

From exclusion to belonging: developing narrative  
practices in day care centers and schools (BELONG)  
Day care centers as a space of relations

*The emotional, social and cultural aspects of collective action*

*Seminar in Tallinn 27.-28.11.2014*

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# The aim of the presentation

- To discuss potential of participatory action research when aiming to improve relations of belonging

# Theoretical and methodological background

- Narrative approach, post-structuralism and action research
  - Being in relations as an **ontological basis** for human beings (Relational ontology, Nel Noddings 1984, 2012)
  - **Relational epistemology** (Barbara Thayer-Bacon, 2009)
    - Rejects the idea of universal, objective knowledge
    - People as contextual, linked to the past, culture and place
    - Knowledge as plural including emotions, body, place
      - children's knowledge

# Theoretical and methodological background

- Narrative construction of experiences (Caine, Estefan & Clandinin, 2013; Spector-Mersel, 2010)
  - Experiences of belonging and exclusion are produced in narrative practices of communities (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Purdue, Ballard & Mac Arthur, 2009)
- Participatory action research as a tool in improving narrative practices of belonging

# Research process

- Attention on the educational practices of the communities
- Research material: observations, discussions, videorecordings, documents and written material
- From written and oral narratives towards multimodal narrating and small stories
- Researchers supporters of practitioners to develop better narrative practices

# Participating day care centers

## Lilies

**Participants:**  
22 adults  
130 children

**Research group:**  
- 3-5 years old  
- 2 children with special needs

**Theme:** co-operation between groups

## Roses

**Participants:**  
21 adults  
95 children

**Research group:**  
- 3-5 years olds  
- Extended opening hours

**Theme:** being present, listening, encountering

## Violets

**Participants:**  
18 adults  
100 children

**Research group:**  
- 3-5 years old

**Theme:** children's participation

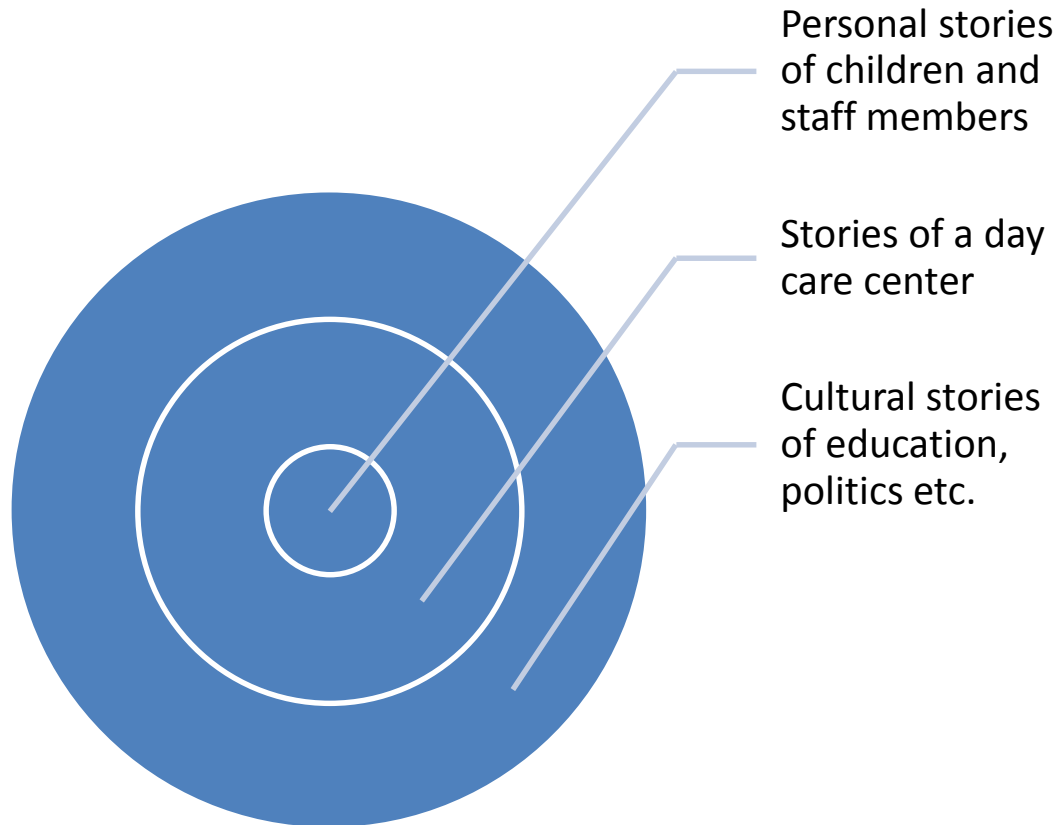
## Maples

**Participants:**  
24 adults  
200 children

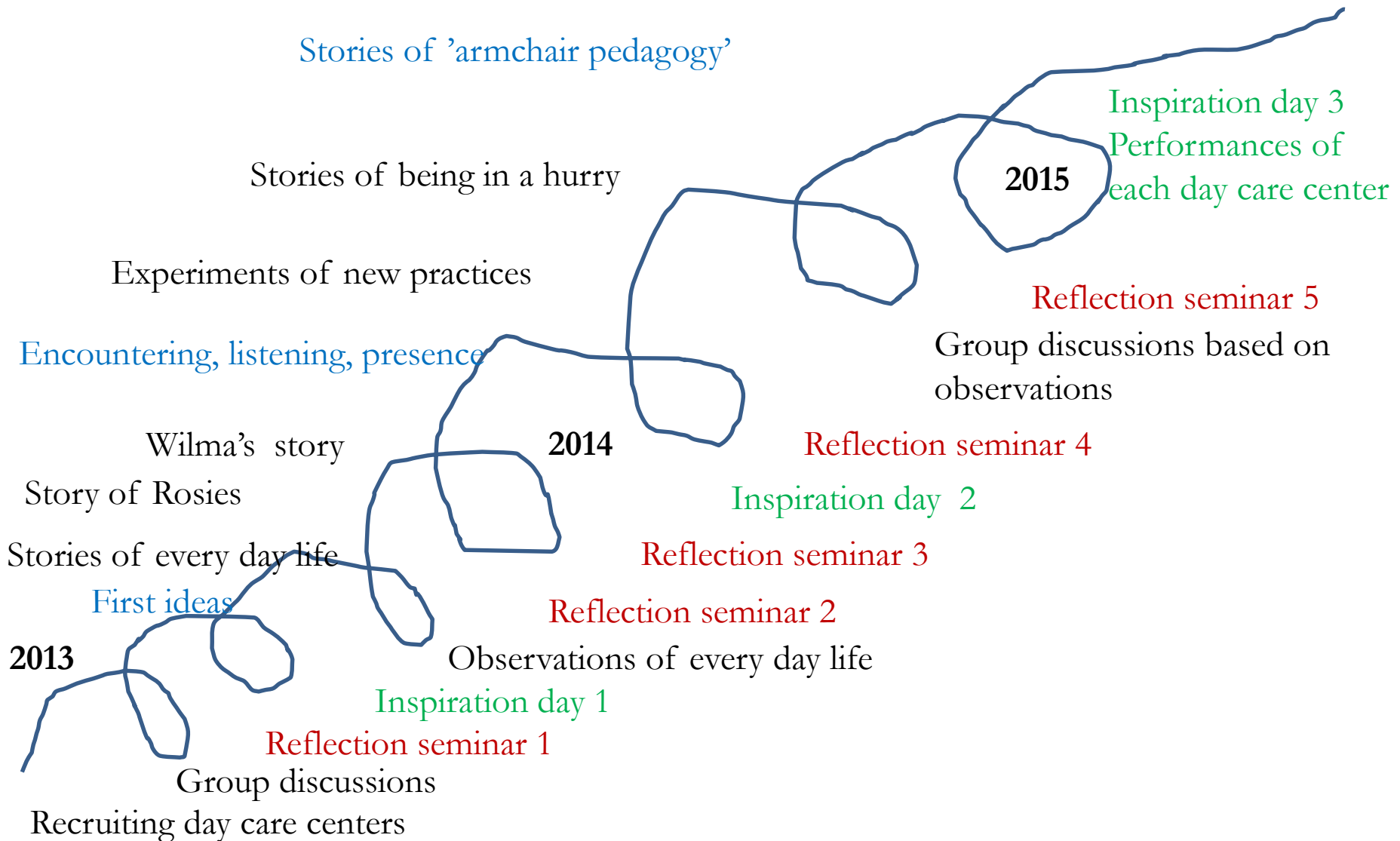
**Research group:**  
- 1-6 years olds  
- Combination of two groups

**Theme:** enabling children's long-lasting play

# Narrative approach in action: researchers in the middle of the stories

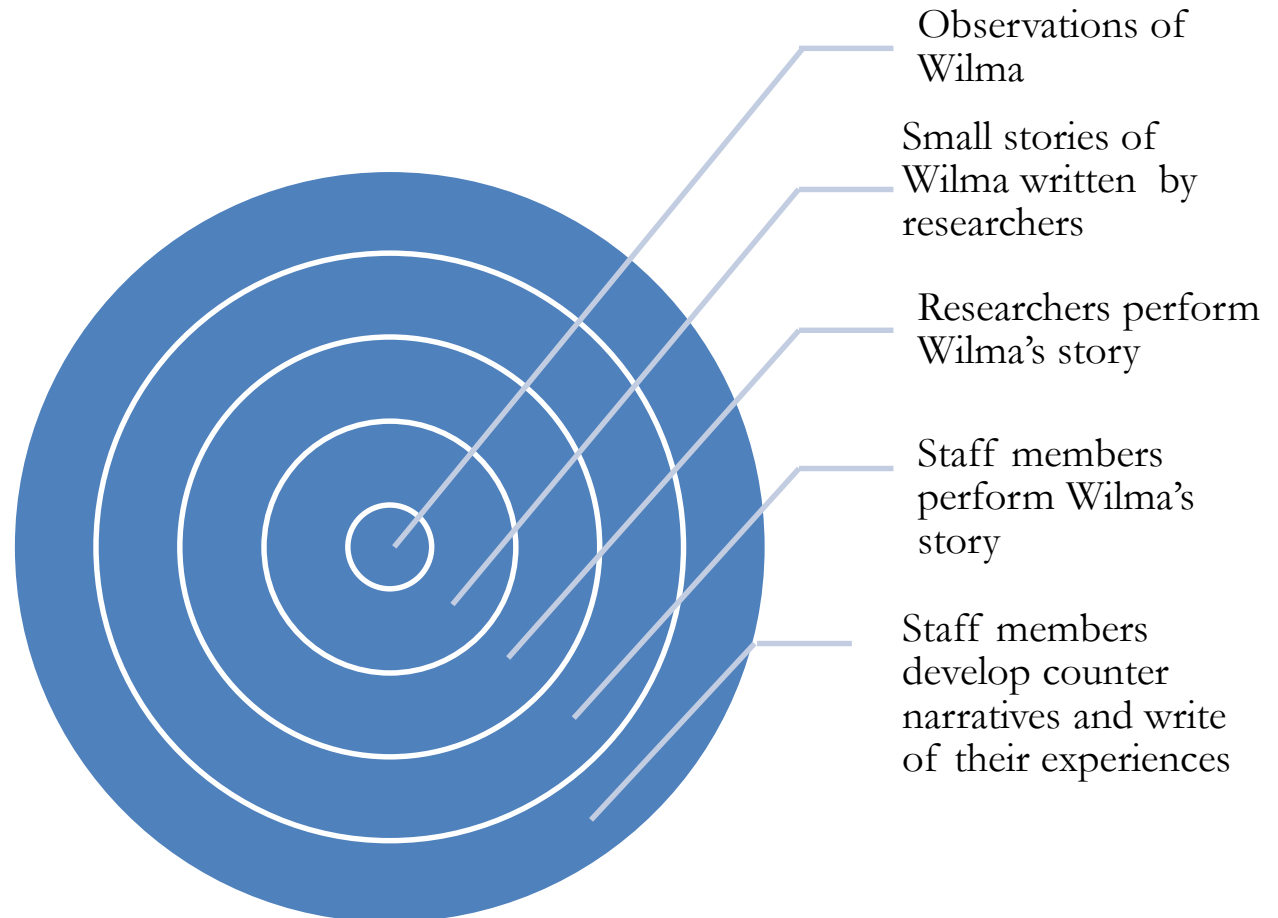


# Action research process in Rosies





# Co-construction of knowledge



*”And we have an armchair , our  
best friend at this moment. We  
have a permission to sit and listen  
and keep our own mouths shut  
and observe children”*

(staff member in Rosies )

# What has been learned?

- 1) The project has inspired discussions, reflections and questions in day care centers about which stories become heard
- 2) The project has increased consciousness of ethical issues in early childhood education

# Multiple voices on the space of relations

- Does research on marginalization reproduce marginalization by conceptualizing some children or groups as being at risk of marginalization?
- Diversity of stories of individuals ~ the story/ies of the community
- Relations between people are not separated from the relations to the material environment
- Relations with researchers and practitioners are crucial in the research process

# Thank you!

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