How to capture and present complexity, ambivalence and ambiguity: Applying dialogism in social science research

Can-Seng Ooi

ooi@cbs.dk

www.serviceresearch.org

How to capture and present complexity, ambivalence and ambiguity: Applying dialogism in social science research

Can-Seng Ooi

Abstract:

Bakhtin was a literary theorist and was the widely acknowledged father of dialogism. This working paper shows how Bakhtin and dialogism can be used to capture complexity, ambivalence and ambiguity in the social world. In following the spirit of dialogism, I will refer to my own research experiences in tourism and art worlds, through which I will reveal my own inclinations – which can be read as biases – in my research knowledge production. Through the concept of genre, heteroglossia, polyphony and carnivalesque, dialogism allows social science researchers to identify and structure the forces of order and disruption in society. There are methodological consequences if one is to follow dialogism. Besides having to get deep into the empirical field, dialogism challenges by raising questions on the manner we collect data, the extent to which we can present a holistic analysis, the ways to engage alternative analytical interpretations and the approach to address a researcher's own biases.

Keywords: dialogism, genre, heteroglossia, polyphony, carnivalesque, social science, research methods, tourism studies, art worlds

Introduction: Dialogic view of the world

Mikhail Bakhtin was a literary theorist. He was also the widely acknowledged father of dialogism. Many social scientists have transferred and appropriated Bakhtin's ideas into the social world. Since text and society function differently, caution must prevail in appropriating a literary approach for the social sciences. As a result, many social scientists do not take Bakhtin's dialogism literally but as a heuristic to imagine and analyze the social world. The dialogic approach has thus evolved into a perspective beyond Bakhtin's investigation of literary texts. This working paper demonstrates how Bakhtin and dialogism provide insights for the social sciences. Specific examples from my own research on tourism and art worlds will be used, partly to acknowledge my own inclinations and voice in the writing of this paper. As will be mentioned later, I am the omnipresent narrator who constitutes partly to the dialogic reading of this text. This article will also discuss the implications for data collection and the textual presentation of a dialogism-inspired study.

Bakhtin's (1981) *Dialogic imagination* is a focal point for many social scientists to think, image and imagine the social world. Just as Bakhtin has introduced complexity into texts, dialogism imagines and characterises the social world as diverse and intricately intertwined. A relational reading of society is necessary; each social phenomenon is constituted by many inter-locking social forces.

A dialogic social science acknowledges that society is complex, and there are areas of coherence and order, as well as, chaos and conflicts. Unlike the postmodernist perspective of deconstructing and then doubting its own analysis, a dialogic approach deconstructs the social phenomenon and reconstructs the order that is observed. Unlike the functionalist ontology however, a dialogically-imagined social world is not naturally integrated, instead the order of the world is seen as negotiated, managed and engineered. As a result, the politics of social control as found in conflict theories are referred to in dialogic studies. It is thus difficult to talk about dialogism as an independent paradigm. Dialogism as a perspective and approach has drawn lessons from and responded to other social theories. The radical streaks in conflict theories, the integrationist order of functionalism and the playful poetics of postmodernism are accepted and challenged in the dialogic approach. There are strengths and weaknesses in such an approach, which will be discussed later.

In the broadest sense, the dialogic perspective offers tools and a set of vocabulary to imagine the social world. In a text, the concept of genre and the narrating author in polyphony point to the structures of order in writing. Concepts such as carnivalesque, heteroglossia and polyphony accentuate chaos, conflicts and negotiation. The unfolding of the text is marked by multiple contexts and voices, which they challenge one another and create ambivalence and ambiguities in meanings and interpretations. Similarly in the social world, the first element in the dialogic imagination is the assumption that there are inherent tensions between order and disorder in society.

The second element deals with how tensions materialize. Bakhtin was not clear in his definition of a dialogic relationship. I propose two general frameworks to imagine these process-relations. The first is *on-going inter-relations* between social phenomena, as in what Gardiner and Bell (1998, pp.4–6) argue that sociocultural phenomena as ongoing, interlinked between individuals and groups, involving a multiplicity of different contexts, discourses and circumstances. The second way to imagine dialogic relations is *co-existence and mutual animation* of social phenomena. This means that social phenomena and the socially constructed meanings must be understood in relation to each other, and not be seen in isolation. This is a framework to imagine the empirical processes of how social phenomena and meanings constantly unfold, and inform about each other. These processes will be elaborated later via the concepts of genre, heteroglossia, polyphony and the carnivalesque.

The third related element in the dialogic imagination is the holistic understanding of all social manifestations in relation to their complementing and conflicting contexts and circumstances. For example, tourism researchers often suggest bringing different stakeholders together and cultivate collaboration in the tourism industry and with the host society. A collaborative effort will minimize the effects of touristification and the maintenance of authenticity in place and cultural products. In a study by Ooi and Strandgaard Pedersen (2010) however, we discover that the authorities behind the Copenhagen International Film Festival and the promotion of Copenhagen as a tourist destination, understand the importance of cooperation but they do not and cannot develop closer collaboration. Their organizations have different interests, and their products embed contrasting social contexts and expectations. The Copenhagen International Film Festival, for instance, celebrates film as an art form; its association with tourism promotion may have detrimental consequences on its perceived independence and aesthetic credibility. The authorities in the film festivals and tourism promotion may want to cooperate but there are clashes of social expectations embedded in their activities and products.

With the emphasis on established social contexts, the clash of social expectations, and the negotiation between the stakeholders are part of the dialogic complexity in a holistic understanding of society.

It is debatable whether Bakhtin's ideas are given more scope and depth than he intended. Regardless, Bakhtin has inspired many social science researchers. And in the spirit of his work, his ideas are also evolving.

Concepts in dialogism

To accentuate multiplicity, a number of dialogic concepts, namely, genre, heteroglossia, polyphony and carnivalesque are highlighted here.

Genre and heteroglossia

"Heteroglossia" (Holquist 1981, p.428; Vice 1997, pp.18–44; Bakhtin 1981, pp.325–6) points to the multiple contexts in understanding tourism and its influences in local cultures. While heteroglossia accentuates disorder, genre emphasizes order. Genre, to Bakhtin, is a language. The concept of genre both manifests and opposes heteroglossia. Bakhtin defined genre as the horizon of expectations in a certain class of text types. Languages are stratified, for instance languages of lawyers, doctors, businesspersons and politicians sometimes coincide with, and sometimes depart from each other, forming their own genres. (Bakhtin 1981, p.289). Similarly in a more recent example, a linguistic genre has evolved on how we talk about human relationship with the environment (Last 2013). In a dialogic reading of the novel, Bakhtin pointed out that genres cross and shift in the text (Bakhtin 1981, pp.290–1; Holquist 1981, p.428). This is heteroglossia. Genres stratify languages thus creating heteroglossia, but at the same time within each genre, it limits the diversification of meaning presentation and interpretation (Bakhtin 1981, pp.288–9). Therefore, genres and heteroglossia generates tensions between closed and opened interpretations, order and disorder.

In appropriating Bakhtin's concept of genre for the social sciences, a genre of social behaviour is defined by the social expectations and context of use. In a context, certain practices and behaviour are expected, and they are considered appropriate and relevant. A social context also defines the scope and sphere of activities. It is an ordering structure that allows people to interact and for society to function. For example, doing tourist entails following certain tacit rules. Most tourists learn quickly and try to avoid being inadvertently appearing in each other's photographs, for instance. Within this photograph-taking tourist activity, the participants tacitly agree to an order, which allows all of them to capture and consume the sight satisfactorily. So, genres point to established expectations, code of behaviour and common activities. On the other hand, heteroglossia demonstrates the existence of multiple social contexts side by side.

To illustrate, aesthetics and business assume at least two different social contexts. Aesthetic appreciation often assumes a detached and non-economic appreciation of the arts. Buying and selling art, on the other hand, is a business and can corrupt the aesthetic experience. These two social contexts bring about ambivalent situations to artists and art buyers. In a study in Singapore of two Dutch tourists buying art, the two art buyers found it rather tiresome and uncomfortable acquiring works from artists directly, as the artists do not want to present themselves as commercial entities, and at the same time the tourists do not want to show that they

are interested in the price of the works; instead they concentrate their conversations on the aesthetic value of art works (Ooi 2010). But both parties want to make an economic exchange too. So artists and art buyers experience ambivalence as they straddle between aesthetics and art business. At the end, even though the artist and buyers are pleased with their commercial exchange, they restrain their elation.

The main implication of the concepts of genres and heteroglossia is that they accentuate complementarily and conflicts when social contexts and expectations meet. In tourism practices, solutions are often pragmatic compromises, and issues of touristification will always remain salient. In another occasion (Ooi 2013), I explain why many tourism researchers who criticise policy makers and cultural services managers for their insensitivity to local needs and cultural integrity often lack nuanced understanding of reality; they do not acknowledge the unbridgeable gaps between social expectations, interests and agendas. The dialogic imagination do not necessarily attempt to square the circle when social expectations and contexts clash, instead understand society according to the order from social expectations and genres of behaviour, and how these different orders clash, resulting in ever on-going exchanges.

Polyphony

Bakhtin highlighted the existence of multiple voices in any text, in particular with reference to the ubiquitous voice of the author ((Bakhtin 1981, pp.331–6; Bakhtin 1986, pp.112–3; Vice 1997, pp.112–48). The author narrates and her/his voice may be invisible but definitely present. As a result, all texts are polyphonic. Similarly, in the social sciences, ideas, stories and images of society and culture are often presented. Who presents these ideas, stories and interpretations?

Any packaging is not able to capture reality, as dimensions and elements have always to be dropped, while others highlighted. The presentation and packaging of culture is polyphonic because the voice of the narrator will always be present. For instance, tourism promotion materials, travel reviews and the like, besides telling stories, histories and facts, also entail the inherent voice of the narrators. There are needs for mediating voices in the tourism industry, as tourists lack the local knowledge to appreciate the places they visit (Ooi 2002). The concept of polyphony alerts us to the numerous ubiquitous voices of tourism mediators, including tourism promotion authorities, travel reviewers, curators and guides. In a study of Ground Zero and how tourists interpret the site, Ooi and Munar (2013) examine the various review contributions on TripAdvisor. Inevitably, there is a cacophony of views and voices. TripAdvisor as a site also mediates these voices and the readers' experiences. There is visual consistency and the entries are structured. As a whole, for a person who wants to find out how previous visitors think of Ground Zero, this person will also come to know the memorial site through the lenses of TripAdvisor, with "useful" links to choice hotels, restaurants, and other attractions.

The main implication of polyphony is that it highlights the parties that present facts, stories and interpretations. They have their own agendas and purposes in structuring the history of countries, stories of local places and drawing attention to selected facts. Polyphony accentuates the politics of presentation. Genre and heteroglossia complement polyphony, as presentations are situated within genres of presentation and social contexts; these genres do clash, as heteroglossia underline.

Carnivalesque

Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque accentuates the limits of social control; it is therefore another concept describing fragmentation and disorder. His carnivalesque readings of *Rabelais and His World* (Bakhtin 1984b) and *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (Bakhtin 1984a) demonstrate his interests in the "culture of folk carnival humour" (Bakhtin 1984b, p.4). A carnivalesque reading of society accentuates its diversity by searching for cultures that are not officially sanctioned. The carnival contains a utopian urge by displacing, even inverting the normal social hierarchies (Stallybrass & White 1986). The carnival is a democratic space (Hirschkop 1999). A carnivalesque reading of culture will discredit officially sanctioned cultures and celebrate folk cultures. On the other hand, the carnivalesque can also become a spectacle. The carnivalesque becomes appropriated and promoted as official culture, such as in the celebration of diversity through multi-culturalism and globalization in many contemporary societies. The carnivalesque can also become objects of tourist sentimental gazes. For example, Christiania in Copenhagen is an alternative space where marijuana and hashes are readily available. Such activities are not legal but the site has become popular with tourists because it is an alternative space. Officials of the Danish capital have an ambivalent relationship with Christiania. While illegal activities seem to thrive with impunity, Christiania is also an indication of Copenhagen as an open and progressive city. The city's tourism promotion agency has now included it as a tourist site but with due warnings. In the spirit of dialogism, the carnival is thus an arena in which different cultures interact, and some of which may be selectively packaged and spectacularized, while others marginalized. As the case of Christiania shows, the process is on-going; the carnivalesque will subvert the sanctioned and yet may eventually be sanctioned.

The main implication of the concept of the canrnivalesque is that there is order in the disorder in society. The carnivalesque point us to folk, popular and alternative cultures that may not receive formal sanctions. The saliency of ideas, interpretations and stories allude to their accentuation by official channels and mediators, regardless there will always be marginalized ideas, interpretations and stories. These may one day become salient, while the current prominent ones fade away.

Conceptual implications

The table below draws out some lessons from these dialogic concepts. As a framework, dialogism offers a set of research tools to identify social contexts and expectations, and how they complement and clash (genres and heteroglossia), be mindful that stories, interpretations and facts are articulated by agents, and they constitute a body of voices (polyphony) and acknowledge that the social world is carnivalesque and mainstream cultures exist side by side with alternative and "marginal" cultures.

The short examples mentioned above warn us against seeing society and culture in any monolithic and well-structured manner. Solutions to mitigating the touristification of society are practical solutions that will not please all sections of society and industry. Policy criticisms, for instance, must thus be more nuanced to account for the actual complexity of society. As researchers, we have our own agenda and genre of practice; are we objective then? We offer our analysis and publications, and thus assert our own voice; are we just one voice in the polyphony? And in our

interpretations and analysis, are we mainstreaming and marginalizing social phenomena in the carnivalesque situation?

The following section will address these issues.

Dialogical methodologies

The thrust of dialogism is to constantly imagine the world in interrelational terms. Dialogism sees threads of unravelling and also sources of coherence. Multiple contexts, multiple voices and the carnivalesque destabilise social orders but at the same time, genres and the order in the carnivalesque allude to stability. In using dialogism as an inspiration, one must also articulate the principles in the research design and methodological practices. So, with the emphasis on holism, and the accentuation of multiple contexts, voices and social behaviours, how does a dialogical methodology mean? Often, it entails in-depth qualitative data collection, through conversations, interviews, participation and observations. And like in other theories, concepts and approaches, there are problems in dialogism, especially when it has to be operationalized into empirical studies. I would like to highlight four implications.

Methodological implication 1: The responsive interviewee

The first implication discussed is the interview method. Any interview situation is social, and the interviewer and respondent interact. Thus, dialogism underlines the principle of the "active interviewing method" (Holstein & Gubrium 1997). All interview situations are interactional and respondents are able to incite the production of meanings that address issues relating to the questions asked. This is different from the perspective that the interview conversation is framed as a potential source of bias, error, misunderstanding or misdirection, a persistent set of problems to be controlled. The corrective is then to get the interviewer to ask questions in a fixed manner, so that the respondent will give out the desired information (Holstein & Gubrium 1997, pp.113–20).

The active interviewing method sees the interview as neither an innocent process nor a source of distortion, it is a "site of, and occasion for, producing reportable knowledge itself" (Holstein & Gubrium 1997, p.114). It does not assume that the interviewee is passive, engaging in minimal interpretative practice, perceiving, storing and reporting experience when properly asked. The subject has a substantial repertoire of interpretative methods and stock of experiential materials. While active interviews can be accused of coaxing respondents into preferred answers to their questions, an aware interviewer can relate with respondents in such a way that alternate considerations are brought into play. Asking difficult questions, seeking finer clarifications, and pointing out conflicts and contradictions, are effective in encouraging respondents to develop and elaborate on the contexts of what they are saying. The objective is not to dictate interpretation but to provide an environment conducive to the production of the range and complexity of meanings that address relevant issues, and not be confined to predetermined agendas. The researcher has to be consciously and conscientiously attending to the interview process and its product in ways that are more sensitive to the social construction of knowledge.

Respondents are capable of disclosing their own understanding of tourism issues, for instance. They reflected on pertinent concerns in their everyday and work life. They were not just "playback" sound machines. Respondents are also not subjects who objectively inform of what were actually happening. Nor interview data

reduced to the cognition and psychological states of respondents. Instead, what respondents say is situated in the contexts of the interview, their position and organisation, for instance. Foucault has convincingly argued that knowledge creates the subject and articulations are not merely the products of some autonomous individuals (Martin et al. 1988).

The dialogical method acknowledges the responsive respondent.

Methodological implication 2: Problem of holism

Related to last discussion, the second methodological implication can be framed this way: if the dialogic perspective embraces holism, to what extent can a dialogic study be holistic? The issue of holism, when pushed to the limit, can paralyse social analysis (Marcus 1988). All social phenomena, if dialogically intertwined, would entail an elephantine project to address every process and issue. On the other hand, such a project would defeat the purpose of research if the project could not identify issues and processes that are more relevant and significant (Babbie 1986). To deal with this issue, it is necessary to examine the subjects being investigated.

Often significant and relevant issues are selected from the field through active in-depth interviews and observations, and/or the literature. Our experiences in the field point to salient issues. Even in a carnivalesque situation, certain manifestations seem to be more blatantly manifested, and they capture our attention. Tourism policies, promoted destination identities and popular tourist products are obvious starting points. And from there, one reaches deeper and wider into the fields, as one observes different policy strategies within the political contexts of the environment, the different ways the products are consumed, etc.

This process does not deny selectivity, however, the selection process is not arbitrary but one that is informed by empirical observations and the literature. For a researcher embracing the spirit of dialogism, the researcher must humbly acknowledge that a totally holistic social science is not feasible. Nonetheless, an attempt to address related, relevant and significant issues, which are derived from fieldwork and earlier studies must be carried out. This, in many respects, is following the principle of good old anthropological studies.

Methodololgical implication 3: Problems of multiple interpretations

The third implication deals with multiple interpretations. If truths are constituted intersubjectively and that dialogic interpretations are also unfinalizable, does it mean that a dialogic understanding is relative, and has no truth value? This is a basic philosophy of science question.

Reflexive methods have undermined positivist perspectives by revealing that interpretations and negotiations are needed to re-contextualise observation situations at all junctures of fieldwork and analysis (Clifford & Marcus 1986; Hopper 1995; Silverman 1997). For example, the codification of data in a survey is itself an interpretative exercise. It is also not possible for any research enterprise to capture reality in its pristine, natural form because of the observer paradox and the reality-constructing activities of research. Let me elaborate.

The "observer paradox" (Labov 1970) makes *in situ* studies difficult to conduct because the observer inevitably changes the "natural" social setting by her or his presence, or interaction. The invisible, non-intrusive researcher can create "non-natural" research situations (as in experiments) or would be limited in data collection

(as in merely observing a crowd from a distant). Ethnomethodology has shown us that descriptive practices are reality-creating activities (Miller 1997). The behaviour, circumstances and persons offered as instances of cultural categories by respondents and researchers will assign these accentuated instances moral and political significance (Asad 1986; Miller 1997).

However, the emphasis on context and circumstances also pose problems in establishing truth-values. The multiplicity of contexts, as accentuated in the dialogic perspective suggests that the analyses by scientists are also contextual, biased by their own backgrounds. Since one's background and working context cannot be avoided, then all scientific analysis are eventually loaded interpretations (Clifford and Marcus 1986). The credibility of the dialogic approach undermines itself (Ellis 2004).

Although social life and history is open-ended and unfinalisable, it is still possible to locate spaces of stability, as Bakhtin accentuated through the concept of genre and the narrating voice. Some anthropologists use the concept of "ethnographic present" to handle this problem (Douglas & Isherwood 1996, p.10). An anthropologist attempts to understand a society he or she studies, the ethnography is necessarily presented at that moment in time, and contains the anthropologist's understanding and interpretations. But the anthropologist's understanding reflects the culture and society in context. By acknowledging the circumstances and knowing that circumstances would change, anthropologists still explain how and why they reach their *situated* conclusions. Developing understanding is therefore an alternative to assuming that there are absolute truths in the social world. In line with dialogism, contexts and circumstances allow social scientists to offer situation-specific analyses that are sophisticated and scientifically sound. And these slice-in-time or snapshot studies are still insightful and informative. A researcher can only unassumingly offer such a strategy and also admit that the study could not have the final say.

Methodological implication 4: Biases from the world-of-the-researcher

In polyphony, the narrating author is accentuated; her or his interpretations and agendas are revealed using a dialogic perspective. However, like in the previous challenge, this effectively raises questions on why the author's agenda should be accepted. This translates to a dialogic paradox in the social science: what authority does the researcher have in her or his analysis of her or his study? The research has a background and an agenda that influence her or his reading of the empirical fields, for instance.

In fact, Crick posed the question: in what ways is the anthropologist studying tourism like or unlike the tourists being studied? (Crick 1995, p.205). He argued that anthropologists and tourists are distant relatives. He was generally referring to social researchers who had to go to a foreign culture and society for research. This question is of particular relevance for this project because I am a social researcher in a foreign land, examining its tourism industry. And I return to my own Singaporean society as a visiting researcher.

Crick (1995) argued that the role of anthropologists and tourists overlap in a number of aspects. Firstly, to the locals, social researchers are likely to be classified and treated like tourists by locals. For my case, the tour excursions, my participation in tourist activities are not unlike that of tourists. In fact, I tried to be like a tourist during my participation, so that I would not be conspicuous.

Secondly, tourist interests and that of a researcher are increasingly similar. Tourists and researchers learn about local knowledge and analyse the place. Processes

of culture, social change, meanings and symbols of local society have become the interests of tourists just like me as a researcher.

However, many social researchers would defend their profession and maintain that they are not like tourists. Otherwise, the justification for doing social science disappears if researchers and tourists are fundamentally alike (Errington & Gewertz 1989, p.39; Crick 1995, p.206). There are at least three arguments to discern the researcher from the tourist.

The first is that researchers are more "serious", and are obliged to be systematic, holistic, historical and contextual in their understanding of their fields. Errington and Gewertz (1989, p.46) argued that researchers differentiate their intentions and politics of their visits, in contrast to that of a tourist. Furthermore, tourists do not have sufficient knowledge to understand world political economy, some do not want to understand or some are just not interested (Errington and Gewertz 1989: 51). However Crick (1995, pp.209–10) warned against the view that all tourists are ignorant of the world they travel in and are uninterested in learning more. Such a view is a form of snobbery similar to certain tourists feeling superior to some other supposedly less sophisticated types of tourist (Crick 1995, p.209; MacCannell 1976, p.10). For example, some independent tourists who search for the authentic despise tour-group tourists (Errington & Gewertz 1989). To Crick, social scientists who consider themselves as more sophisticated than other visitors, are like tourists who distant themselves from others. Such field researchers are merely asserting a sense of superiority like that of other tourist groups.

The second defence is related to the first, some researchers suggest that tourist experiences are shallow and the researchers feel that their own "deep" encounters led them to know more than tourists, have more authentic experiences and are more sensitive than tourists. There is the assumption that experiences and knowledge that are considered relevant and appropriate for research are considered more "authentic". But both researchers and tourists "travel to collect and expropriate what they value from the other and then tell of their journeys" (Crick 1995, p.210). Their motivations and experiences are not very distinct. The knowledge and experiences, framed as data, are also collected circumstantially. The context behind the collection of knowledge and experiences for the tourist and the researcher may be different but the justification for one being superior, more authentic and more real to the other veil the still limited and selective experiences of researchers. .

The final argument to differentiate researchers from tourists is based on moral grounds. Some researchers see their activities to be more moral than tourists. Tourists and economic tourism, on the other hand, can harm the destination. Local culture is being commodified and artificially staged for tourists (Cohen 1988; MacCannell 1976, pp.91–107; Watson & Kopachevsky 1994). Tourists and their activities destroy the authenticity of the society. Tourists are said to be indulging in hedonistic neo-colonialism, collecting souvenirs, photographs and other things they find of symbolic value to them, from which they transform them into status back home. Crick reminded us that researchers are also engaged in "scientific colonialism" (Crick 1995, p.210). Researchers collect data for their research, so that they become publishable products to advance their careers (Crick 1995, pp.210–2).

Crick suggested that anthropologists in foreign land are distant relatives to tourists. The genres of practices of tourists and researchers are similar. His criticisms are general and do not account for the different nature and specific methodological and theoretical differences between research and tourist activities. He merely pointed

out that as genres of practices, tourists and researchers face similar circumstances and motivations.

I would argue that research activities are more methodological, which bears higher scientific validity. It is justified that some researchers assert superiority for their interpretations. It is also the case that many researchers have deeper knowledge of the society they investigate than tourists. Most researchers stay much longer than tourists in their fields. However, Crick wanted to play the devil advocate, so as to explore the anxiety in research and gain insights into what researchers do (Crick 1995, p.219).

Crick's arguments are important. He illustrated the dialogic tension of order and disorder in research. He accentuated the inevitability of selective interpretation in all social activities, and the need to be reflexive in the study. As the author in the text is accounted for in the dialogic perspective, the social researcher should also be accounted for in the research project. The theories, methods, research circumstances and the research are dialogically intertwined in the project.

1. The researcher explicitly acknowledges one's own presence as an element in the research process.
2. The researcher reflects on the research process in a detached manner and is self critical and aware of strengths and criticisms in the methodological and theoretical issues.
3. Triangulation of data is needed to increase the soundness of the project, as more sources of data and multiple interpretations are garnered to present a more comprehensive and diverse reality.

From the discussion above, dialogism does not offer a new research methodology. Established reflexive research methods are adequate in realising a dialogic social science. But dialogism acknowledges the contextual gap between reality and interpretation, and it has to live with it. The interpretations of the researcher are subjected to questioning in the dialogic approach but within the accepted genre or practice of doing better social research, the research methods and reflections give more credibility to the analysis, then one that is less reflexive and systematic.

Conclusions

The first half of this paper gave an introduction to dialogism. It is a perspective that emphasises on interrelationships, tensions between order and disorder. It offers a framework to structure complexity in the social world. The discussion in the second half concentrates on the methodological implications.

Dialogism has its weaknesses. It is not meant to offer any hypothesis, or has offered any predictive trajectory for the social world. It offers a structure to present complexity in the social world. The authority of dialogical interpretation is questioned, as the researcher's authority is seen as only one of many others. Furthermore, the researcher is situated within a sphere of social practice and a single voice of many. Research merely contributes to the carnivalesque reality. The methodological implications of dialogism center on reflexive practice, and acknowledges the limitations of dialogic research.

Finally, it is inadvertent that the published work will be re-interpreted by readers. So, this paper invites you into a participative interpretation of what I wrote. You will generate your own understanding of Bakhtin and dialogism. The anxiety of

doing dialogic research remains unresolved. On a more positive note, this anxiety is maintained so as to acknowledge and celebrate the complexity of the social world. On a more negative note, it is an inevitable gap that I have to resign myself to as a researcher embracing dialogism.

References

Asad, T., 1986. The concept of cultural translation in British social anthropology J. Clifford & G. E. Marcus, eds. , pp.141–164.

Babbie, E., 1986. The Practice of Social Research. , Fourth, p.-.

Bakhtin, M.M., 1984a. Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetic. , p.-.

Bakhtin, M.M., 1984b. Rabelais and His World H. (trans. . Iswolsky, ed. , p.-.

Bakhtin, M.M., 1986. Speech Genres and Other Late Essays C. Emerson, M. Holquist, & V. W. (trans. . MacGee, eds. , p.-.

Bakhtin, M.M., 1981. The Dialogic Imagination C. Emerson & M. Holquist, eds. , p.-.

Clifford, J. & Marcus, G.E., 1986. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* J. Clifford & G. E. Marcus, eds., Berkeley: University of California Press.

Cohen, E., 1988. Authenticity and commoditisation in tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 15, pp.371–386.

Crick, M., 1995. The anthropologist as tourist: an identity in question M.-F. Lanfant, J. B. Allcock, & E. M. Bruner, eds. , pp.205–223.

Douglas, M. & Isherwood, B., 1996. The World of Goods: Towards an Anthropology of Consumption. , p.-.

Ellis, C., 2004. *The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel about Autoethnography*, New York: AltaMira Press.

Errington, F. & Gewertz, D., 1989. Tourism and anthropology in a post-modern world. *Oceania*, 60, pp.37–54.

Gardiner, M. & Bell, M.M., 1998. Bakhtin and the human sciences: A brief introduction M. M. Bell & M. Gardiner, eds. , pp.1–12.

Hirschkop, K., 1999. Mikhail Bakhtin: An Aesthetic for Democracy. , p.-.

Holquist, M., 1981. Glossary M. Holquist & C. Emerson, eds. , pp.423–434.

Holstein, J.A. & Gubrium, J.F., 1997. Active interviewing D. Silverman, ed. , pp.113–129.

Hopper, S., 1995. Reflexivity in academic culture. In B. Adam & S. Allan, eds. *Theorising Culture: An Interdisciplinary Critique after Postmodernism.* London: University College London Press, pp. 58–69.

Labov, W., 1970. The study of language in its social context. In P. Giglioli, ed. *Language and social context*. London: Penguin, pp. 282–307.

Last, A., 2013. Negotiating the Inhuman: Bakhtin, Materiality and the Instrumentalization of Climate Change. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 30(2), pp.60–83. Available at: http://tcs.sagepub.com/cgi/doi/10.1177/0263276412456568 [Accessed March 21, 2013].

MacCannell, D., 1976. The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class. , p.-.

Marcus, G.E., 1988. Contemproary problems of ethnography in the modern world system. In J. Clifford & G. E. Marcus, eds. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 165–193.

Martin, L.H., Gutman, H. & Hutton, P.H., 1988. *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* L. H. Martin, H. Gutman, & P. H. Hutton, eds., London: Tavistock.

Miller, G., 1997. Building bridges: The possibility of anlaytic dialogue between ethnography, conversation analysis and Foucault. In D. Silverman, ed. *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*. London: SAGE, pp. 24–44.

Ooi, C.-S., 2010. Cacophony of voices and emotions: Dialogic of buying and selling art. *Culture Unbound*, 2, pp.347–364.

Ooi, C.-S., 2002. Cultural Tourism and Tourism Cultures: The Business of Mediating Experiences in Copenhagen and Singapore. , p.-.

Ooi, C.-S., 2013. Tourism policy challenges: Balancing acts, co-operative stakeholders and maintaining authenticity. In M. Smith & G. Richards, eds. *Routledge Handbook of Cultural Tourism*. London: Routledge, pp. 67–74.

Ooi, C.-S. & Munar, A.M., 2013. The digital social construction of Ground Zero. In A. M. Munar, S. Gyimothy, & L. A. Cai, eds. *Tourism Social Media: Transformations in Identity, Community and Culture*. Bingley: Emerald.

Ooi, C.-S. & Strandgaard Pedersen, J., 2010. City branding and film festivals: Re-evaluating stakeholders' relations. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 6(4), pp.316–332.

Silverman, D., 1997. *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice* D. Silverman, ed., London: SAGE.

Stallybrass, P. & White, A., 1986. Bourgeois hysteria and the carnivalesque S. During, ed. , pp.284–292.

Vice, S., 1997. Introducing Bakhtin. , p.-.

Watson, G.L. & Kopachevsky, J.P., 1994. Interpretations of tourism as commodity. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 21(3), pp.643–660.