Kingdom*. 'In a comic it is by starting with divisions or fragments that the whole is made' (Fall 2020, p. 8), and panels are tales of a broader mosaic which gain meaning through their reciprocal relations, and associations; likewise, through moving together with other cars, Suzie perceives herself as a small part in a broader picture. Indeed, both natural and inorganic features, human subjects and non-human objects alternate in the panels, as small parts of a unique whole. Playing on scales of time and space, McNaught uses the alternation of different grids, from splash pages to a structure of three, five, even eight panels for each line, to provide readers with a sense of changing rhythms, of interchanging mobilities, and immobilities. Moving their gazes when leafing throughout the pages of *Kingdom*, readers somehow replicate these alternating rhythms, sometimes moving fast along the motorway, other times lingering, still and silent, on small natural details. In *Kingdom*, mobile epiphanies about the meaning of movement and stillness, and their co-existence, emerge through the graphic mobilities *represented* in, and *performed* through the comics page.

Yet, what are the peculiar mobilities that emerge from comics and geoGraphic narratives if we compare them to other narrative forms? As Marian Aguiar, Charlotte Mathieson and Lynne Pearce observe in their volume *Mobilities, literature, culture* (2019) the recent 'humanistic turn' in mobility studies makes visible the significant role the humanities have already been playing for a long time in a field that is too often identified merely with the social sciences (p. 2). In this light, literary and cultural studies among other disciplines, and especially literature and textual materials, provided the social sciences not just with useful representations of movement but especially with original understandings, meanings, and metaphors to conceptualise mobilities in past and present times. Moreover, in the *Introduction* to their volume, Aguiar et al. stress the prolific connection between literary scholars working within mobilities studies and those engaging with spatio-centred and geocritical perspectives, explicitly bringing together the parallel research paths followed by these two critical streams in the last decade. The peculiarities of the spatial grammar of comics provide mobility scholars in the social sciences, in literary spatial studies, and in the geohumanities, with imaginative, fresh, and original insights to think of the entanglements between real world's and narrative spaces, places, and mobilities differently.

Crossing chronotopes in contemporary graphic narratives

In his seminal volume *On the move: mobility in the modern Western world* (2006), Tim Cresswell claims that mobility is at the same time experienced and thought, it can be both literal and metaphorical, it involves bodies and embodied practices as much as symbolic representations. According to Cresswell, 'representations of mobility capture and make sense of it through the production of meanings' (2006, p. 3), they help us understanding its value and importance in our real lives. The practice of composing 'mobile stories' provides us with new understandings of what our mobile practices mean, from walking and driving to dancing, dwelling in, commuting, biking, riding, to mention only a few. Yet, we should not forget that, in narratives, mobility is represented but also necessarily practiced, experienced, and embodied through the situated spatial events happening when authors and readers meet the text (Cresswell 2006, p. 4). Mobile physical bodies and representations of mobilities are strictly connected, and we cannot separate corporeal materiality from mobile representations in order to interpret mobility. Proposing a focus on graphic mobilities, then, means to consider the forms of representation, meanings, and practices of mobility that are connected with comics.

On the one hand, like other representations, comics load mobile practices, experiences, and bodies with new meanings by representing them in the form of a combination of words and images. On the other hand, the writing and reading of comics involve authors and readers in spatial practices that, I argue, are not merely spatial but intrinsically mobile. Through moving from one frame to another, from one site in the page to the other, authors and readers produce a narrative sense (meaning) as much as they undergo an embodied experience that moves across space and time: here narrative sense is gained through non-linear combinations of meanings and contents, and built through the physical movement of the gaze through the page. Also, the representations of mobile practices within comics help us producing new meanings to understand mobility,

and the way we conceptualise it: when writing and reading about mobilities in comics form, we are constantly asked to engage with the comics page in a relational way, building bridges between what we see and read on the page and what we see and experience in our ordinary lives. In this perspective, comics are agents that produce mobility, changing our perspective through affective and emotional engagement.

Cresswell further says that 'if movement is the dynamic equivalent of location, then mobility is the dynamic equivalent of place' (2006, p. 3): these definitions of mobility and movement are particularly helpful for my aim to apply a relational approach to comic book geographies. Attempting to transpose these conceptualisations of 'movement' and 'mobility' into the spatio-topical system of comics (Groensteen 2007), I argue that if movement represents the assemblage of all the potential narrative lines that could be followed by comics authors/readers when composing/reading the page, then mobility is the actual trajectory they choose to trace throughout the comics page. The reading trajectory embeds movement with meaning, and an experience of mobility happens every time the author/reader engages with the comics page. It is by authors' and readers' mobilities that the space of the page is filled with meaning and becomes a significant place. Not by chance, this reasoning resonates with that of many comics theorists, even if they never explicitly focused on mobility. Indeed, also Thierry Groensteen, when exploring and searching for the 'threshold of narrativity' in comics, asks himself:

> Immobile images separated by gutters: how do we tell a story with these things? Is the narration in the images? Is it dispersed between each image, or does it emerge from being arranged end to end? (2007, pp. 103–4)

I know the answer to Groensteen's question I am proposing here is only partial, because it does not give the coordinates to precisely locate the threshold of narrativity; yet, I suggest that in comics space and time are intrinsically connected by mobilities, more than in many other narrative forms. It is the movement of the gaze from panel-to-panel that embeds the apparently static space of the page with narrative time. Reading paths make the virtual plotlines imagined by the author explicit, turning potential narrative movement into actual narrative mobility. Of course, each narrative form implies the correlation of time and space but, as illustrated in Chapter 3, I argue the peculiar spatial grammar of comics has an intrinsic chronotopic dimension since it permits the construction of different narrative paths (times) that can unfold in non-linear ways when moving through the page (space): this means each panel is a chronotope in the sense that it is a meaningful space embedded with time, where narrative time becomes visible, and readable. Comics' plurivectorial narration does produce a fragmented but also multiscalar, pluridimensional, and relational sense of time-space: on the one hand, it permits authors to dictate the pace and set the rhythms by which readers pass through the panels in the sequence; on the other hand, it gives readers the opportunity to dictate their own pace, allowing them to move back and forth, in different directions through the space of the page.

Mobility and immobility alternate in the experience of reading comics. Interruptions of mobility occur when, as seen for example in McNaught's *Kingdom*, our gaze lingers on visual details that capture our attention. Even though we can come back to previous pages also when reading literary texts, in comics the presence of images often asks authors/readers to embrace multiscalar visions, to rediscover visual clues and associations that were disseminated throughout the narration, from panel to panel, page to page, chapter to chapter. Moreover, when we hold a comic book in our hands to read it, we usually have a first overall vision of the page, and only by then we go back to the beginning of the page (to the first panel) to trace our reading pathway through it: comics work through both simultaneity and braiding (Kuttner et al. 2020, p. 9). This multiscalar understanding of the comics page could be profitably used in geography to think of space from a multiscalar perspective. If comics are a 'map of time' (McCloud 2000, p. 220), which attempts to translate temporal events into spatial representations (Jenkins 2017), to orientate ourselves within this chronotopical structure we have to make both temporal and spatial choices. As Scott McCloud reveals in his prophetic volume *Reinventing comics* (2000), the infinite possible time-space combinations and narrative structures offered by the comics page are further multiplied by the new technologies and digital or web comics. I am aware that the reflection on mobility and time could be further explored considering the peculiar mobilities enacted by digital comics: yet, in this book, I am focusing on the comic book as a material product and, more in general, on printed comics. Also the geoGraphic narrative presented in Chapter 5, was imagined as a work to be printed, displayed, and located in material space, and its narrative structure does not exploit the possibilities offered by digital supports. Thus, even if firstly shared online, it is still following printed comics rules, especially in the idea of the page as a narrative unit.

In comics, the structuring of time does not only depend upon the way in which space is fragmented. In fact, given a sequence of panels, the perception of time changes according to how the author decides to fill each single frame with images and words, and to design the alternation of full and empty spaces, of frames of

different forms and dimensions. For example, many sequences of Chris Ware's comics, from *Jimmy Corrigan: The smartest kid on earth* (2000) to the experimental work *Building stories* (2014) and *Rusty Brown* (2019), linger on everyday routines, banal actions, insignificant gestures through both the fragmentation of space and the representation of small details. Here, the author drastically slows the narrative rhythm down through fragmenting the page, in order to provide readers with a sense of claustrophobia through narrative immobility. Ware himself claims that the style of comics artists is 'expressed in how their characters move, how time is sculpted' (Ware quoted in Singer 2010, p. 36). As Marc Singer observes, Ware 'relies heavily on figurative, analogic descriptions borrowed from music and the plastic arts' and his emphasis on rhythm, motion, and time suggests that, much like Scott McCloud, he 'believes the art of comics inheres in its ability to represent time through the juxtaposition and arrangement of multiple images' (2010, p. 36). Likewise, as shown in Figure 4.2, in *Kingdom* the arrangement of multiple images in sequence corresponds to the assemblage of human and non-human gestures, movements, and times. As readers we are not sure of how much time has passed in the gutter between one panel and the other, because some of the small details represented in the panels could have happened in both Suzie's present or her mother's past.

<insert Figure 4.2>

Like in Ware's graphic novels, a 'pursuit of slowness' (Banita 2010, p. 177) characterises the works by two other outstanding contemporary comics authors: namely, Nick Drnaso and Adrian Tomine. Both cartoonists represent contemporary urban and suburban anxieties as well as the contradictions and failures of urban lifestyle through playing with changes in narrative rhythms in their stories. Drnaso and Tomine make use of rigid grids to organise the page in a geometrical structure, giving readers a first glance impression of social order through the choice of a precise graphic layout. Yet, moving panel-to-panel, readers encounter the frictions and fractures of a society that is far from being perfectly structured and organised. Moving across the panels readers encounter many characters, lives, and personalities that are, indeed, deeply fragmented and often immobile, despite their unceasing movement. In his collection of stories *Beverly* (2016), Drnaso presents a frustrated and monotonous American life, portraying fast foods and shops placed along empty streets, motorways and cars that seem immobilised in their daily commuting routine, and people stuck in front of their laptops in search for a way to escape their everyday immobilities – the latter becoming the central topic of his latest and successful graphic novel *Sabrina* (2018). In *Beverly*, the author explores a precise time-space, namely contemporary US during the so-called 'Trump era', and experiments with the possibilities offered by the comics language to represent monotony through different stylistic choices. For example, beyond the already mentioned geometrical structuring of the space of the page, Drnaso uses a very thin graphic line that reduces the visual characterisation of each character to a very few traits, thus making facial expressions more visible through a careful use of 'tilts and curves in the mouths' and 'tilts of the eyebrows' –as he declared in an interview for the Vulture magazine[1]. Moreover, a repetitive palette of pastel colours provides readers with a sense of existential flattening and boredom, in a world where emotions are somehow anaesthetised. This visual poetic seems to be a common graphic voice of authors interested in the representation of contemporary American way of life: not by chance, his *Sabrina* was the first-ever comic to make it onto the Man Booker Prize long list, becoming a point of reference also for narrators working outside the comics scene, like English writer Zadie Smith.

Many traits of Drnaso's graphic poetics are shared also by Adrian Tomine, another contemporary American cartoonist. If in Ware's comics 'slowness seems to indicate nothing but trauma' (Banita 2010, p. 187), I argue the same applies for the six stories collected in *Killing and Dying* by Tomine. His long-standing collaboration as a cover illustrator for The New Yorker, makes him not just a well-known graphic voice in the international scene but also an author especially capable of realising single images, often set in urban contexts, that are both contemplative and narrative. In fact, the cover of *Killing and Dying* brings the reader into a precise spatio-temporal frame as much as into a specific everyday lifestyle and mood, made of ordinary lives' struggles, of intimate frustration and unrealised dreams of a bored (lower) middle-class: the cover represents a revealing single moment that summarises an entire era. Many stories in the collection are anticlimactic and inconclusive not because the readers are expected to fill in the gap and imagine the possible ends, rather because the represented plotlines seem to be small extracts from longer immobile lives that proceed always at the same pace, in the same direction. Tomine often gains narrative deceleration by providing huge portraits of urban landscapes, capturing urban everyday life through still frames in his comics as he does in his covers. Despite his figurative precision, by representing the small details of buildings,

roads, single houses and apartment buildings, streetlights and shop signs, the author wants readers to experience everything but a sense of being perfectly located. These details represent still and meaningless fragments of an immobile era.

Before moving to my first-hand experience with the doing of an original 'mobile geoGraphic, I would like to mention another recent example of graphic mobilities that was particularly inspiring for my own work on urban everyday mobilities: namely, *Commute. An illustrated memoir of female shame* by Erin Williams (2019). William's work allows me to introduce the genre of the illustrated memoir or graphic autobiography. This self-centred graphic genre permits to access the more intimate, affective, and emotional aspects connected to everyday mobilities, further allowing readers to explore their own emotions through the author's experience. Similarly, from a researcher-cartoonist perspective, the open declaration of the positionality of the author, often represented as the protagonist or at least as a character in the narration, permits a high degree of reflexivity. Thus, this genre enables significant reflections on our bodies, affects, emotions, perceptions, relations, and gestures during the research process, and beyond. As the title highlights, *Commute* poses at its centre an apparently banal route, Williams' everyday commuting path from home to work, and return. Within the increasing amount of works on women and transport, gender mobilities, and everyday mobile practices experienced by women in urban contexts, 'the journey-to-work strand of research made a major contribution to urban geography' (Law 1999, p. 570). As Robin Law affirms, this strand 'produced a substantial body of highly consistent and well supported evidence showing that women (especially married women) displayed different worktrip patterns relative to men' (1999, p. 570). The past twenty years, which separate Williams' graphic memoir from Law's discussion on gender and mobility, have been enriched by contributions coming from different disciplinary directions, from transport to feminist geographers and mobility scholars (Hanson 2010). What emerges is the need to embrace, among others, 'a gendered time-geography perspective' where 'bodies are treated as sexed and gendered subjects' (Scholten et al. 2012, p. 595): there is no single, abstract commuter but thousands of single bodies, whose embodiments produce different perceptions, meanings, affects, and practices connected to mobilities. As Christina Scholten et al. suggest, bodies are at the centre of mobility studies:

> mobility requires a bodily presence, because mobility is conducted by bodily movement. It is the own body that is seated in the car, on the bus or on the train. It is the own body that carries bags, children, or both. The body is frequently connected to trolleys, bags, wheelchairs, or other equipment. It is the own body that is sometimes forced to travel standing due to the lack of seats, and that becomes vulnerable, for example, through illness, age, pregnancy or disability (Friberg 2005). It is the body that risks being assaulted and subjected to violence, which in turn leads women working nightshifts to change their route to work to avoid imagined or real threats (Andersson 2005). The basis of time-geography is the embodiment; humans and artefacts moving in time and occupying space. (Scholten et al. 2012, p. 595)

<insert Figure 4.3>

As Williams herself affirms in the pages of her illustrated memoir, 'the body remembers things that the mind would rather forget' (Williams 2018, p. 77). Therefore, the situated, sexualised, gendered, violated, frustrated, naked, exposed and hidden, visible and invisible, desired and rejected body is at the centre of *Commute*. Sometimes, through the repetitive gestures and movements dictated by public transport roles and routines, the author perceives her own body as a cell in a broader urban body: for example, when commuters walk off the train all together, and move through the intestine of the Grand Central (Williams 2018, pp. 94–5). In pubkic transport, in the streets, 'women have bodies and take up space, even when it is undesirable' (Williams 2018, p. 192), and this produces fear, shame, anxiety, a sense of desirability or undesirability, an illusion of power that often turns into a sense of oppression.

In *Commute*, the narration unfolds in one single day, and the plotline develops along the author's daily commuting pathway that is punctuated by the alternation of the chapters: *get ready*, *walk the dog*, *wait for the train*, *ride the train*, *walk to work*, *take a break*, *walk back to the station*, *ride the train*, and, finally, *home*. Though, this apparent simplicity is just a starting point for the author to undergo a journey that moves in both space and time, and that covers her entire lifetimes. In Williams' comics, daily, almost mechanic motion first by foot and then by train turns into a transcalar movement across space and time, along both horizontal and vertical lines. On a horizontal level, Williams' commuting routine permits us to see through her eyes (and body) the violence, violation, objectification of female bodies in contemporary urbanscapes: when half-naked bodies on huge billboards accompany her walking path along the streets; when men stare

insistently at her in the street, on the platform, on the train. Along this horizontal line, the author's commuting route is nothing but isolated, as it replicates the experiences of many women moving in urban space; even if told in first-person, her individual perspective is an invitation to reflect on our own embodiments. Namely, there are moments in which the author openly reveals her connection with the readers' experiences, directly referring to them:

> It's important that I keep you here, on this commute. I want you to understand what it's like to be constantly reminded of what you are: desirable + visible or undesirable + invisible. With the first comes a constant + vague sense of threat. With the second comes loneliness. This is what it means to be a woman in public. (Williams, 2018, p. 47)

Beyond this horizontal narrative line, though, there is a vertical line to follow that goes back to the author's past experiences: all these examples of everyday harassment, in fact, are narrative triggers to explore Williams' own intimate story of abuse, sexual traumas, and struggle with alcoholism. In the front cover, Williams stands in her underpants on a platform where a train passes-by, packed with male passengers staring at her. There is a double reason for the author to represent herself almost naked: first, she wants us to empathise with her fragilities and sense of being violated by others' gazes; second, since the very beginning of her illustrated graphic memoir, through sharing her own story she appears somehow undressed and thus vulnerable in front of the reader. For the same reason, the graphic style of the illustrated memoir resembles that of a personal sketchbook, with an often insecure, thin, and black line. By sharing her own perspective through the narrativization of the trauma, Williams does not simply react on an individual level to the abuses she has experienced, but she further participates in other women's struggles. The therapeutic reflexivity of the comics story functions for both the author speaking in first-person and the readers, who can recognise their own bodies, emotions, and practices in the story. Because of this, Williams' work has been listed among those narrative reactions that were inspired by the #Metoo movement in the US, and all around the world together with the comics anthology *Drawing power: women's stories of sexual violence, harassment, and survival* (2019), edited by Diane Noomin and comprising non-fiction comics stories by more than 60 female cartoonists; and the Italian anthology *Post-Pink: antologia di fumetto femminista* [Post-Pink: Anthology of feminist comics] (2019), collecting stories of sexuality, desire, bodies, social and cultural taboos, to mention only a few. Whereas Williams' comics echoes the voices of many other female stories of mobilities, these collections function as polyphonic testimonies of female graphic voices.

<insert Figure 4.4>

Finally, let me come back to the different ways in which *Commute* engages with mobilities, to give a further example of the potential lines of connection between mobility studies and comic book geographies. First, Williams' plotline *on the move* is devoted to a banal urban mobile practice: commuting, thus, becomes the narrative trigger of the story, and permits the author to bring everyday mobilities at the centre of her graphic memoir. Indeed, the comic book focuses on different spaces, practices, and experiences connected to ordinary urban mobilities. Second, the genre of the illustrated memoir, *moves* readers' affective reactions, stimulating readers' explorations of personal journeys, mobile experiences, and emotions connected to these mobile practices, and activating a shift from a personal to a plural mobile narrative. Third, since comic book mobilities imply the consideration of both the contents and forms of comics, the genre of the graphic memoir permits to engage with mobilities from a peculiar affective, autoreflective, and emotional point of view. Fourth, through the interconnection of a horizontal and vertical narrative line, *Commute* offers a great example of how comics permit us to easily move across space and time, constructing multi-layered representations of space and multiscalar, plurivectorial perceptions of time. My geoGraphic novel *Lines. Moving with stories of public transport in Turku* begins precisely at the crossroads of these multiple spatio-temporal layers. Finally, whne thinking about graphic mobilities, beyond form and content we should also consider the peculiar mobilities of comic books as material objects, and narratives that have their own circulation. I am sure that the casual encounter between me and Williams' book, in London, has influenced my own perspective on ordinary mobilities, and the composition of my own geoGraphic narrative about the role of women in urban public transport in Turku.

Mobility and the geohumanities

Graphic narratives, such as literary ones, do not simply represent mobilities, rather contribute to their production. As Peter Merriman observes, recently there have been many 'attempts to rethink movement and

mobility as not simply occurring *in* or *across* space and time, but as actively shaping or producing multiple, dynamic spaces and times' (2012, p.1). Here, he partially recalls Creswell's idea that mobility 'is not just a function of time and space, but an agent in their production' (2006, p.6), with social mobilities defining the shapes of space and time beyond their abstract conceptualisation. If 'non-representational theories are inherently concerned with movement and mobility' and, Merriman says, 'they are, or perhaps it is, "a theory of mobile practices"' (Merriman 2012, p. 10), then it is not by chance that the doing of comics looks like a research practice so much connected to mobilities. This is the reason why the final chapter of this volume moves from the critical practice of reading to that of composing mobile stories in comics form. Of course, the example I will provide you in Chapter 5 is just one of the infinite possible ways to embrace comics as a research practice to explore urbanscapes as complex scenarios of multi-layered mobile subjects, practices, and bodies.

As we all know, both mobility and the city had a central role to play in the definition of modernity. When thinking of public transport, we should not forget that there is a close connection between the city and the development of new means, practices, meanings, and ideas of mobility. Also, the diffusion of new modes of travel changed significantly the way we dwell in, understand, and move through the city, from the modern to the contemporary times. Moreover, mobility seems to play a significant role in both the literal description and metaphorical depiction of what the urban is: namely, the city is often defined as a fluid, mutable, unsteady, changeable, and nomadic space. Avoiding binaries, I place the city along the fluid continuum that connects (rather than separate) mobility and immobility, movement and stasis, past and future. Therefore, urban space is a prolific laboratory to explore contemporary mobilities; at the same time, the observation of everyday mobilities represents a fundamental entry point to understand contemporary cities. Bodies *on the move* and landscapes *of* movement represent privileged perspectives on contemporary cities, and they provide us with useful narrative triggers to build our urban comics.

Drawing stories of public transport in Turku (Finland) for the PUTSPACE project
Mobile stories have something to tell us through both their content and form (Ghobrial 2019): for this reason, the practice of composing mobile narratives as a research practice represents an opportunity that should be explored more in depth, especially from a comic book geographies perspective. With this idea in mind, in late 2019 I submitted a geoGraphic creative proposal for the project *Public transport as public space in european cities: narrating, experiencing, contesting* (PUTSPACE) with the aim to realise a short comics story as part of a Post-doctoral fellowship. The proposal started from recent research in cultural geography, urban studies, geohumanities, literary and comic book geographies, literary and cartographic theory, with the scope to bring these interdisciplinary perspectives in the analysis of public transport. The story and fellowship had to be based in Turku (Finland), one of the cities of the Universities involved in the project, and was supposed to be able to move across time and space as well as between an historical and geographical perspective. Moreover, the narrative had to consider the cultural heritage of the tramway that crossed the city of Turku until October 1972, but also to represent the meaning and practices connected, nowadays, to public transport in the city. Yet, before coming to the composition of the story and to the actual 'doing of comics', which will be at the centre of the following Chapter 5, I need to introduce the PUTSPACE project more thoroughly. More in general, in this final section of Chapter 4 I would like to trace the theories that helped me moving from the reading to the actual doing of graphic mobilities.

'Public transport as public space in European cities: narrating, experiencing, contesting (PUTSPACE)' is a project financially supported by the HERA Joint Research Programme (www.heranet.info) which is co-funded by AKA, BMBF via DLRPT, ETAg, and the European Commission through Horizon 2020. The project has a deep interdisciplinary approach and involves members from the Tallin University in Tallin (Estonia), the Åbo Akademi University in Turku (Finland), the Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography in Leipzig (Germany) and the Université Libre de Bruxelles in Brussels (Belgium): with project leaders coming from both geography and literary studies, the project involves scholars working on mobilities and transport across different disciplinary fields, from comparative literature to cultural history, regional, transport and urban geography, and fine arts.[2] PUTSPACE wants to analyse public transport as one type of 'public space' that is also able to challenge existing definitions of what is understood under this label: as team members affirm in the presentation of the project, in public space and thus also in public transport we are confronted with social diversity, social norms that are challenged by social practices, and different types of ownership, control, and subversion. All this is conceptualised in the PUTSPACE project through different objectives, mentioned in the project's website, by which the team aims, first, 'to critically conceptualise and analyse what kind of public space public transport is', exploring how much our conception of public space can be

enriched by observing it from the mobile angle of public transport. Second, the project aims also 'to understand urban transformations of public space in European cities by attending to public transport as particularly intense and contentious set of public spaces'. Thus, public transport functions as an observational lens, by which we are capable of observing significant changes occurred in the society over the past centuries (and before), in the social, cultural, political, and economic assets of our cities. Third, the analyses of public transport from a specific humanities approach aims 'to offer a located and historicised perspective on the transformation of public space by examining narratives, experiences and contestations connected with public transport in different European cities'. This interdisciplinary approach proposed by the PUTSPACE project contributes to transport-related, and hopes to involve audience beyond the academia, 'to intervene in civic mobilising, planning and policy via a humanities-led analysis and conceptualisation of public transport'[3]. Indeed, the latter was especially interesting from my own narrative geoGraphic perspective. Bringing researchers in different disciplines together with transport enthusiasts, practitioners, activists, and citizens using public transport regularly, often on a daily basis, PUTSPACE gave me the opportunity to explore the possible entanglements between the geohumanities and mobility studies, using comics as a creative research practice to conduct geographical research.

A graphic-narrative approach to mobilities

Recently, a closer examination of the manifold theoretical influences, methods, approaches, and disciplinary perspectives underpinning the 'new mobilities paradigm' (Sheller and Urry, 2006; Sheller and Urry, 2016) has challenged 'any easy alignment of mobilities research with a neatly demarcated realm called the social sciences' (Merriman and Pearce 2017, p. 495), making the influence of the humanities in the mobilities debate explicit. As underlined in the project's website, the PUTSPACE project starts from the idea that 'public transport research remains dominated by economistic and technocratic readings and remains peripheral in the humanities literature' and, therefore, it aims 'to humanise transport research by studying diverse narratives, experiences and contestations of public transport, as they have been unfolding in cities across Europe since the late nineteenth century'. The PUTSPACE project's idea to 'humanise transport research' needs to be contextualised here in this broader field of interdisciplinary research projects, symposia and conferences, journals, book series, research centres, and labs that emerged in the last decades around the prolific encounter between 'mobility and the humanities' (Merriman and Pearce 2017; Pearce and Merriman 2018), starting from the CeMoRe at the Lancaster University and coming to the more recent Centre for Advanced Studies in Mobility and Humanities at the University of Padua (Italy)[4] and the KU Academy Mobility Humanities at the Konkuk University (South Corea), to mention only a few. Cresswell, in his introduction to the special issue of *New Formations* on 'mobilities' published in 2001 (Cresswell 2001a; 2001b), 'traces a genealogy of mobility theory and mobile metaphors that is more clearly attuned to humanities literatures than any nascent social science paradigm' (Merriman and Pearce 2017, p. 495). Within this broad multidisciplinary spectrum, literary mobilities have a central role to play in the production of metaphorical thinking, with texts being at the fore in exploring inventive conceptualisations, beyond representations, of mobile experiences, places, and practices. These 'variations of mobility', as Cresswell calls them, 'have become central metaphors for abstract forms of understanding in cultural geography, anthropology, cultural studies, critical theory, philosophy and the humanities in general', as they 'are used to bring into question the apparent fixities of older forms of understanding' (Cresswell 2001a, p. 9).

Nevertheless, the creative potential of graphic mobilities, with their inspiring use of visual metaphors, is still underexplored, and needs to be further considered in this broader dialogue between mobility studies, the humanities, and the creative arts. Comics' contribution should not be simply confined to a mere representational level, with scholars considering only the figurative potential of comic books; on the contrary, graphic mobilities are able to introduce also methodological and theoretical insights in this interdisciplinary conversation. Following Mimi Sheller's 'experimentalist orientation', I interpret the doing of comics as a 'research-creation' endeavour that is stimulated by an experimentalist orientation towards new mobile and creative methods, and the exploration of 'vital methodologies' to visualise, narrativise, and understand mobilities differently (Sheller 2015, pp. 130-1). In fact, the 'kinaesthetics', intended as the entangled relationship between mobility and aesthetics, are not confined to the representational potential of arts and artistic practices, rather they have a huge generative potential, as Merriman reminds us in his 'Editorial' of *Transfers* (2018) – a journal that not by chance has a section completely devoted to 'Mobility and art':

> Mobility aesthetics, then, would not just be concerned with the production, generation, or interpretation of representations of mobility. Rather, it could be seen to encompass all manner of

creative processes, practices, and embodied movements that generate aesthetic affects and effects and are apprehended by embodied subjects in different ways. (Merriman 2018, p. vi)

According to Sheller, 'this sense of working on the move, and more creatively, has been taken up in more diverse methodologies that seek to engage with the mobile, fleeting moments that make up the everyday (Sheller 2015, p. 131)': in my opinion, the doing of comics as a research practice could be easily listed among these creative mobile endeavours.

The presence of a growing set of creative practice-based contributions to mobilities studies, the emphasis on methodological innovation and on the potentialities of art-research collaboration, especially within the interdisciplinary field of the geohumanities (Dear et al. 2011), made it possible to activate an ongoing process of 'rethinking mobile methods' (Merriman 2014). As Merriman claims, 'rethinking mobile methods' does neither mean to necessarily embrace practices to see with, walk along, move together with objects of research, nor to affirm the supremacy of these methods in comparison to more 'conventional' and only apparently less mobile ones, like interviews, questionnaires, discourse analysis, or archival research. Rather, he suggests rethinking these mobile methods by expanding and diversifying their repertoire of approaches (Merriman 2014, p. 168), adopting a mobile and experimental perspective, working across disciplinary boundaries, and drawing upon a plurality of methodological, theoretical, disciplinary approaches (p. 183). As a cultural geographer working in the emerging field of the geohumanities, I suggest the doing of comics as a creative research practice that is able to further collapse the dichotomies between the representation and practice of mobilities. If, as Micheal Dear affirms, practicing the geohumanities means to explore the 'unprecedent opportunity for a transdisciplinary collaboration' (2015, p. 32), I have taken this disciplinary plurivocality as a stimulus to develop my own creative research within the fields of comic book geographies and mobility studies. Mobility and the geohumanities, thus, look like a prolific entanglement that is worth to explore.

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1 'Nick Drnaso on *Sabrina*, the first comic to make the Man Booker long list' interview with Nick Drnaso by Abraham Riesman published on Vulture, July 25, 2018. Accessed online August 13, 2020: https://www.vulture.com/2018/07/nick-drnaso-on-sabrina-his-booker-longlisted-comic.html.

2 The list of project leaders and members is available at: https://putspace.eu/people/.

3 Excerpts from the homepage of the PUTSPACE website: https://putspace.eu/.

4 See the project's website: https://www.mobilityandhumanities.it/.

[ABSTRACT
The chapter offers an empirical example of how to design and conduct geoGraphic fieldwork, presenting the geoGraphic novel *Lines. Moving with stories of public transport in Turku* (2020) I realised as an original creative research output for the interdisciplinary project 'Public transport as public space in European cities' (PUTSPACE). *Lines* is devoted to the diachronic representation of public transport in Turku (Finland) and collects the plurivocal mobile stories connected to it. The story plays with the chronotopic language of comics to build relational representations of urban space, and stratigraphic perceptions of time. The insertion of many pages from *Lines* sustains the theoretical reasoning in the chapter, and exemplifies the close connection between the stylistic features, narrative structure, graphic appearance, and fieldwork in the geoGraphic novel. Doing comics appears as a geographical research practice that involves embodied perceptions, more-than-representational experiences, archival research, and creative mobile methodologies. The chapter presents the geoGraphic novel through a processual approach, inserting excerpts from a fieldwork diary, and allowing for a reflexive perspective on the geoGrapher's positionality during the practice of doing comics.
Keywords:
autoethnography, fieldwork, mobile methods, archive, chronotope, public transport]

[16.149 words]

5. Doing comics on the move: an autoethnographic account of geoGraphic fieldwork

Mobile storylines along the tramway in Turku

The composition of an original geoGraphic novel, based on non-fictional materials, appears as an original tool to contribute to the expanding field of research in mobility and the (geo)humanities. The practice of doing comics is an opportunity to participate in the rethinking of mobile methods from the narrative angle, and an occasion to narrate public transport from a relational, and multiscalar spatio-temporal scale. The geohumanities suggest taking advantage of the communicative potential of art to engage broader audiences for 'doing something in the world' (Hawkins et al. 2015, p. 216). Thus, my proposal to compose a geoGraphic narrative about public transport in Turku was meant to contribute from a theoretical and methodological perspective to the PUTSPACE project, but also to capture the attention both of specialistic and non-academic audiences. The geoGraphic narrative offers an example of the potentialities of creative methods to represent the experience of using public transportation: doing research with comics permits to access the affects, emotions, memories, and imaginaries that are connected to everyday mobile practices in the city. From an educational point of view, the composition of a short story with different characters and points of view may be used in the classroom to give students an accessible example of urban complexity and plurivocality: the educational potential is not limited to the students living in Turku, because the story could be used as an example to activate processes of urban storytelling in other urban contexts. Finally, the realization of a creative output in comics form allows researchers to come into dialogue with non-academic partners: in my case, I collaborated with STORMI[1], an independent online journal that is specialised in graphic journalism, to publish the short geoGraphic narrative both online. I was especially surprised by the request to translate the comics story into Italian to be published by STORMI: in that moment, I realised that even highly context-based comics stories, like the one I drew for PUTSPACE, have a broader disseminative potential, which goes beyond the spatial limits of the context in which the story is set. As we have seen in Chapter 3 with the example of *Quartieri*, geoGraphic narratives function as translocal bridges that connect different spatial contexts: through processes of identification and empathy, they become narrative triggers that stimulate the emergence of stories in other cities.

As partially exposed in Chapter 4, the PUTSPACE project's interest in the perception and representation of urban public transport meets some of the spatial and methodological issues I had already explored in previous projects. Indeed, as we have seen in Chapters 2 and 3, both *Street geography* and *Quartieri* have explored possible creative engagements with public transportation: especially the tramway was intended as a means to cross urban diversities in space and time, to connect stories and memories, and to physically move across the city, but also as a trigger for realising creative interventions in urban space. In *Street geography*, we enhanced the role of the tramline in connecting different areas in the city of Padua and used it as a public transport means for the exploration of a public art exhibition: the tramway provided an opportunity to cross

urban space moving across different geographical topics such as waterways, mobility, and neighbourhoods. In *Quartieri*, the tramline is an iconic presence in Arcella's urbanscape and a narrative thread that connects different stories: following the tramline, the narrator's gaze can easily move from north to south, and from one interviewee to the other. Working on the public transport network of Turku enabled me to further experiment with the creative and narrative potentialities of different transportation means. Through the composition of the geoGraphic novel I could easily move across different urban spaces and eras and transform inhabitants into characters, existential trajectories into narrative lines, and the tramline and the bus routes into plotlines.

My pots-doctoral research project for PUTSPACE was titled *GeoGraphic narratives of public transport lines: creative methods to explore urban complexities moving across space and time*: here, the tramline, iconic bus routes in the city, and other yellow means of transport are the real protagonist and the composition of the original geoGraphic novel *Lines. Moving with stories of public transport in Turku* was the main aim of the project. For this reason, Chapter 5 is organised as a verbo-visual reflection: autoethnographic excerpts from my fieldwork journal, and more traditional theoretical and methodological reflections will be informed by the pages from the geoGraphic novel *Lines* that will be partially reproduced in the following sections[2]. Readers are invited to embrace public space through various intimate perspectives represented in the geoGraphic novel, and to recognize urban complexity through a stratified polyphonic narrative of mobilities in urban space, by following the routes of public transport means, and the trajectories of their users. The sections *Notes from a geoGraphic fieldwork diary* offer some auto-reflective notes about the comics story and my fieldwork experience, in order to highlight the connections between research materials, the narrative structure, and the graphic appearance of the geoGraphic novel. Whereas some notes are directly taken from my fieldwork diary or the result of later reflections, a few of them are probably the result of an ongoing fictional re-elaboration of what I did, saw, thought, drew, and wrote: no worries, 'the myth that fiction and non-fiction are binary categories' has been already dismantled by the practice of fiction-based research and this chapter makes voluntarily use of the blurring of these genres as a method of research (Levy 2013, p. 36).

Drafting the research path along the 'yellow thread'

Comics are useful tools to represent but also explore the variations of mobilities and urban complexity at different spatio-temporal scales, from individual stories to the social, collective, and historical perspective. Narratives are capable of crossing 'chronotopic thresholds' and following spatial changes. The next sections describe the methodological approach I have embraced during fieldwork and the creative research process I underwent to realise a short comic book story about public transport in Turku. I want to provide you with an autoethnographic account of my fieldwork experience in Turku as an example of how to experiment with the doing of comics in geography. In this chapter, I want to give some practical suggestions that may be useful to realise original geoGraphic narratives. The project was structured in two distinct moments. In the first phase, from 18 January to 2 February 2020, I have spent two weeks of intense fieldwork activities in Turku to collect, discuss, and select archival, historical, ethnographic, literary, artistic, and visual materials for the creative output. In these weeks I made some main graphic choices, defining for example the colour palette, the graphic style, and the way I wanted to translate photographs into drawings. In the second phase of the geoGraphic composition process, I worked intensively on the graphic and narrative re-elaboration of collected oral, visual, and textual materials. This was the moment in which the drawing practice became more intense and I finalised the narrative structure of the story.

My research started with a simple question: what if we think of the geoGraphic novel as a way to combine images and words, and fiction and facts but also the representation and 'doing' of geographic research through comics? Can we interpret *doing comics* as one of the creative practices we can use for conducting geographical research? Before answering these questions, let me first summarise the history of the tramway in Turku. The tramway in Turku permits to register the presence of urban narratives on public transport that can be both collective and more personal stories. After a very short experience with the horse tram in 1890, the first electric tramway opened in Turku on 22 December 1908. The new transport network soon became a symbol of the modern way of life, following the model of other metropolises in Europe, from Germany to Sweden. The tramway became the main means of transportation on an urban scale but along its pathway it crossed also the routes of regional and international means of transportation, such as the regional railway connecting Turku with other cities in Finland, and the shipping routes converging at the harbour. At that time, the harbour was the most important mobile node in the city and one of the main points of entry into the country. Here, people coming from Sweden and Europe disembarked on a daily scale, placing the city within a broad translocal network of circulation of goods, people, and ideas. Not by chance, then, the first tramline

drew a figure-of-eight moving back and forth from the city centre to the harbour. Today, bus line number 1 still covers part of this ancient tramline. Over the decades, the tramway network expanded by adding to line 1 other two lines, number 2 and 3: in fact, the tram network was trying to follow the constant expansion of Turku's urban area. Brand new projects to further expand the tramway network continued to appear over the 50s and 60s, until when on 1 October 1972 the closed permanently. The reasons for the tramway's closure were partially connected to the diffusion of automobility as a more modern means of transportation and the consequent interpretation of the tram as al old-fashioned one. There is no doubt that the urban expansion played a central role in the process: the tramway network was out of scale in the expanded urban area of Turku, because it was uncapable of reaching the many recently built neighbourhoods. Nevertheless, today, many activists sustain that in the past the tram was closed mainly because of political interests and decisions and, thus, they ask to bring it back now for environmental reasons. Despite its closure, the tramway still constitutes today an important part of the city's cultural heritage and has remained in the citizens' memories as an iconic element that represents a nostalgic past, in which the city was at the front in the modernisation process of Finland. Through my research I aimed to realise a geoGraphic novel that should be able to observe the present public transport system in Turku but also to embrace a stratigraphic and diachronic perspective to register how this network changed over the years. Since the beginning of the project I was especially interested in people's memories from the past, but also in their expectations, today, about its possible future developments. Especially, through a cultural geographical, creative, and narrative approach, I wanted to creatively explore the different mobile practices and encounters that take place along the transportation network in the city as well as the ways in which they are narrativised by citizens. My narrative research, thus, included encounters with local people, random walks or bus rides, and visits to local Museums, archives, public libraries, touristic gift shops, comics shops, bars, and public spaces, of course. The practice of doing comics enabled me to explore the stories and memories that are embedded in the cityscape, and especially along the routes that was once followed by the tramway and is nowadays traced by Turku's yellow buses.

As shown in Figure 5.1, the story opens with a very limited colour palette made of shadows of grey and yellow and the first page introduces from the very beginning a fundamental symbolic element that recurs throughout the narration: the yellow colour. Indeed, yellow is not simply the colour of the past tramway in Turku but also the one chosen nowadays by Föli, the Turku Region Public Transport, for its bus fleet, bicycles, and kick scooters. Yellow symbolises the long-lasting, multimodal, and transepocal presence of public transport in the city: indeed, in *Lines* it functions also as a narrative thread that accompanies readers throughout a journey across the city's transport network in different eras. Beyond the symbolic and narrative use of colour, from a figurative perspective, the geoGraphic novel starts (Figure 5.1) with an image of strength and speed and horses' legs on the move, which evoke a sense of movement through the simple, archetypical gesture of putting one leg in front of the other. The first page of the comics story asks to embrace a mobile perspective, because readers' gazes are expected to follow the direction of the horses' legs – not by chance it is also the reading direction. The role of the horses' yellow harness and bridle is finally revealed when the horse tram suddenly appears in the third panel. Even if the focus of this short geoGraphic novel is on the history of the tramway, nevertheless, this history is intrinsically connected with the one of other means, bodies, and practices of mobilities in Turku. Therefore, beyond yellow trams, in *Lines* we will see also yellow buses, bikes, and ships together with yellow signs, roads, and maps that trace mobile routes across the urbanscape. Beyond horses' legs, another main visual element in the page is the minimalist reproduction of a historical map, representing the evolution of the horse tramway from 1890 to 1892. Even maps are never intended as fixed images in the narration, but rather they are often used as mobile narrative means to provide readers with a rapid sense of movement across space and time. For this reason, in Figure 5.1 the yellow line tracing the route of the horse tramway in Turku expands from panel-to-panel, starting from the city centre and crossing the river Aura to reach the Cathedral on the other side. From now on, readers will know that the history of the tramway in Turku moves together with that of the city: beyond their past, maybe also their destinies will be strictly entangled in the future.

<insert Figure 5.1>

Notes from a geoGraphic fieldwork diary. At the bus stop

Day 1
January 19, 2020.

I've been walking for 4 hours, taking pictures of what I see, trying to become familiar with the city. The temperature is much higher than I expected it to be, so I start my walk at 10.45 a.m. My main object of interest today are buses. I want to observe buses while they're on the move but also to capture some specific traits of these vehicles when they stop. I spend a lot of time at different crossroads and bus stops across the city to watch people stepping in and out or simply waiting for the buses to come. I want to observe the minute, tiny, repetitive, and natural gestures of their everyday mobile practices. So, I wait twenty minutes behind the glass of a bus stop in front of the Lidl, not far from the main square, in the city centre. A girl captures my attention because, from the perspective from where I stare at her, her body builds a perfect symmetry with the glass structure of the covered bus stop. I take my camera and start taking pictures of her, while she simply waits, reads, and looks at the street, until when a police car parks a couple of metres from where I stand, with my camera in my hands. I feel like I'm particularly visible now, while I'm apparently doing nothing but staring at people and taking pictures of them. I consider leaving before the girl finally catches her bus and losing the end of the story that captured my attention for the past twenty minutes, but the framing is too good to leave. So I stay. The policemen pass-by without even noticing me. The bus arrives, the girl steps in. And leaves. I've captured with my camera the alternation of her stasis and movement. Now, I can leave too.

I'm heading to the train station, where a high pedestrian bridge passes over the train tracks. On both sides of the bridge there are plastic barriers that hinder my view. I ask myself what's the suicide rate in the city, but today's a sunny day and I keep on walking. I come back to the riverside and follow the pedestrian walkway towards the old medieval Castle, in the area beneath the harbour. Here I step into the Museum's bookshop and find many books by Mikko Laaksonen. I've heard his name in many discourses since when I've arrived here and I wonder who he is – a researcher, an historian, a populariser of the city's history? – and think I should definitely meet him – he'll maybe turn into a mysterious character in my story. But these books are too expensive for me to buy them all, even if the title *Turku. Historical city maps* has definitely captured my curiosity. 'Kartta' means map in Finnish – I take a note on my fieldwork journal, because I'm sure maps will play a central role in the story! Then, I go back to city centre by walking along the riverside and staring at small boats and ships anchored at the piers on both sides. Once in the city centre, I stop at the touristic information office to grasp some free maps of the city and of the public transport network. 'Walk like a local' claims a poster on the wall. It sounds like the city-text is speaking to me and I read the wall poster as a sign of encouragement for my strolling around the city. Unfortunately, the bored guy at the office says there are no posters left for me. Never mind. For today, I'm done working (and walking).

Storying memories, interviews, and encounters along the route

Despite the electric tramway in Turku inaugurated at the beginning of the 20th century and permanently closed in 1972, its iconic yellow tramcars are still alive in the imaginaries of people living in or simply visiting the city. For elders, who often personally experienced the use of the tram, and even for younger citizens, who see the tram as a symbol of the past but also as a possibility for the city's green future, the tramway represents a yellow reference point in Turku's cultural heritage. While this way of moving is still recalled in citizens' memories and visual culture, the tramway as a transportation means has been completely replaced nowadays by public buses, private cars, bicycles, and other greener ways of urban mobility – like the yellow kick scooters recently introduced by Föli. As said, from a narrative perspective, the tramway together with the iconic yellow buses of Turku, is the real protagonists of my geoGraphic novel *Lines*: indeed, the comics story develops along the lines of the public transport network that I interpreted as a narrative infrastructure with many 'yellow' threads and storylines to follow.

In fact, at the centre of the narrative there is not just the history of the tramway but rather the multiple stories that are told, experienced, and collected along its pathway. In my research practice, I interpreted the tramway as an archive of memories, where personal experiences, encounters, mobile practices, everyday routines, expectations, and affective relations but also collective hopes, social practices, and public transformations are collected: thus, in the geoGraphic novel the tramline functions as a narrative chronotope, a space in which different individual and plural narratives formed and stratified over time. *Lines* hopes to let these mobile stories emerge and to make them visible, readable, and shareable; by representing personal memories as tiles of a broader collective vision, *Lines* wants to make explicit that urban archives are made of multiple personal and collective stories, and formal and informal materials that inform and cross each other. So, also the geoGraphic novel should be interpreted as an emerging archive and an ongoing collective storytelling practice that does not aspire to tell the whole storie(s) of the tramway in Turku but rather hopes to stimulate the emergence of further narratives and collection of other stories.

When drafting the multifocal narrative structure of *Lines*, I had many polyphonic urban novels from the modernist tradition in my mind that functioned as constant points of reference for the construction of the story, such as *Berlin Alexanderplatz* by Alfred Döblin and *Manhattan Transfer* by John Dos Passos. Not by chance, one of the first scenes of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* represents the protagonist, Franz Biberkopf, while he takes a tram ride to the city centre in 1929. The tramway, in Döblin's novel, is a symbol of modernity and provides the protagonist and, consequently, the readers with a shocking sense of speed. Rapid movement pervades not just the experience of Franz on the tram wagon but involves the whole urbanscape around him. With its loud sounds, rapid movement, and the crowds of people stepping in and out, the tramline offers a polyphonic perspective on Berlin in the early Twentieth century and symbolises a city that was, indeed, changing fast beyond the tram's windows. *Berlin Alexanderplatz* is a plurivocal novel, where Franz Biberkopf is just one of the many protagonists of a collective urban epic. To make this plurality explicit, Döblin makes many voices audible all at once: during the narration, for example, when different citizens enter the same tram wagon, or tramlines cross each other at main interchanges and squares (like Alexanderplatz or Rosenthalerplatz), Döblin allows passengers' thoughts to overlap. When passengers depart in different directions, the narration follows their disparate existential routes, providing readers with a plurivectorial sense of narrative space. These 'collisions' and 'accidental encounters' between characters have a role to play in the narration as they often offer the narrator an escape route to leave the story of Franz Biberkopf behind and to explore other potential plotlines (Kneale 2011, p. 170). In Döblin's novel, the network of public transport turns into a narrative infrastructure that provides readers with a sense of movement across space and time, and between different possible narrative lines.

Following Döblin's example, my goal was to embrace the perspectives of different users at different times, providing the readers of my geoGraphic novel with a polyphonic reading experience, in which the stories of public transportation means are always multifocal and never fixed. Given this stratigraphic and multifocal perspective on the tramway, I needed to organise the plotline through the interconnection between a plurality of time-spaces and voices. In fact, the geoGraphic novel does not develop along a linear temporal line that moves from the past to the present; on the contrary, the plotline imitates the way in which our memory works and makes use of recurring images, colours, and sounds as well as of objects and bodily movements as narrative triggers. Following James Kneale's anlaysis of Bakhtinian types of literary chronotopes (2011), I argue that the chronotope of the tramway functions a kind of threshold in *Lines*, since it offers the possibility to cross the borders between disparate characters and times, past and present, public and private spaces, and intimate memories and collective experiences. As Kneale observes:

> The threshold becomes a general metaphor for the sorts of encounters that might happen on the road. These encounters allow the 'bringing-together of that which had traditionally been kept distant and disunified' (1981, p. 170); public spaces may 'become meeting- and contact-points for heterogeneous people' (1984, p. 128). Bakhtin was interested in these kinds of 'encounters', 'collisions', 'meetings', and 'intersections' because he believed that they encourage dialogical relations, the clash of different points of view, and perhaps the development of an ethics of hospitality. (2011, p. 180)

The tramway, like the road in Kneale's analysis, brings together people and stories that may be distant. Moreover, the narrativization of the tramway as a public space of encounter allows for new potential encounters to happen: for example, it allows the intersections between characters' trajectories that meet on the page even though they have never met in real space (as shown in one of the final pages of *Lines*, in Figures 5.16 and 5.17). Public spaces too are thresholds that bring people together, create contacts, and suggest dialogical relations: their chronotopical narrativisation allows these aspects to become explicit. Therefore, my aim was to let the collision between multiple perspectives on the tramway in Turku become a narrative tool in the geoGraphic novel and invite readers to recognise the importance of transportation means for the co-existence of different people, languages, cultures, and points of view in public space.

During the two weeks of fieldwork in Turku, I have tried to meet and interview as many people as possible, starting to schedule meetings and visits even before my arrival in the city. In general, wherever I was, working at the University, drinking in a small bar or pub in the city centre, shopping at the market square, in a small design or souvenir shop, in a Museum's bookshop, or in an archive, I attempted to embrace a dialogical behaviour and open approach in order to come more easily in contact with local people despite the linguistic barrier. This helped me to collect narratives about public transport in the city from very different urban actors. As the geoGraphic novel testimonies, also the open approach of the people I met, their kind helpfulness and generosity in sharing their personal thoughts and often intimate family memories, beyond their time, of course, played a fundamental part in the research process. When planning interviews, given the

fact that I do not speak a word nor of Finnish neither of Swedish, I had to make clear that they should be carried out in English. Many interviewees, though, moved even a step forward and helped me to overcome the linguistic barrier not just by communicating with me in English but also translating for me significant information, texts, signs, postcards, and excerpts from books and newspaper articles, local sayings, and typical idioms. Meeting these people, from the scholars and colleagues at Åbo Akademi University to the archivists at the Museum Centre of Turku Archive, and from tram experts to private citizens living, working, and studying in the city, has been a significant part of my fieldwork experience. From a dissemination perspective, their effort to translate local micro histories and ethnographic materials into English plays a significant role: they made these information accessible not just to me, as a researcher, but to a broader audience of people, who will read the geoGraphic novel, this chapter, and other research materials deriving from those interviews.

As we have seen in Chapter 3, I had already worked with interviews for a creative and narrative research purpose, as these were fundamental sources for the composition of the comics story about the Arcella neighbourhood, in *Quartieri*. In previous chapters, we have also seen how much interviews as a method for qualitative research are influenced not just by the researcher's positionality and relation with the interviewee, but also by the spatio-temporal context where interviews take place. The city itself plays an active role, as it constructs the interview and shapes the collected data (Dowling et al. 2016, p. 684). I have also used interviews to explore everyday practices of mobility, to understand the ways in which movement takes place, and to have access to the meanings, affective relations, and symbolic values that are attached to urban mobilities (Berg et al. 2014). When doing comics for research, interviews work as means for collecting individual memories, feelings, affects, and experience: they have the double effect of collecting qualitative data and providing authors with narrative ideas, characters, and situations that can be easily translated into the a storyworld. In Turku, I collected memories from people who used the tram in person or who were told by their relatives about their own experience. The interviewees generously shared their stories, feelings, concerns, and hopes connected to the public transport network in Turku in non-structured interviews that were conducted at different times and in different locations. I have met tram enthusiasts and experts, like Mikko Laaksonen (Figure 5.11), who is the author or the most popular book about the history of the tramways in the city. I have heard stories from people working at the customer office of Föli, like Maijastiina on Page 22 (Figure 5.14), and members of the Turku Region Public Transport Committee like Emma, on Page 20 (Figure 5.12). Many of them have become characters in the comics story and their everyday life episodes, the details about the sensorial perception of sound on the tram they shared with me, and the descriptions about how people interact today or used to do it in the past in public transportation means helped me to develop the narrative line of the comics story.

Before starting the interviews, participants received a consent form and were all informed of the fact that I was collecting stories for a research project that implied the realisation of a comics story. Therefore, the consent form mentioned also that I would have made use of both the audio and the visual recordings taken during the interviews to compose the comics story: their words but also their faces may appear into the drawn pages of the geoGraphic novel. They were all curious and intrigued by the idea of being part of a creative research project, and almost every informant gave me the permission to take pictures during interviews. Others shared their very intimate memories and allowed me to use them for the construction of the story but preferred to remain anonymous. Even if their stories and voices are still in the geoGraphic novel, I had to find a narrative and graphic way to represent their particular contributions: in fact, the speech bubbles recalling their words simply float in the page and are not connected through tails that point the speaker, as it happens in pages 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 of *Lines* (section partially reproduced in Figures 5.2, 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5) and, later on in the story. Precisely one of these informants offered me the narrative starting point for the first part of the story: the voice of a lady remembering when she was a young girl using the tramway suddenly appears on page 3, and then proceeds her storytelling in the following pages 4, 5 and 6. Afterwards, on Pages 7 and 8, the person speaking changes as the old lady leaves the floor to the memories of a man. He remembers when he was a ten-year-old boy and was almost 'frightened by those ladies' that were working as conductresses on the tram, in their grey uniforms. Speech bubbles play a distinct narrative role: whereas captions display information about the history of the tramway that are told by an apparently neutral voice over, which reports significant dates and historical information through a minimalist font displayed on a white background, conversely, balloons host intimate stories, personal reflections and emotional memories shared by informants during interviews. For this reason, balloons are coloured in grey and interviewees' voices are quoted through an original hand-written font that I realised to stimulate readers' empathy through the humanisation of their graphic voices. These two different graphic and narrative levels inform and

complete each other, with the small stories in the speech bubbles becoming part of a broader collective history of public transport in the city that is displayed in the captions' boxes.

The way in which different stories overlap suggests a multiscalar and relational conception of urban space. The non-linear storyline, as said, imitates the way in which memory works through holes, repetitions, and recurring images. At the same time, I decided to play with different spatio-temporal layers through creating an apparent discrepancy between the story that is told in the texts and the one that is displayed in the drawings. This happens especially in pages 4 and 5, where we hear the voice of the already mentioned mature lady remembering her adventurous experience of taking the tramway alone for the first time, when she was only five years old. Her story unfolds along the Tramline number 1, the one connecting the harbour of Turku to the city centre. Through her memory we experience the noisy sounds of the tram wagon approaching the stop, empathise with her sense of liberation, and have the impression of being in a safe space, because in the tram 'you were never really alone'. Yet, even if the story is set in the past, in the drawings the tramway is suddenly replaced by a contemporary yellow bus. Here, the Föli sign indicating the bus stop and showing the route between the centre and the harbour of Bus No. 1 functions as a graphic bridge that connects the present bus route with the old tramline. Through the speech balloons, we imagine the protagonist of pages 4, 5 and 6 (shown in Figures 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4) when she was a young girl using the tramway; nevertheless, the drawings show something different, and the clothes of the girl drawn in the same pages place her in the present time. In comics, drawings and written words do neither necessarily proceed together nor show the same scene: in this case, for example, the combination of images and words helps to make the relational conception of space and time visible, creating a double narrative level, where the that is story told in the text happens in the past and the one in the images is happening nowadays. This way, stories of disparate transportation means and set in different eras overlap along the same route, showing repetitions and differences in mobile practices and creating spatio-temporal connections that move beyond a linear conception of time.

The geographer-cartoonist decides where to stop this process and change the spatio-temporal direction – as symbolised in the second panel of page 6 (Figure 5.4), where I drew my hand pressing the STOP button to get off the bus. Stop. The narrator's voice changes in page 7 (Figure 5.5) and readers hear now the memories of a man; the era and the transport means change too, since we are moving back to the past, when the tramway was still operating. By leaving the present and the bus ride behind, the framing places the readers within a tram carriage and in the past. While a man is 'sitting on the front driving', readers are sitting (or standing?) towards the back of the car, looking at the city of Turku through the windows: through the panel's framing, readers of page 7 embrace the point of view of the many conductresses that used to occupy the same position in the tram cars. The urban street view is divided by the three small rectangles of the tram window that resemble three panels in the comics page.

<Insert Figure 5.2>
<insert Figure 5.3>
<insert Figure 5.4>
<insert Figure 5.5>

Notes from a geoGraphic fieldwork diary. At the city library

Day 2
January 20, 2020

It's Monday, and I wake up at 9 a.m, before the sun rises. After breakfast I head to the Åbo Akademi, where I meet Jason Finch[3], who kindly introduces me to some members of the Department of Comparative Literature and gives me the keys of my temporary office.

At 3 p.m. I'm at the Föli information desk to buy a couple of bus tickets and a map of the public transportation network of Turku for only 2 euros. Unfolding the map, I have for the first time an impression of the extension of the urban area of Turku. The bus routes create a thick network of orange lines, starting from the city centre and covering the surrounding suburbs, from Pansio on the Western side to Varissuo on the Eastern urban outskirts, connecting Turku with the islands of its archipelago and with other urban centres like Kaarina, Raisio, Lieto, Naantali and Rusko. In my mind, I start to compare the network of orange bus lines on the map in my hands with the maps of the tramway I've collected. The city has expanded beyond where the end of the tramlines 1, 2 and 3 were located. I start reading the map as a narrative infrastructure made of narrative nodes and potential plotlines. I see overlaps and crossings, I read existential lines and affective experiences that are stratified along the bus routes, and I imagine characters moving across the

map, animating its traits with sounds, laughs, tears, and fears. I refold the map, put it in my pocket, and walk away.

At 4 p.m. I'm at the city library, in a beautiful newly restructured building. It's dark outside but the warm and gentle glow of the library makes me feel at home. Here, on the shelves of the section devoted to the city's history, I finally find the book *Turun raitiotiet. Åbo spårvägar. Turku tramways* by Mikko Laaksonen (2009). I'm surprise by the fact that the introductions to the single sections are translated into English and so are the captions of the many photographs and figures reproduced in the book. Leafing through the pages, the blurry black and white image of a woman in her grey uniform captures my attention: this is Birgit Telenius, the first conductress to receive tram driver instruction during the Winter War in 1939 – I learn from the image's caption where her story is summarised. How is it possible that women employed as wartime tram drivers were ruled back to their original duties, afterwards, when men came back from the front? I know that Birgit's story is just one of the many stories of women working in and commuting by the yellow tram cars. I know these stories are entangled with the ones of women doing the same thing today, following the routes of yellow buses. I'm sure I've just found another tile of my story: from now on, women will play a central role in my geoGraphic narration.

Composing urban archives: objects and visuals as narrative triggers

Lines. Moving with stories of public transport in Turku wants to observe the way in which different mobilities occurred over time by considering everyday practices of mobility beyond chronological time from a non-representational perspective and with a sensitivity to temporal complexity (Bissell 2014, p. 1948). To give the impression of the duration of changes as well as of similarities between mobilities in different eras, the focus in *Lines* is not simply on specific episodes but also on the duration of practices over time: thinking about the public transport system in Turku as a process, I used repetitive mobile gestures and visual rhymes as bridges to connect different spatio-temporal levels. For example, this happens on pages 4 and 5, where, as we have seen before, a narrated memory of the past tramway overlaps with the images of the experience of a young girl using the bus line number 1 today: through this overlapping, it was possible to experiment with the possibilities offered by the comics language to represent what Bergson called the 'virtual', namely something that is fully real even if not actual in the 'here and now' (Bissell 2014, p. 1949). The young girl using the tram in the past never met with the one in the bus today and their existential lines are completely disconnected: yet, through the comics page, their actions and commuting routes overlap in time and space by following the same pathway from the city centre to the harbour; moreover, some banal mobile gestures, like stepping in and out the transportation means, are replicated from the past (in textual level of the balloons) to the present (in the visual level of the drawings); maybe the two little girls have even some common emotional and affective reactions to that specific mobile practice, like excitement, fear, and a sense of freedom and apprehension, because they are both traveling alone. According to David Bissell's reading of Deleuze and Bergson, through the *virtual* encounters enacted in the geoGraphic novel it is possible to think of time in a non-linear way and to take into account 'the continued virtual presence of the past as a realm of potential in the present' (2014, p. 1950).

My aim was to actualise the virtual presence of past stories, experiences, memories, affects, and emotions in the present by collecting personal memories and historical materials about the history of the public transportation system in Turku and making them visible through the geoGraphic novel. Those stories were already 'real', since they were stratified along the routes of the public transportation network that I interpret here as a mobile archive of stories; furthermore, they were constantly enacted and reperformed every time someone remembered, shared, or even replicated them through similar practices and gestures. As Bissel affirms, we have to consider that 'virtual pasts are vital not only to the experience of commuting, but to its emergent transformation': this perspective 'challenges us to grapple with how the past continues to live on through the present and into the future through commuting practices, changing them in the process' (2014, p. 1950). In my opinion, comics' plurivectorial narration, their spatial grammar, and multimodality give us the opportunity to both represent and experience this non-linear conception of time: in fact, as we will see in the next sections, this temporal complexity does not just appear as a narrative structure that organises the plot in the comics story, but was also part of my own mobile experience during the practice of doing comics. When I was listening to others' mobile stories while performing the past routes of the tramway by walking or cycling in the streets where the lines used to pass, the virtualities of those past mobile practices became actual in my 'there and then'. I was literally guided through urban space both physically and emotionally by those narratives.

So, how can we assemble a geoGraphic novel that wants to embed this non-linear conception of time and space into its plotline? As we know, comics stories are made of an entangled combination of images and words. As there is no hierarchy among them, the structure of the story is equally based on words and images and on the capacity of these two levels to inform and enrich each other by avoiding being one the explanation of the other. As seen through the example of pages 4 and 5 of *Lines*, in comics images are not meant to illustrate what texts say and, in the same way, texts are not intended as captions used to comment the drawings. The composition of a comics story, indeed, asks for an effort in combining words and images in a new language. Through this brand new verbo-visual combination, a new story is created and an unforeseen set of connections, meanings, and perspectives on the same research materials emerge. For this reason, especially when dealing with comics stories that are set in the past and when doing comics for research, the preliminary visual documentation is as much important as the one concerning the collection of textual materials. Therefore, beyond collecting historical texts, ethnographic materials, and oral stories about how the city and the public transportation system was organised and experienced in the past, I underwent also an accurate research about the visual appearance of the city of Turku during the Twentieth century. What emerged from this research is a collection of hybrid and mixed visuals, from graphic images and postcards to archival photographs, that helped me to provide the geoGraphic novel with sufficient historical accuracy. Through this visual collection, I looked at technical details about how the tramcars looked like and changed over time and I registered how the citizens were dressed, moved, and behaved in urbanscape. My collection of visual materials started as an improvised and disarticulated assemblage. Beyond ordinary and historical maps, during fieldwork I started collecting visual materials displayed and sold in the city's bookshops, in the covered market, and in the design shops along the main streets. I was not surprised when I found traces of a kind of 'tram-nostalgia' in the old postcards that are sold in the more traditional souvenir shops but it surprised me to discover that the tram has become, nowadays, a recurring visual element used for the realisation of graphic patterns on textile products, gadgets, objects, and maps sold in more fancy shops run by local designers. Soon, I understood that in Turku the yellow tramcars are nostalgic images from the past as much as cool visual elements in the present and are alive both in the elders' memories and in the youths' visual imaginaries.

So I asked myself: if these are manifest traces of the popularity of the tram memory nowadays, almost fifty years after its closure, what was the reaction of the media and citizens when the tram was closed? With this question in mind, I went to the city library's archive to leaf through the copies of the local newspaper in Finnish language, the *Turun Sanomat*, to collect news devoted to the tram on the three days, between 1967 and 1972, in which the tramlines were closed: indeed, while line 1 was closed on March 11 in 1967, both lines 2 and 3 were closed in 1972, the first on May 31 and the latter on October 1. The fact that I cannot speak a word of Finnish was especially significant in this case, since I could not focus on the articles' contents. The translation would have taken too much time and I would have definitely needed a native speaker to spend some time with me for virtually leafing through the newspapers' pages through the microfilm tape on which they are now stored in the city's library. Thus, I focused on articles' images and titles and searched for words connected to the tramway's semantic sphere, such as 'raitiovaunu', 'ratikka', and 'raitiotie'. After hours spent using the microfilm reader, the only news I could find about the tram closure were just a couple of articles dating back to 1972. The first one, of May 31, speaks of the closure of line 2 by observing how 'the tramway disappears from Turku's street scene'; the other one, dating back to October 2, namely the first day without any tramway in Turku, simply states that 'now it's over'.

Beyond the direct reference to the tramway in these few articles, I noticed the increasing number of advertisings devoted to new models of cars that were displayed on the newspaper's pages. These cars with their modern shapes were one of the reasons why the tramway had already started to look old-fashioned to many inhabitants, who now used this new mode of privatised mobility to commute. At this point, a new suburban way of life had appeared and the tramway was only able to cover a small part of the spread urban surface of Turku. These visual clues, titles, and small information I collected were embedded in the geoGraphic novel: indeed, in pages 16 and 17, cars seem to gradually occupy the whole lane, while the tramway slowly disappears in the automobile traffic page after page, until it 'definitely disappears from the street view of Turku' – quoting the newspaper's title on page 18. From that moment on, the tramway disappears also form the geoGraphic novel, the following pages being devoted to the so-called 'yellow dangers', namely the yellow buses that substituted the tramway in the public transport system. In fact, if readers look closely, there is a sort of visual mirroring between pages 15 and 17 that is meant to display the shift from the use of public transport to a privatised mobility in the Sixties: while page 15 represents the crowd of citizens that occurred to attend the free tram rides offered by the Turku city transport authorities

before its closure, in Page 17 the colours of the cars that now crowd along Turku's streets remember the colours of the jackets of those queuing in front of the tram. Through the use of colour and a similar composition and framing of the page, this visual rhyme symbolises a crucial change in everyday commuting practices. As this example demonstrates, also banal visual materials can help to translate research data into a verbo-visual form. The informal and mixed materials I collected provided me with a sense of the atmosphere that accompanied the closure of the tramway, in the past, and with an idea of why the tram still plays a significant role in the city's cultural heritage and visual culture, nowadays.

Narrative stratigraphies in the comics page

The recent graphic novel *Belonging. A German reckons with history and home* (2018)4 by Nora Krug, a German-American author, was especially important when I was searching for a way to visualise the complex multiscalar relation with time and space that I had in mind: in fact, Krug's graphic novel offers a brilliant and unprecedent example of how to integrate disparate archival materials into a comics story. This autobiographic novel, which is also a graphic memoir, a family scrapbook, and an investigative narrative, starts from Krug's struggle with her German identity. Loud to the author's website, despite she was born in Karlsruhe decades after the Nazis era and the Second World War, 'for Nora, the simple fact of her German citizenship bound her to the Holocaust and its unspeakable atrocities and left her without a sense of cultural belonging'. In order to reconstruct the history of her German family, Nora moves from the end of the Nineteenth century to the Second World War until the present, trying to come to terms with the historically inherited sense of guilt derived from the National Socialist era. Her quest turns into a verbo-visual journey that crosses space and time and the graphic novel is an assemblage of disparate places and eras as much as of different stories, materials, and documents. Trying to find a graphic form to express this complexity, the story is constructed through the alternation between more traditional comics pages, structured in panels with illustrations, photographs, pages of personal diaries, and excerpts from the author's sketchbook. Krug collected all these sorts of materials by scrutinising flea markets, public archives, and private collections and interviewing many key informants along her route. Leafing through the pages of *Belonging* permits to go through official documents and personal family albums by moving from the USA to Germany, and from the present to the past. This montage was especially inspiring when I designed, first, my creative research process during fieldwork and, then, the structure of my geoGraphic novel during the composition of the story. I liked theKrug's idea of juxtaposing the official, authoritative, and authenticated information of the public archives with the unofficial, imprecise, intimate, and vague microstories collected through people's memories.

<Insert Figure 5.6>

From a textual and narrative perspective, I interpreted assemblage as a useful conceptual tool to bring together informants' voices and archival materials as well as official historical information and informal narratives; from a visual perspective, I recognised that working with juxtapositions, overlays, echoes, and rhymes could help me filling in the gaps in the story and also provide readers with a sense of the multi-layered nature of urban spaces. If history itself does not exist as an uniform narration and all that we have is scattered, mutilated, and very fragmentary debris left from the past (Black 2010, p. 467), also my own narrative research and creative endeavour was made of gaps and holes, which are unavoidably replicated in the form of the geoGraphic novel. Collecting debris and assembling remains from the past of the public transport system was part of my research practice. With this idea in mind, I visited twice the Archives at the Museum Centre of Turku, where stories about public transport history and use are told by period photos, documents, material objects, and by the people working there. Here, through the fundamental mediation of the archivists who showed me their intrinsic narrative potential, I was allowed to consult and examine the information written on the archival labels, documents, objects, and photographs. In fact, even objects and single are narrative archives imbued with virtual plotlines and inhabited by stories that ask to be activated and told by someone, be it an archivist or a researcher. These stories were accessible to me thanks to the invaluable mediation of the archivists at the Museum Centre, whose prior research and selection of materials related to the tramway was a very helpful starting point for me to create the visual imaginary I needed for the composition of the visual part of the comics story. The first time I was at the Museum Centre, with Jason Finch, I visited the depot to see the few tram cars that are still preserved there: entering their mainly consumed, fragile, scratched, and rusted bodies (shown in Figure 5.7) was a deeply touching experience, since it gave me the opportunity to enter the main set of the story I was about to tell. Later on, when we

entered the main building of the Museum Centre, we focused on objects and I specifically asked to examine conductresses' grey uniforms, with jackets, coats, bags, and huts that became protagonists of the story told on pages 8 and 9 (see Figures 5.8 and 5.9). The second visit at the Museum Centre was especially focused on visual materials such as postcards and photographs, but comprising also small tramway tickets and other documents collected by the archivists before my arrival.

<Insert Figure 5.7>

I am aware of the fact that a proper archival research would have asked for deeper critical reflections. Considerations about how the archive was socially constructed and how some objects came to be preserved while others were lost or even dismantled, especially for what concerns the tram wagons, would have asked for a further research and critical effort (Craggs 2016; Black 2010). I am also aware of the fact that I was not searching for historical evidence (Craggs 2016, pp. 111–2), neither was I expecting my readers to search for it in my geoGraphic novel. Thinking of archives as spaces of a society's collective memory, as places of both abundance and absence, and as 'sites of loss, effacement, and forgetting, where some voices are silent or silenced' (Hodder 2017, p. 452), I entered the Archives at the Museum Centre of Turku with a peculiar narrative aim that was strictly connected to the practice of doing comics for geographical research: there, I wanted to individuate potential visual subjects and narrative triggers for my comics story.

Since comics are made of both images and words, the scenes in the pictures, the shape and colour of objects were as important as the information and descriptions kept on their labels. In some cases, the conversation activated with the archivists because of the translation process followed their own considerations and memories: this process turned the visit at the archive into a multivocal and intersubjective dialogue rather than into an individual practice of selection. The archivist's everyday mobilities, familiar memories, and emotional reactions connected to the materials we examined became part of the stories I collected and, therefore, her voice is recalled on page 10 (Figure 5.10), while she points the caption of a photograph dating back in 1947 and showing a couple of conductresses. This stratified narrative that is composed of disparate fragments of memories is graphically represented on page 10 through the assemblage of photographs, documents, and shadows of past inhabitants or public transport system workers. If the archive is a space of 'traces', 'fragments' and 'ghosts' (Hodder 2017), then, through *Lines* I have tried to compose a narrative archive where past and present coexists, ghost profiles are revealed and made visible, and fragments are recomposed into a new polyphonic story.

<Insert Figure 5.8>
<Insert Figure 5.9>
<Insert Figure 5.10>

Notes from a geoGraphic fieldwork diary. At the archive

Day 3
January 21, 2020

I'm with Jason on the bus number 1, heading from the city centre to the Museum Centre of Turku. According to what I'm told by Jason, the area has been changing rapidly over the last years, with huge apartment blocks growing fast one after the other. We have an appointment with an archivist working in the section of the Museum Centre that is devoted to material objects. We are quite excited because today we're going to see the few tram cars that are still preserved in the Museum's depot. I have my camera with me and I'm ready to collect as many pictures as possible and to capture all the small details that will help me in making my drawings more accurate. When we enter the industrial building of the depot, there is a huge number of objects accumulated in each corner of the room without an evident order. On the shelves and among the columns that divide the big space in two parts, I see chairs, sledges, wooden easels, beams, road signs, small vehicles, and panels of plastic, glass, and metal left everywhere. The archivist switches the lights on, but the tram cars are still lying in a sort of penumbra.

Sitting on the wood benches pretending to be a passenger, embracing the drivers' view sitting on the front, and playing the conductress' role when moving towards the back of the car, I'm performing my comics story. By entering the places where the geoGraphic novel should be set, I'm enacting the story in first person as if I were a character myself. I have the impression of moving across time by simply entering a yellow tram. Soon, I notice that I'm not the only passenger. Dozens of mannequins are sitting, standing, and looking

out the window with me. Their movement is immobilised and their bodies are frozen in time and space. 'Some colleagues had fun positioning them as if they were traveling' says the archivist.

In one of the tram cars, we find a small leather bag that was used by conductors to collect the ticket fares. It's exactly the same as the one that the bus driver was wearing this morning, when we took the bus to come here. It feels like some objects are bridges that create connections between narrative routes and mobile practices.

Before leaving, we're allowed to go to the main building to examine some photographs and objects. There are huts, bags, male and female uniforms, shoes, emblems, and smaller objects of all kinds. Among them, there's a winter uniform, composed of a grey jacket and a grey skirt. Once we open the door of the cabinet where it is stored, I observe the thick weft of grey woollen threads and imagine the sun and rain and snow and wind they've absorbed over the years. I draw the lines of these objects in my mind, while I stare at the beautifully preserved buttons on the jacket and imagine how many times fingers must have opened and closed them when getting prepared for work. I focus on the lines and colours of the emblem of the Transport Service Company sewn on the jacket's breast pocket and in the meantime I think of the story of Margit Nurmi, who worked for the tramway for more than thirty years, serving as a driver during the winter war and working as a conductress for the rest of the time. The uniform dates back to the Seventies but she donated it to the Museum after her death. The plot of her story is there, entwined with the threads of those grey clothes. I'm just a means to tell her story.

Day 9
January 28, 2020

I'm back to the archive at the Museum Centre. This time I'm with Silja Laine, an historian who is also a member of the PUTSPACE project's group at the Åbo Akademi. We're welcomed by two archivists. Before our arrival, they've already selected hundreds of digital and printed photographs, plates, and slides in different formats specifically connected to my research interests: the public transport system and mobility practices in the city, with peculiar attention to drivers and conductresses. We spend hours together, sometimes leafing fast through the photographs and other times lingering for a longer time on small details. Through these visual materials, I encounter dozens of conductresses in their grey uniforms, wearing shorter skirts or longer woollen coats depending on the season.

The archivists help me translating the information written on the backside or on the index card of the photos, in order to locate them in time and to have an idea of the context in which they were taken. My Föli map is unfolded on the table in front of us and sometimes we try to locate the pictures on it, playing with overlaps and juxtapositions of different times on the same map. This way, the map becomes a means for remembering how the city looked like and registering the changes that have occurred in the meanwhile. One of the archivists is a young woman from Spain who has been living in Turku only for a couple of years; the other one is woman who was born here: their past memories and present experience of the city enrich our conversation. Often the narration of their own mobilities merges with the stories told by the photos we examine and looking at visual materials becomes a storytelling practice. Each photograph tells a small narrative episode and turns into a tile of a bigger mobile story. As usually, I'm recording what we say through my smartphone, writing notes on my fieldwork diary, and taking pictures of the single photographs. I follow with the camera the elegant gestures of the archivist, while she moves from one photograph to the other, turning them gently and then placing them back into their box. Before I leave, we hug as if we were good friends, and I promise I will send them the comics story as soon as it will be finished.

GeoGraphic fieldwork in practice: mobile methods, creative practices, and the researcher-cartoonist beyond the frame

<Insert Figure 5.11>

The attempt to narrativise movement through geoGraphic choices was a fundamental part of my creative research endeavour: movement was not simply connected to the main topic of the story, but it was also at the centre of my research practice, through a set of embodied experiences and mobile methods. The doing of comics was an intrinsically mobile practice, where mobilities of different kinds together with more structured mobile methods have been embraced in order to conduct fieldwork. Mobilities can variously meet a geoGraphic research practice, becoming sometimes a narrative topic for comics stories and an object for the spatial analysis that stimulates their composition. Other times, the focus on mobilities suggests

embracing a mobile perspective on the people we met, the neighbourhoods we pass through, and the practices we would like to represent in the comics story. As seen in the previous chapters, mobilities played a significant role in my geoGraphic research even before the composition of *Lines*: for example, in chapter 2, mobility was the key topic around which Mónica Bellido Mora was asked to compose her comics installation in the train station of Padua for the *Street Geography* project; moreover, in chapter 3, the interviews in the Arcella neighbourhood were conducted through the mobile method of 'talking whilst walking' (Anderson 2004). These examples show how mobilities can enter a geoGraphic research practice from both a representational and processual perspective: beyond comics' contents, mobile practices and perspectives on the move contribute to the processes of composition and dissemination of comics. A processual approach to comics as practices suggests, indeed, to analyse what kind of mobilities influenced the way in which the story was imagined, composed, and circulated. Looking at *Lines* from a processual and mobile perspective permits me to explore comics' intrinsic mobility and to focus on the mobile practices that contributed to the composition of my comics story.

The mobile grammar of comics

During the composition of *Lines*, different mobilities permitted me to cross spatio-temporal thresholds: through mobile practices, I was able to create connections between the memories of the past that I collected and what I was experiencing in first person in the present; mobilities were a narrative trigger for the geoGraphic narration to unfold, since both transport means and their passengers are protagonists in the comics story; the various movements of transport means and people are not just represented in the story's contents but they turned into structural features to set the narration, organise the plotline, introduce new characters, and move from one place to another in space and time. From a processual perspective, *Lines* looks like a story on mobilities that was composed through a deeply mobile research practice.

Even if mobile methods entered the creative geoGraphic practice of composing *Lines*, I did not a priori decide to embrace them because of the mobile nature of the main topic of the story. Indeed, as Peter Merriman claims, to do research on mobile subjects, practices, or spaces we do not need to necessarily embrace 'new mobile methods' neither to overstate their value in comparison to other more 'conventional' ones (2014, p. 169–179). As Merriman affirms, the humanities provide us with a good example of how a long-lasting and prolific research on mobility can be profitably conducted with methods that are considered more 'conventional' (2014, p. 168) or, traditionally, less mobile, such as textual analysis or archival research, to mention only a few. As already exposed in chapter 4 when speaking about literary mobilities, many scholars in the humanities, historians, historical and human geographers, literary theorists, philosophers, architects, and arts practitioners 'have had a long-standing interest in practices, experiences, representations and technologies of mobility, travel and transport, whether in writing histories of mobility, transport, travel writing and exploration, or in developing philosophical approaches that value movement, flux and change' (Merriman 2014, p. 171). Nevertheless, despite the undisputed contribution of the humanities to mobilities research and the conceptualisation of the 'new mobilities paradigm', scholars in this disciplinary fields do not necessarily refer to mobile methods to conduct their researches on mobile subjects. This applies also for the doing of comics as a research practice: in fact, it is not necessary to move with the subjects of our narrative research to gain a better comprehension and geoGraphic representation of their movements, mobile affects, and practices. I argue that comics studies and comic book geographies can contribute to the enrichment of the expanding set of experimental, creative, and mobile methods in and beyond the social sciences. Recently, the encounter between well-established qualitative and mobile methods has given rise to hybrid experimentations among which there are the already mentioned go-along interviews; disparate forms of mobile video, photo and auto-ethnography; and more creative and performative mobile methods such as place-writing, drawing, photographing, and dancing, to mention only a few (Bissell 2009, 2010; Büscher et al. 2011; McCormack 2008; Ward 2014). Comics-based research may also contribute to the expanding debate on mobilities and mobile methods.

A mobile approach to comics is directly inspired by the peculiar spatial grammar of comics. As Jason Dittmer variously states in his seminal works on comic book geographies, the embodied experience of reading comics naturally implies a kind of movement. In fact, if 'meaning in comic book visuality is produced through an emergent process of plurivectorial narration' (Dittmer 2010, p. 235), it is the embodied movement of the reader's eye that creates sense by moving from one panel to the other (Dittmer and Latham 2015, p. 435). This embodied experience involves also the comics author, because, like reading, also the practice of composing comics is intrinsically mobile and spatial. The composition of comics implies the movement of the author's eye throughout the page to place elements, write texts, and draw figurative

contents. This process is often recursive, since authors may come back to the same page at different times, in order to change details and refine graphic features and textual choices. The process of composition is also often a highly consuming embodied practice that implies the movement of the whole body. During the practice of drawing, the mobility of the body is influenced also by external non-human factors and human actors: especially when drawing outdoor, the changeability of the surrounding landscape, the effect of the elemental together with the deeper connection with the non-human imply a constant mobility of the whole body. Like scribing and other verbo-visual immersive practices, doing comics is both a representational and more-than-representational practice that 'unfolds through embodied performances, transubjective and more-than-human choreographies, and requires participants to practise a multisensory engagement (Bertoncin et al. 2020, p. 14). Drawing takes place in the most disparate situations, when traveling on transport means or standing on the sidewalk. When drawing in urban space, the sense of being immersed in and moving together with the surrounding landscape is often part of the act of tracing the line on paper. Here, external stimuli, such as the sudden sound of a car horn, the distracting voice of a child, the relaxing melody of the water flowing, the laughs of two friends passing-by, and the screeching sound of a bike's brakes and of the tires scraping on the asphalt, permeate the trait of the line by dictating its irregularities or thickness.

An unceasing flux of gestures, actions, shifts, changes of position, and other bodily movements, lead us thinking of drawing as an event that happens beyond the space of the page and of comics as a process that extends far beyond the frame of the single panels. Following Sage Brice's inspiring work on observational drawing, also the doing of comics may be understood as a process, a situated skill, a mobile embodied practice that becomes also 'a particular mode of attunement, and a way of opening up new spaces of encounter within a more-than-human world' (2018, p. 137). Through a processual and mobile perspective, comics can be interpreted as a way 'for attunement to spatial, temporal, material and cultural relations that play out in the storying of a landscape' (Brice 2018, p. 136). The practice of doing comics is a storying process that includes a set of experiences, encounters, perceptions, and affects that happen beyond the frame of the comics page. These events, even if not represented on the page still contribute to the composition of the geoGraphic narrative by influencing the collection of narrative materials and graphic ideas.

Beyond the embodiments of authors and readers, there is a further mobile feature of the comics language that I would like to discuss before coming to the mobile methods I have embraced for the composition of *Lines*. I have already recalled in Chapter 2 the significant role of assemblage for the geographical interest in urban comics: namely, it is a useful concept to describe the process of composing a comics page by the juxtaposition of different elements (texts, images, panels and frames, gutters) in the page. Assemblage as a concept further helps in describing the close relationship between comics and the city and highlights the fact that both the comics page and urban space are produced through ongoing assembling, disassembling, and reassembling movements. Dittmer himself, when thinking about how to narrate urban assemblages through comics, affirms that 'one of the contributions of assemblage thinking to the study of urbanism has been to highlight the city's relationality, its flux, and its movement' (Dittmer 2014, pp. 477–8): since comics like cities can be understood as assemblages, the same reference to relationality, flux, and movement can be used to describe the geoGraphic novel. Assemblage suggests thinking cities like processes that are made of a constant flux of emerging combinations of meaning; likewise, also the geoGraphic novel can be interpreted as an ongoing process of composition of meaning, where authors' and readers' movements across the page, and beyond the frame in real space, are stimulated by the mobile essence of the spatial grammar of comics.

<Insert Figure 5.12>
<Insert Figure 5.13>

Moving while doing comics

The topic of my narrative investigation and especially the mobile grammar of comics spontaneously led me to organise fieldwork through a set of mobile practices: by mapping, walking, cycling, and traveling by bus through the city of Turku I was able to build my own mobile perspective on its transport system and spatial practices. To orient myself in the city, I did not use technical maps but rather I relied on ordinary maps taken from the tourist and Föli offices and, of course, on the use of Google Maps on my smartphone (see Pages 20 and 21 on Figures 5.12 and 5.13). Nevertheless, these maps were not sufficient for my goal to embrace a stratigraphic gaze on the city's public transport network, because they represented Turku's urban area only nowadays. Therefore, I compared them with the reproductions of historical maps and in particular with those of the past tramway network presented by Mikko Laaksonen in his books (Laaksonen 2009). The multi-layered combination of these cartographic representations made it possible to visualise the sometimes virtual

other times physical traces of the past tramway in contemporary urban space: the tramline functioned as both an orientating tool in the city and a diachronic thread that helped me moving diachronically from the present to the past of Turku. By comparing the past maps of the tramway and the present ones of the bus lines, I was able to recognise some overlapping areas in their routes: these areas functioned as bridges to connect different times and existential lines in the comics page as, for example, along the Linnankatu, the main road that connects the city centre with the harbour area (shown in Figures 5.2. and 5.3) and where the bus number 1 retraces the old route of the tram line number 1: when I performed this stratified map, this line became a pathway to follow in the real urban space; the route on the map also became a plotline in the narration and helped me merging several temporal levels.

Maps were also variously performed during interviews, often offering a useful reference point for informants to locate their practices and orientate themselves. Literary cartographers have variously claimed that maps have an intrinsic narrative potential (Muehrcke and Muehrcke 1974; Tally 2014): recently, maps have stimulated autoethnographic carto-fictional writings (Peterle 2018) and speculative explorations that tell the 'map's own experience' through fictional it-narrations (Rossetto 2019, p. 74). Recalling John Brian Harley's seminal paper on the map as biography, maps 'can draw from the roots of our experience' and sometimes we can just 'read them as transcriptions of ourselves' (Harley 1987, p. 18). For this reason, I often used maps as storytelling devices to help informants to trace their routes and tell their mobile stories. With fingers pointed on a crossroad, a street, or a building, the conversation often started to unfold once the map was unfolded on the table. These moments were part of the performative and mapping practices I engaged with during fieldwork but became also scenes in the comics narration, since these mobile and embodied experiences are often represented in the drawings.

As mentioned in the previous section, the Föli map triggered the storytelling practice at the Archive of the Museum Centre of Turku: when the archivists tried to locate photographs on it, they realised a spontaneous multi-layered assemblage of images, words, and cartographic projections that placed past photographs in contemporary urbanscape. As illustrated on page 14 (see Figure 5.11), the map was a basis to organise a cycling tour across the city during my interview with Mikko Laaksonen: while sitting on a table in a local restaurant before cycling, Mikko traced the route of our cycling tour on the Föli map and used the reproduction of historical maps in his book to show me where we would have crossed the former tramway path. Afterwards, performing the former tramway map by bike, we found traces of the tramway on the city walls, along the streets, and on the grass of an apparently banal and meaningless flowerbed. Moreover, since cycling is Mikko's everyday means of transportation, engaging together in this mobile practice made it possible for 'more nuanced, situated and richer linguistic accounts' of his embodied everyday mobilities that otherwise I would have ignored (Brown and Spinney 2010, p. 131). Finally, as displayed on pages 20 and 21 (Figures 5.12 and 5.13), during an interview with Emma, an activist and tram enthusiast, she spontaneously used the dynamic map of the bus lines available on the Föli website to organise her thoughts. Zooming in and out, Emma used the map as a storytelling device by showing me the route of the bus that she used to take to come back home, at night, in a small island of the Turku archipelago, when she was a student at the University of Turku. Using maps as storytelling practices and engaging with mobile methods 'people can talk about their practices', providing the researcher-cartoonist with unexpected personal accounts on mobile experiences, affects, and emotions (Hitchings 2012).

As exposed more thoroughly in previous works on comic book cartographies (Peterle 2017 or see Figures 1.3. and 1.4 in Chapter 1), there is a close connection between comics and maps that lays at the basis of this intensive use of maps in my geoGraphic fieldwork practice. Like when writing or reading comics, engaging with maps means to produce an interpretative and narrative path, where 'there is no right way to read' or move (Hatfield 2005, p. 65). Not simply comics have map-like features, then, but also maps have comics-like features that become extremely useful when organising a geoGraphic fieldwork: indeed, the orientation that vernacular and historical maps provided me with, in Turku, was both spatial and narrative, since they guided my steps in real space, across the city, but also in the narration, being a valuable help throughout the composition process. Map-users, like comics authors or readers, need to elaborate different spatial strategies to move in concrete and fictional space and to orientate themselves in space and time. Indeed, the comic book has been described as 'a map of time' (McCloud 2000; Raeburn 2004) that needs to be passed through, traversed, and crossed to be deciphered. Through his ground-breaking short comics strip and his more recent graphic novel *Here*, Richard McGuire has demonstrated how we can represent the overlapping and crossing of different timelines in a single place, in his case a living room, using the assemblage of several time-frames on the same comics page (McGuire 1989; 2014). Following his suggestion but moving outside the walls of a house, in public urban space, I imagined that different timelines can be superimposed on the same map,

especially when we compare cartographic representations from disparate eras. These overlaps become virtually present also in the urban space we are performing, loading streets, crossroads, transportation networks, and squares with meanings and stories from other eras.

Beyond their use as storytelling devices during interviews, maps themselves were interpreted as ongoing, emerging practices that asked to be performed and experienced and suggested me to move both horizontally, in space, and vertically, in time. According to emergent perspectives in cartographic theory, the maps of public transportation asked me to be performed, embodied, and enacted (Dodge et al. 2009; Kitchin 2010; Rossetto 2012). So, the coloured line of the past tram route on the map became a narrative line along which I could move to see how much the city has changed over time, register the various ways in which people used to move in different times, and build my storyline through a deeply embodied experience. The tramline functioned as an invisible trace and a silent guide, which helped me to move across the present space and past history of the city. Following Bissell, I was in search of 'new ways of understanding how practices emerge, persist, and transform' over time in order to be able to capture, in my geoGraphic novel, 'the complexity of forces that animate commuting practices and shape mobile lives' (Bissell 2014, p. 1946). A processual approach and the nonrepresentational theories of practice helped me exploring the manifold ways in which mobility transformations take place and evaluating mobility transformations beyond a linear conception of temporality (p. 1947).

Therefore, I embraced myself an everyday mobile perspective and decided to perform the map of the old tramlines mostly by walk, sometimes by bus, and even by bike; here, I was searching for traces of the tram's passage and collecting memories about the tramways presence on a daily scale, through a 'grounded' and embodied experience (Ingold 2004). By following these lines, I was able to collect traces of the tramway's material presence: like, for example, old yellow signs left on the walkways that once were used to warn pedestrians of the presence of the tram tracks or pylons of the old electric tramway that are now used as street lamps. Thanks to these transtemporal clues of the tramway's presence, the practice of walking revealed itself as a useful method to become aware of the experiential and non-linear dimension of time in urbanscape. As commuting practices and transport routes are always evolving and adapting, both cycling on a guided tour with Mikko and walking alone functioned also as 'a way of understanding the complex temporal folds through which the past inheres in the present, transforming its course' (Bissell 2014, p. 1947). Engaging with mobile methods from a specific narrative and geoGraphic perspective, I am particularly intrigued by the relationship between mobile methods and creative arts (Lorimer and Wylie 2010). Like Middleton, I interpret everyday movements as means of reading/knowing urban space (Middleton 2009, 2011a, 2011b): indeed, there is a close connection between the practice of doing comics and mobile methods. Both the practices of cycling and walking in the city provided me with a fundamental embodied and sensory experience that contributed to the production of meaning as well as to the comprehension of everyday rhythms and practices of mobilities in Turku (Middleton 2011a). Walking was also a method to experience everyday urban rhythms and to sense the city through an embodied practice: through my own body, by moving up and down the small hills of the city of Turku or following the flow of the river towards the sea, I registered the changing sounds of the urban environment at different times, noticing the difference between the silent morning, before the sunrise, and the sounds and coloured lights of cars during pick hours. The atmosphere in the geoGraphic novel and its apparently suspended sense of space and time, have been deeply influenced by these sensorial perceptions and the fact that my fieldwork took place in silent and cold Finnish January and not in the summer, for example. As Tim Ingold claims we perceive not from a fixed point but along a 'path of observation', a continuous itinerary of movement (Ingold 2004, p. 331):

> But if perception is thus a function of movement, then what we perceive must, at least in part, depend on how we move. Locomotion, not cognition, must be the starting point for the study of perceptual activity (Ingold 2000, p. 166). (Ingold 2004, p. 331)

I often use walking as a method to collect perceptions, visual, and narrative materials; the practice of walking helps me rearranging ideas in a more structured form. Being helped by the regular movement of my feet I start to place one point after the other and compose plotlines on the city map that easily become narrative threads in the process of the story's composition. Walking on the streets is an intrinsically narrative and creative beyond social activity (Ingold 2004, p. 328): for example, encounters with other people can turn into narrative dialogues and crossroads and changes of direction in real space can suggest a twist in the plotline. During all these mobile practices, from walking to cycling and bus riding, I was constantly engaged with the doing of comics and the composition of my geoGraphic novel: along the routes I took verbo-visual notes, wrote and sketched drawings on my fieldwork journal, and took pictures. Moving while doing comics,

I started my verbo-visual assemblage of Turku's urbanscape, on which I came back once fieldwork was finished in order to start disassembling and reassembling those materials in a coherent geoGraphic novel.

During fieldwork, a journal, dozens of pens, a Canon mirrorless camera, and the audio recording app on my smartphone were the mobile toolkit that accompanied me in my research practice. Whereas the sketches and photos I have taken in Turku represented the raw materials to start drawing the comics story, the written notes and audio tapes helped me to arrange the collected memories into complex stories and to remember smaller details from the interviews. Apparently, after two weeks of intense fieldwork I had collected what I needed to realise the short comics story for the PUTSPACE project: to be honest, I came back with more materials than I could expect and, therefore, the comics story that was initially planned to be around five pages turned into a longer story of more than twenty pages. The story expanded spontaneously, because of the multi-layered stratification of stories I had collected. Once in Italy, the geoGraphic novel started quickly to unfold by including more photographs in the drawings and suggesting other ways to cross characters' narrative lines and merge the interviewees' perspectives.

Before going back to Italy, I have also searched for other 'mobile stories', especially in comics form, about the transport network in Turku and in Finland, more in general. As far as I know and I was told, there is no graphic novel about public transport in Turku, neither telling the story of the past tramline nor of the contemporary bus network. However, I found a collection of comics strips published in Finnish and realised by a bus driver, who decided to share his own daily experience as a worker for public transport. Furthermore, during my researches, I came to know that some comics strips on public tramways set in different cities, namely San Francisco, Lisbon, Turku and Tampere, were drawn by well-known Finnish comics artist Paulli Kallio to decorate the barriers of the building site for the new tramway that will be opened in Tampere (a city almost 170 kilometres north of Turku), between 2020 and 2021. Maybe this represents a further virtual narrative line to follow, which could help me connecting the history of the tramway in Turku with that of other cities in Finland or to explore also the potential futures of the tramway in the city. Certainly, this shows how much urban comics are increasingly used to intervene in public contexts for transforming urban spaces into narrative surfaces and becoming themselves part of urban infrastructures, as Dominic Davies claims (2019).

When working on a geoGraphic novel, also entering a comic books shop can be part of the research process! It may happen, for example, that one of your key informants is also a comic book enthusiast, who introduces you to the shopkeeper of the main comic book store in town and to his wife, Maijastiina, who works part-time at the Föli office in the city centre. The narration of her personal everyday experience with comics and public transport, as a worker at both the comics store and the Föli office, a commuter, a woman, and a mother, functioned as a narrative expedient to bring different narrative threads together. Her story was perfect to close the geoGraphic novel with a kind of *Ringkomposition* that comes back to the young girl of the beginning of the story and provides readers with a multiscalar female perspective on the city of Turku (see Figures 5.14 and 5.15). As we have seen, the comics page is a transcalar space that embeds plurivectorial narrative lines and several temporal layers that coexist through the combination of panels, images, and words. The comics page is a place where virtualities happen: indeed, on page 23 (see Figure 5.15), before the story ends, I was able to stage the encounter between different characters in the story and different interviewees I met in my fieldwork. In the comics story, Maijastiina is the mother of the young girl with the yellow backpack (that we encountered from page 4 to page 6) and, on a bus ride (page 23), their narrative routes meet the one of the old lady that we heard speaking at the beginning of the comics story (from page 3 to page 6). Juxtapositions, encounters, and coincidences are part of urban everyday life and permeate our experience as much as our research practices and storyworlds. Like 'performative improvisations' (Amin and Thrift 2002, p. 3), these everyday mobile practices entered my geoGraphic novel in unpredicted ways, opening 'the horizon of the present to the richness and complexity of duration' and making it possible to register 'past happenings that project into the future' (Bissell 2014, p. 1947).

<Insert Figure 5.14>
<Insert Figure 5.15>
<Insert Figure 5.16>

Notes from a geoGraphic fieldwork diary. End of the line

Day 10
January 29, 2020

The *Kauppahalli*, the covered market, is one of the main attractions in the city. I remember visiting it back in 2015. That visit is probably one of the most vivid memories I have of my short first stay in Turku. And, I swear, I'm not saying it because I'm working on public transport and mobilities now, but when you enter the door it looks like you're entering an old carriage, with wooden walls and leather seats. Even if then market is immobile in space, you've the impression of traveling through time and being transported into another era. Instead of train compartments, though, the space is divided by several stands selling meat cuts, smells, and products. I feel displaced, and maybe it's because I don't see any reason for being here until I jump into a small touristic stand with thousands of items, gadgets, and objects. There's an entire column of postcards devoted to the yellow tram: different models of tram cars are portrayed at the centre of the picture, while you can see the city changing over time, in the background. No doubt, the yellow trams are the real protagonists of the postcards. I buy a copy of each of them. Now, I've reached the final station. End of the line, I get off the train, exit the wooden door of the market, and start walking again along the invisible yellow thread.

<Insert Figure 5.17>

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1 STORMI is an online journal of graphic journalism that is 'anti-fascist, antisexist, antiracist and ecologist, and ideated by Giacomo Taddeo Traini and Mattia Ferri'. It was born under the wing of the BeccoGiallo publishing house, and publishes original works and archival materials by both emerging and well-known comics authors. More information is available at the website: http://www.stormi.info/.

2 Due to a lack of space for the reproduction of Figures, some parts of the story have been cut. The complete version of Lines is available at: http://narrativegeographies.com/lines/.

3 Prof. Jason Finch (Åbo Akademi) was the supervisor of my PUTSPACE project and is one of the project's principal investigators. He is a member and co-founder of the ALUS – Association for Literary Urban

Studies, and his contribution for an interdisciplinary perspective on urban literary studies and spatial literary studies more in general was fundamental in the development of the project.

4 The English title of the graphic novel by Nora Krug differs from the German one: *Heimat. Ein Deutsches Familienalbum*, namely 'Heimat. A German family book', with the word 'Heimat' to be intended, according to the author's website as 'the German word for the place that first forms us, where the sensibilities and identity of one generation pass on to the next'. See: https://nora-krug.com/.

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21-Feb-20

Nonita Saha

This Publishing Agreement is made this _____

between

(1)   **Giada Peterle** of **Università degli Studi di Padova, via 8 febbraio 2, 35122 Padova, Italy** (the '**Author**', which includes the Author's executors, administrators, successors and assignees, as may be appropriate);

and

(2)   **Routledge, an imprint of Informa UK Limited trading as Taylor and Francis Group**, whose registered office is at 5 Howick Place, London, SW1P 1WG, UK and whose principal place of business is at 2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX14 4RN, UK (the '**Publishers**', which includes the Publishers' administrators, assigns and successors in business as may be appropriate).

Agreed terms

1   Author's Obligations

1.1   The Author agrees to write, compile or edit, a work provisionally titled

Comics as a Research Practice: Drawing Narrative Geographies Beyond the Frame

As part of the Routledge Research in Culture, Space and Identity Series

together with the Chapter Abstracts as set out in clause 1.2(c) below (together, the '**Work**').

1.2   The Author will deliver to the Publishers by 30/9/20 (the '**Due Date**'):

(a) the complete typescript of the Work in Microsoft Word format or another recognisably generic format such as Rich Text Formatting (RTF) which will be no longer than 65,000 **words (including the references, bibliography, figures, illustrations and index),** and will be prepared according to the Publishers' Guide for Authors as amended from time to time and supplied to the Publishers in accordance with the provisions of Schedule 1 to this Agreement;

(b) all **photographs, drawings, diagrams (up to 45)**, **tabular material (up to 10)** and any other material as are necessary to illustrate and complete the Work (together, the '**Illustrations**'). The Illustrations supplied by the Author will be ready for reproduction and in accordance with the provisions of Schedule 1 to this Agreement, and the Author will, upon demand from the Publishers, reimburse the Publishers for all costs incurred by the Publishers if the Illustrations need correction or re-drawing. In addition, the Illustrations and other additional material will be returned to the Author if the Author requests this, but the Publishers will not be responsible for any accidental loss or damage to the Illustrations and other additional material while it is in their possession;

(c) an abstract in respect of each and every chapter in the Work, being a summary of 100-200 words which outlines the content of that chapter (each a '**Chapter Abstract**'). Should the Author be unable or unwilling for any reason to deliver the Chapter Abstracts to the Publishers

by the Due Date, the Publishers shall be entitled to arrange for the Chapter Abstracts to be prepared by another party in its sole discretion, and the Author will, upon demand from the Publishers, reimburse the Publishers for all costs incurred by the Publishers in connection therewith;

(d) a complete list of any third party materials included in the Work and, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Publishers, copies of any relevant correspondence and permissions as set out in clause 1.3 below; and

(e) the Author's ORCID identifier, if the Author wishes, pursuant to clause 1.4 below.

1.3   The Author will:

(a) be solely responsible for obtaining and paying for any third party permissions for the use in the Work of any material in which the copyright or any other intellectual property rights are owned by a third party, and when seeking such permissions the Author will obtain both print and electronic rights so that the materials can be used in both print and eBook formats of the published Work;

(b) retain a duplicate copy of the Work, the Illustrations and all other material supplied to the Publishers; and

(c) by no later than the time that page proofs are approved for publication as described in Clause 6, compile an index for the Work, of a length and nature acceptable to the Publishers. Should the Author be unable or unwilling to compile an index, the Publishers may arrange for its compilation and, at the Publishers' sole option, either (i) the Author will, upon demand from the Publishers, promptly reimburse the Publishers for all costs incurred in connection therewith, and/or (ii) such costs will be deducted from any payments that may become owed to the Author under Clauses 9 or 10.

1.4   To assist with the smooth running of the submission, production and publication process for the Work, the Publishers request that the Author registers with ORCID (Open Researcher and Contributor ID) and provides the Publishers with his/her ORCID identifier at the same time as delivery of the typescript of the Work under clause 1.2 above. For the avoidance of doubt, this is the Publishers' preference but this is not a mandatory obligation on the Author. The current website for registering with ORCID is at https://orcid.org/.

2   Acceptance for Publication
2.1   If the Publishers decide not to publish the Work, they will give the Author their reasons in writing. The obligation to repay the Publishers any monies already paid to the Author will depend on the Publishers' reasons for not publishing the Work, and may be discussed when this Agreement is terminated.

2.2   The reasons why the Publishers may decide not to publish the Work may include any of the following.

(a)   The Author fails to deliver any item mentioned in Clause 1.2 by the Due Date, in which case (i) the Publishers may decline to publish the Work, and (ii) the Author will, upon demand from the Publishers, return any royalty advance already paid under the terms of this Agreement by the Publishers (and/or the Publishers may set off an amount against the royalties of other books contracted between the Author and Publishers if necessary).

(b)   The Work is delivered, but does not conform to the scope or content of the specifications agreed, or to the academic standard that might reasonably be expected. In this event the Publishers will have the right to request the Author to make revisions to the Work. If the Publishers consider that such revisions are unsatisfactory in form and content, or the Author is unwilling to make such revisions, then the Publishers may terminate this Agreement with written notification, and the Author will promptly repay to the Publishers any monies already paid by the Publishers to the Author in connection with the Work. When the contract is terminated, all rights granted to the Publishers under clause 3.2 of this Agreement will revert to the Author.

(c)   The Work delivered to the Publishers exceeds the agreed length by more than 5%. If so, the Publishers may either request the Author to make the necessary reductions, or reduce the royalty rates specified in Clauses 9.1 (a) and 9.1 (b) below by half on the first printing of the Work.

(d)   The Publishers consider it necessary to submit the Work for legal or other professional review, in which case acceptance of the Work will be conditional until any changes which may be requested by the Publishers as a result of such review have been made by the Author and accepted by the Publishers in writing.

(e)   The Publishers have a reasonable basis to believe that the Author has (i) breached the warranties or responsibilities contained in this Agreement and/or any other agreement with the Publishers and/or its affiliates and/or (ii) committed any act which brings or could be expected to bring the Work or Publishers into disrepute and/or is otherwise prejudicial to the Publishers' interests.

3   Copyright

3.1   The copyright in the Work will, as between the Publishers and Author, remain the property of the Author. The copyright notice to be printed in the Work as published by the Publishers will be in the name of **Giada Peterle** with year of first publication.

3.2   (a) In consideration of the payment to the Author of the fee and/or applicable royalty percentages of the Publishers' receipts set out in Clause 9, the Author grants to the Publishers the exclusive right and license to produce and publish, and to license others to produce and publish, the Work or any abridgement, adaptation or translation of the Work, or any part of the Work, in all forms and media, in all languages throughout the world for the full term of copyright, (including all renewals and extensions of that term).

(b) The rights granted to the Publishers in this Agreement, shall include but not be limited to:

(i) the rights specified in Clauses 9 and 10, and specifically the Author grants the Publishers the right to exploit, and to licence to others the right to exploit, the subsidiary rights referred to in Clause 10; and

(ii) the exclusive right to edit, adapt, produce, publish, disseminate, enrich or otherwise make available and to license others to produce, publish, disseminate, enrich or otherwise make available the Work or any part of the Work in any digital, online or electronic form now known or later invented, in all languages throughout the world for the full term of copyright (including all renewals and extensions of that term) and the right to renew and extend such right.

3.3   The Author may use no more than 10% of material from the Work in academic or professional journals, and for the Author's professional purposes, provided that he/she informs the Publishers in advance, and acknowledges the Work and the Publishers.

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3.4   The Author asserts to the Publishers their moral right to be identified as the Author of the Work in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

3.5   The Publishers undertake to place the following notice with due prominence in every copy of the Work published by them in the United Kingdom:

> 'The right of **Giada Peterle** to be identified as the author of this Work has been asserted by him/her in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.'

3.6   Notwithstanding the provisions of Clause 21, no accidental or inadvertent failure by the Publishers or by any third party to include such a notice shall constitute a breach of this Agreement or the Author's rights and/or otherwise give rise to or result in any liability for the Publishers.

4   Author's warranty and indemnity

4.1   The Author warrants to the Publishers (knowing that the Publishers are relying on such warranties) that:

(a) the Author is the legal owner with full title guarantee of the copyright in the Work or to the extent that the Author is not, has obtained all necessary permissions, and thus has full power to make this Agreement;

(b) the Work is original (except for material in the public domain, and material included with written permission of the copyright owners), and that it has not previously been published in any form in the territories covered by this Agreement and does not violate or infringe any existing copyright or licence, or any other right of any person or party;

(c) the Work contains nothing libellous, obscene or unlawful or that could reasonably be expected to result in liability for the Author or the Publishers, that the Work respects the privacy of any individual(s) named therein and that all statements in the Work purporting to be facts are, to the best of the Author's knowledge and belief, true, complete and not misleading;

(d) all and any programmes in the Work have been prepared with due care and attention and have been adequately tested; and

(e) any recipe, formula or instruction in the Work will not, if followed correctly, cause physical injury or damage to any person.

4.2   The Author will indemnify and hold harmless the Publishers against any loss, damages, injury, costs and expenses (including any legal costs or expenses, and any compensation costs paid by the Publishers) arising from any alleged facts or circumstances which, if true, would constitute a breach of the warranties.

4.3   All warranties and indemnities in Clause 4 (this clause) will survive any termination of   this Agreement.

5   Publishers' Activities

5.1   If the Publishers accept the Work for publication in accordance with the provisions of Clause 2, then unless they are prevented from doing so by circumstances beyond their reasonable control and subject to the Author's compliance with the terms of this Agreement, the Publishers will

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publish the Work at their own expense as soon as practicable and no later than eighteen months after full delivery of accepted Work from the Author.

5.2   The Publishers will have the right to make any decisions they see fit concerning the production, design, publication, marketing, sales, distribution, licensing, permissions and pricing of the Work, including the number of copies printed, format, paper, printing, binding, jacket and cover designs. The Author expressly acknowledges and agrees that the Publishers shall have no liability to the Author or any other person under this Agreement or otherwise in connection with any such decisions.

5.3   The Publishers will not be responsible for any accidental loss or damage to the Work while it is in their custody, or in the course of production.

6   Proofs and alterations
Following acceptance by the Publishers of the Work, the Publishers will prepare and deliver proofs to the Author. The Author will read and correct the proofs of the Work and will promptly return them to the Publishers. If the Author fails to return the corrected proofs at the time agreed with the Publishers, the Publishers will consider the proofs as being approved by the Author for publication. Any alterations made by the Author to the proofs, or to the finished artwork (other than the correction of the Publishers' or printers' errors) may be charged to the Author at cost per line changed. At the Publishers' sole option, either (a) the Author will, upon demand from the Publishers, pay these charges directly to the Publishers, or (b) such charges may be deducted from any payment due or payable to the Author under this Agreement.

7   Free copies
7.1   The Publishers will send to the Author immediately after first publication of the Work 6 (six) free copies of the Work in the first format in which it is published.

7.2   The Author will be entitled to purchase directly from the Publishers at the current author discount rate (which will be applied to the list price of the book at time of purchase), additional copies for personal use, and for re-sale at events and workshops organized by the Author, or where the Publisher will not be displaying or selling the Work. The Author will also have the right to purchase other publications of the Publishers at current author discount rate for personal use only. The Author will pay the Publishers in advance for any such orders, and except for orders sent by surface mail to addresses in the UK+ Western Europe will pay the postage costs.

7.3   The Publishers will also provide the Author with access to one copy of any eBook or online version of the Work that they produce.

8   Conflicting publications
Subject to the provisions of Clause 3.3, the Author warrants that during the continuance of this Agreement no material written, compiled or edited by the Author (or otherwise associated with the Author) will be published which may reasonably be considered by the Publishers to directly compete with and/or tend to lessen the sale of the Work (excluding earlier editions of the same Work) (a 'Conflicting Publication'), unless the Publishers have granted the Author permission in writing for a Conflicting Publication. In addition, the Author warrants to the Publishers that no Conflicting Publication has already been published and undertakes that he/she will not enter into (or cause any other person, such as an agent, to enter into on his/her behalf) any agreement to publish a Conflicting Publication.

9   Royalties to the Author

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9.1 Unless otherwise agreed in writing by the parties, the Publishers will pay royalties at the rates set out in Clause 9.1 (this clause) to the Author, in respect of the following sales of the Work.

(a) Hardback sales:
5% of the actual amounts (also referred to as net receipts) received by the Publishers on all copies sold throughout the world.

(b) Paperback sales:
5% of the actual amounts received by the Publishers on all copies sold throughout the world.

(c) Rental of whole or part of the Work:
5% of the actual amounts received by the Publishers on receipts from rentals throughout the world.

(d) Sales of the book in electronic form (i.e. a copy of the Work which can be or is read, viewed, downloaded, or podcasted by the reader in or by a digital format, whether or not available over the World Wide Web):
5% of the actual amounts received by the Publishers on all copies sold throughout the world.

(e) Book club sales:
5% of the actual amounts received by the Publishers.

(f) Special discount sales:
On all sales at 50% or more off the UK or US published price, 5% of the actual amounts received by the Publishers.

(g) Customized text sales:
If the Publishers include a substantial part of the Work with the Work of other Authors, e.g. for course use, the Author will receive a share of the royalties in the customized text in proportion to the percentage of the Author's text used. The maximum royalties payable on any customized text will be 10% of the Publishers' net receipts.

(h) Remainder sales:
5% of the actual amount received by the Publishers in respect of all copies of the Work remaindered above cost.

(i) Audio and video rights:
5% of the actual amounted received by the Publishers.

9.2 All royalties specified in Clause 9.1 will be calculated on the Publishers' sales exclusive of any copies remaindered at or below cost, returned, destroyed in transit, provided for review, or given free to the Author.

10 Royalties for Subsidiary Rights

10.1 Unless otherwise agreed in writing by the parties, the Publishers will pay to the Author the following percentages of the net amounts received by the Publishers from any sales of the following rights in the Work.

(a) Anthology and quotation rights   5%
i.e. The exclusive right to publish, and to license others to publish, extracts from the Work in book or eBook form, including all original maps, plans or illustrations supplied by the Author.

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(b) Book club rights (where the book club produces its own edition)   5%

(c) Reprint rights licensed to another publisher   5%

(d) Translation rights   5%

(e) Coursepack rights   5%
i.e. The right to reproduce, or license others to reproduce, extracts from the Work in a collection of material designed to support a module or course of study.

(f) Electronic and Mechanical reproduction rights   5%
i.e. The right to license others to reproduce the Work, or parts of it, by electronic, mechanical or any other form of copying, recording or transmission, including without limitation, copying or recording by phonographic, photographic, magnetic or laser means onto film, microfiche, slides, filmstrips, transparencies, audio and video cassettes and CDs, floppy disks, computer software media, or any other human or machine-readable medium, and the broadcast or transmission of these.

(g) Non-commercial rights for the Print Disabled   5%
i.e. The Publishers may authorize free of charge the reproduction or recording of the Work in Braille or as a Talking book, or as a microfilm, cassette or PDF file for the exclusive use of blind or disabled people. This permission will only be granted for the material to be used on a non-commercial basis.

(h) Serial rights, film rights, drama and performance right, merchandising and commercial rights
     5%

(i) In respect of any subsidiary rights not specified above, payments to the Author shall be mutually agreed in writing.

11   Royalty Disputes

The existence of a dispute over the amount and/or payment of royalties due and payable to the Author pursuant to this Agreement shall not prevent the Publishers from continuing to exploit and/or exercise the rights granted under this Agreement (specifically including the right to publish and sell the Work).

12   Copyright Licensing Agency

The Publishers have empowered the Copyright Licensing Agency (CLA) to grant non-exclusive licences to reproduce by photocopying, other reprographic means, and digitally in electronic form, works published by the Publishers.

The Work will be included with those works, and the CLA will divide the proceeds from reprographic reproduction of the Work authorised by CLA equally between the Author and the Publishers.

The Author will receive the Author's share of the proceeds through the Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society (ALCS) in accordance with ALCS standard terms and conditions.

13   Royalty Accounting

13.1   The Publishers will prepare once annually clear statements of the sales of the Work to the 31st day of December, and these statements will be sent to the Author, together with any payment

Author contract (UK) (v09/19)

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due, 60 days after this date. If the Author's earnings from each separate right licensed in any accounting period are less than £25, no statement will be sent, or payment made, and the amount will be carried over to the next accounting period.

13.2   The Author or his/her representative may, if they make a written request with reasonable notice, examine during normal business hours the Publishers' accounts solely as they relate to the Author's Work, once in any accounting year.

14   Tax
The Publishers will deduct, from any money due to the Author under the terms of this Agreement, any payments that the Publishers have a legal obligation to deduct in respect of tax, duty, or similar levy.

15   Copyright infringement
15.1   If the Publishers consider that the copyright in the Work has been infringed they may at their sole discretion be entitled to take proceedings in their sole name and shall retain any sum received by way of damages. The Publishers shall be entitled to use the Author's name in proceedings but shall indemnify the Author against any damages and costs which may arise out of proceedings taken, provided that the Author is not in breach of any of their obligations under the Agreement and that the Author shall make no response to or admission in relation to any such claim, without the consent of the Publishers. The Publishers shall retain the right to defend any such claim or shall, if the Publishers deem appropriate, make a settlement on any such claim, at the Publishers' own discretion, and the Author shall co-operate fully in defence of any such claim.

15.2   The Author agrees to execute any documents and do any acts reasonably appropriate to give effect to the rights of the Publishers granted by this clause.

16   New editions
16.1   If the Publishers consider that a new edition of the Work is needed, they will notify the Author in writing.

16.2   At the Publishers' request and subject to such other terms and conditions as it may reasonably specify in its sole discretion, the Author shall prepare and deliver a manuscript for a revised edition of the Work. Subject to the provisions of this Clause 16, each revised edition shall be deemed to be covered by the terms and conditions of this Agreement to the same extent as if it were the Work referred to in this Agreement; except that there shall be no advances or grants payable in connection with revisions or future editions (if any) of the Work unless such advances and/or grants are expressly agreed to in writing by the Publishers and the Author.

16.3   If the Author is unable or unwilling to revise and update the Work, the Publishers may, after informing the Author of their intention in writing, arrange for a competent person(s) to do so, and may deduct any cost reasonably incurred by Publishers of doing this from any sums payable to the Author.

17   Open Access Option
The Publishers currently offer authors the option of publishing the electronic version of their works on an open access basis. If the Author wishes to pursue this option at any point during the term of this Agreement, then the Author shall notify the Publishers in writing accordingly and, subject to the Publishers confirming their agreement and to the Author paying the appropriate open access fee as set by the Publishers, the Publishers shall publish the electronic version of the Work on an open access basis. Such publication shall be subject to the Publishers'

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then-current terms and conditions for open access books, with the current terms and conditions being available at https://www.routledge.com/info/open_access.

18   ~~Option on Future Work~~
~~The Author grants to the Publishers the right of first refusal of (including the first opportunity to read and consider for publication) the Author's next work suitable for publication in volume and/or electronic form, and the Author will not offer such work for publication to any other publisher until an offer made by the Publishers has been considered and declined. If terms for publication of the new work have not been agreed with the Publishers within three months of receipt by the Publishers, the Author will be free to enter into an agreement with any other publisher.~~

19   **Death of the Author**
19.1   All sums payable to the Author under the terms of this Agreement will continue to be paid to the deceased Author's representatives on any edition of the Work available from the Publishers at the time of his/her death and on any reprints and sub-leases of those editions.

19.2   All sums payable to the Author under the terms of this Agreement will continue to be paid to the Author's representatives on the next revised edition of the Work following the Author's death, including any reprints and sub-leases, less any fees or royalties payable to an editor or reviser in the course of preparing that edition for publication.

19.3   On any further revised editions of the Work (after that specified in Clause 19.2) the Author's representatives will not be paid.

20   **Out of Print**
20.1   When, in the sole judgement of the Publishers, the demand for the Work is no longer sufficient to warrant keeping it available for purchase, the Work may be allowed to go out of print. If within six months of a written request by the Author, the Publishers do not make the Work available for purchase in at least one English language edition, in any format, including copies manufactured on demand or electronically transmitted, then this Agreement will automatically (without further action or notice) terminate, and all rights granted to the Publishers under clause 3.2 of this Agreement will revert to the Author.

20.2   The Publishers reserve the right to withdraw the whole or any part of the Work from publication or otherwise put it out of print, whether temporarily or permanently, if they have a reasonable basis to believe that the Author has (a) breached the warranties or responsibilities contained in this Agreement and/or any other agreement with the Publishers and/or its affiliates and/or (b) committed any act which brings or could be expected to bring the Work or Publishers into disrepute and/or is otherwise prejudicial to the Publishers' interests. If the Publishers decide to do so, they will give the Author their reasons in writing. If within six months of a written request by the Author, the Publishers do not make the Work, or (if applicable) any withdrawn or out of print part of the Work, available for purchase in at least one English language edition, in any format, including copies manufactured on demand or electronically transmitted, then (a) where the whole Work has been withdrawn or put out of print, this Agreement will terminate, and the rights granted to the Publishers under clause 3.2 of this Agreement will revert to the Author, or (b) where only part of the Work has been withdrawn or put out of print, then this Agreement will terminate in respect of that part only, and the rights granted to the Publishers under clause 3.2 of this Agreement will revert to the Author to the extent they relate to that part, but the remainder of this Agreement shall remain in full force and effect.

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20.3   The Author expressly acknowledges and agrees that the Publishers shall have no liability to the Author or any other person under this Agreement or otherwise in connection with any decision the Publishers make regarding not publishing the Work (pursuant to clause 2 above), and/or withdrawing or putting out of print the Work or any part of it (pursuant to clauses 20.1 and 20.2 above).

21   Termination

21.1   Should the Publishers by themselves or anyone acting on their behalf fail to fulfil or comply to a material extent with any of the conditions accepted by them in this Agreement within 60 days of receipt of written notice from the Author of that failure, or should the Publishers go into liquidation (other than voluntary liquidation for the purpose of reconstruction only), or have a Receiver appointed of the Publishers' business then all rights granted to the Publishers under clause 3.2 of this Agreement will revert to the Author and this Agreement will terminate automatically (without further action or notice).

21.2   If the Agreement is terminated under Clauses 20.1, 20.2 or 21.1, all rights granted to the Publishers under clause 3.2 of this Agreement will revert to the Author with the exception of:
(a) subsidiary rights properly entered into by the Publishers; and
(b) the right of the Publishers to continue to sell any copies they have in stock at the date this Agreement is terminated and honour any existing subscription, access or licensing arrangements already entered into.

22   Entire Agreement

This Agreement constitutes the entire and sole agreement between the parties with respect to its subject matter and supersedes any and all previous and contemporaneous agreements and understandings, whether written or oral, with respect to the subject matter hereof. No addition to or modification of any provision of this Agreement or consent granted pursuant to it, shall be binding upon the parties unless it is in writing and signed on behalf of the Author and the Publishers.

23   Arbitration

If any difference arises between the Author and the Publishers concerning the meaning of this Agreement or the rights and liabilities of the parties under this Agreement, it will in the first instance be referred to the Informal Disputes Settlement Scheme of the Publishers Association, and failing Agreement under this Scheme, will be referred to the arbitration of two persons (one to be named by each party) or their mutually agreed umpire in accordance with the provisions of the Arbitration Act 1996, or any amending or substituted statute for the time being in force.

24   Assignment

24.1   The Author may not assign, sublicense, subcontract or otherwise transfer his/her rights or obligations under this Agreement without the prior written consent of the Publishers.

24.2   The Publishers may assign, sublicense, subcontract or otherwise transfer its rights or obligations under this Agreement.

25   Force Majeure

The Publishers shall not be in breach of this Agreement if they are prevented from carrying out any of their obligations because of circumstances beyond their reasonable control in which case the time permitted for the Publishers to fulfil those obligations shall be extended by a period equal to the period of the effect of those circumstances or that delay.

26   Governing Law and Jurisdiction

Taylor & Francis
Taylor & Francis Group

Each party to this Agreement irrevocably agrees that this Agreement will be subject to and will be interpreted in all respects in accordance with English law and that any controversy or claim arising out of or relating to this Agreement, or the breach thereof, shall be settled by arbitration in the United Kingdom in accordance with the provisions of Clause 23.

VAT Registration No. (if applicable) ………………….

Tax Exemption No. (if applicable) ……………………….

This Agreement has been entered into on the date stated at the beginning of it.

Signed by Giada Peterle

Giada Peterle
....
Author

Signed by

Andrew Mould
....
Publisher

for and on behalf of
**INFORMA UK LIMITED TRADING AS
TAYLOR & FRANCIS GROUP**

Author contract (UK) (v09/19)

Taylor & Francis
Taylor & Francis Group

Schedule 1

Supply of the Work and Illustrations

A copy of the final version of the manuscript should be supplied electronically via email, USB, or CD. Each chapter should be stored in a separate folder (labelled clearly e.g. Ch_1, Ch_2 etc) and a separate text document.

Each illustration must be supplied as a separate file, e.g. fig1.1, and table 1.1. The files should be placed in the appropriate chapter folder.

Please use Microsoft Word for the text. Illustrations should be supplied in TIFF or JPEG format at 300 dpi with a minimum proportional width of 4 inches (100mm). We occasionally accept images in other file formats, however, other formats may incur extra production costs and we reserve the right to reject them should they not be suitable. If in doubt, please ask your Editor to contact Production.