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Master Narratives as Experience:
Continuous (Counter) Movement (Monument)
towards Anti-Racism

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A work of art elicits and accentuates this quality of being a whole and belonging to the larger, all-inclusive, whole which is the universe in which we live.

...

We are, as it were, introduced into a world beyond this world which is nevertheless the deeper reality of the world in which we live in our ordinary experiences. We are carried out beyond ourselves to find ourselves.

(John Dewey, in *Art as Experience*, 1934, p. 202)

One of our most difficult duties as human beings is to listen to the voices of those who suffer.

(Arthur Frank, in *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness & Ethics*, 1995, p. 25)



Source: antirasistisktmonument.se

Abstract

What can monuments do as communicative and imaginative media? This thesis exemplifies how counter-monuments present an entry point for Media and Communication scholars to re-conceptualise traditional monuments, shifting the focus from a noun to a processual verb based on conviviality. Accordingly, using a case-study methodology informed by Flyvbjerg's (2001) and Dewey's (1934) pragmatic understanding of research and art as experience, and extended by the concept of conviviality (Deniz, 2024; Illich, 1973), this thesis sheds light on what a monument does.

I conducted a case study of the counter-monument *Master Narratives*, which is scheduled for installation in Jesusparken (Falsterboplan), Malmö, later this year. This counter-monument represents the final phase of an anti-racist project initiated by Malmö-based activists in 2019 to promote public discourse on anti-racism. Interviews were conducted with six actors engaged with the project, complemented by a qualitative content analysis of the documentary film *Letters to a Serial Killer*. This film mediates one of the project's traumatic origins: Kamal Masri's experience as a victim of the racist serial killer Peter Mangs.

To explore what monuments can do as media, this thesis presents an answer to the following research question: 'How does the *Master Narratives* counter-monument mediate and transform anti-racist knowledge?'. The findings suggest that *Master Narratives* is mediated and discussed imaginatively, emotionally, and through practice, transforming the counter-monument from a physical structure into a convivial medium and a processual space-time. In this space, anti-racist knowledge is actively co-produced rather than passively received, pointing to how the narration of experiences and resistances to racism can be pluralised through a convivial medium, promoting "reflexive monitoring", learning, and "an exercise of responsibility" (Frank, 1995, p. 16).

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Introduction

Monuments are conceived of as “products of social relations, powers, ideas, identities, and the collective memory” (Cudny & Appelblad, 2019, p. 273). This understanding of a monument as a product is illustrative of the tendency of art, as an example of media (or product/form), and production (or process/function), to be viewed in separation, precluding their mutuality as an esthetic experience or whole pattern (Dewey, 1934; McLuhan, 1964). Illich (1973) and McLuhan (1964, p. 5) emphasise the consequence of this division: an individual “of action who appears not to be involved in the action”. Accordingly, in this thesis, I aim to conceptualise *Master Narratives* as both an (imagined) medium and an esthetic process, amounting from individual stories that together inform collective group dynamics. By shifting focus to the monument’s function as a public mediator of stories, with its “associated emotional charge of affect” (Dahlgren & Hill, 2023, p. 75); I address the following research question: ‘How does the *Master Narratives* counter-monument mediate and transform anti-racist knowledge?’.

Master Narratives is an anti-racist project, which was initiated by an anti-racist monument group in 2019, consisting of local activists from Malmö who collaborated with Malmö’s Culture Department to facilitate public dialogue on (anti)racism. This thesis is concerned with the currently undergoing final phase of the project: a permanent, anti-racist monument that will be installed in Jesusparken (Falsterboplan), Malmö, later this year (see Appendix A). According to its artists, the monument’s title “reclaims and complicates [the concept of a ‘master narrative’] by making it plural, suggesting that each individual’s narrative is valid and contributes to the whole” (antirasistisktmonument, n.d.) By contrast, a master narrative, much like an official monument, consists of a singular, dominant narration of an event, shaping “ideas concerning what is expected, good, and valuable in life” in a top-down manner (Breen & Mclean, 2017, p. 198). By adopting a processual view of *Master Narratives*, which exists imaginatively, but not yet physically, I argue that we can recuperate a “convivial function of language” founded on a joint “right to share in the shaping of the community” (Illich, 1973, p. 106). This focus on function is crucial considering that media content is countless and easily manipulable (Flyvbjerg, 2001). Moreover, in bringing together “details and particulars physically scattered into an experienced whole”; this case study, like *Master Narratives*, seeks to elucidate how the monument acts as a convivial medium, notably, one that fosters community by supporting engagement in shared, anti-racist practices (Dewey, 1934, p. 56).

In this thesis, I also draw on the documentary film *Letters to a Serial Killer* as an example of a personal story of collective trauma that the *Master Narratives* incorporates and extends into public memory and, in turn, transforms. For example, Kamal Masri has been lecturing at public schools in Malmö, helping to shed light on a traumatic aspect of the recent past that continues to manifest, albeit in different forms, in Malmö today. This documentary, directed by Manal Masri, centres on the point of view and experiences of her brother, Kamal Masri, who was one of Peter Mangs victims. Peter Mangs was a racist serial killer who “committed at least three murders and twelve murder attempts between 2003 and 2010”, creating a sense of fear and uncertainty for Malmö’s residents (Gardell, 2018, p. 1). Specifically, he targeted “Black, Roma, and Muslim citizens to amplify racialized tensions, grievances, and anxieties” (Gardell, 2018, p. 1). However, his political motives were not acknowledged by the institutions or the general public, except by those people who belonged to the communities that he was targeting (Gardell, 2018). The documentary, as another medium of *Master Narratives*, highlights this institutional blindness through various examples, such as when official media highlighted Kamal’s immigrant background and implied that he might have been involved in gang-related associations. This dominant media frame shaped the public’s perception, representing a top-down master narrative in action, criminalising Kamal, the victim, and maintaining an institutional status quo, which the counter-monument seeks to re-construct.

A monument is a medium that is long-lasting, constructed from “heavy and unwieldy media, such as stone, [that act as] time binders” (McLuhan, 1964, p. 25), as was noted by the artists who mentioned that the monument’s materials were chosen to fit Malmö’s climate. *Master Narratives* will consist of a block of Phoenix granite, weighing 29 tons, which will be held up by approximately 160 bronze rods of varied lengths. Susanna (2026), one of the *Master Narratives* artists, spoke about how the sedimentation of the stone:

is part of the social, collective memory project, the lines that you can see, it’s just time condensed into layers of material. It was nice to include this deep time perspective of the material itself, in relation to talking about this recent history in Malmö.

The permanency of a monument contrasts to the fleeting news coverage and institutional reports that failed to acknowledge Kamal’s experience of racist violence, which continues to affect individuals in Malmö. The continuation of racism, as materialised by the artists incorporation of memory boxes, inviting the public to write a letter on (anti)racism, which will

be buried under the monument, highlights racism as an ongoing structural and societal issue (see Appendix B). Thus, it requires ongoing public dialogue and action, which the counter-monument, as an esthetic and convivial medium, can foster.

Dahlgren and Hill (2023, p. 74) assert that: “to understand the origins of political engagement and civic agency, we need to look beyond the public sphere theory...into the experiential domain of everyday life” in order to illuminate their connections. *Master Narratives* contributes towards bridging the collective (and political) with the personal (and esthetic) by engaging people in the expression of personal stories that are tied to a physical and ideological structure: the monument and the discourse on (anti)racism. By situating the monument in a park, a public place of leisure and transit, and incorporating pedagogical materials into the project's outreach, perception can develop through a “cumulative series of interactions”, promoting a confrontation between individual experiences and the collective trauma of the Mangs era (Dewey, 1934, p. 228). Although the monument has not yet been installed, the communicative processes that it has already inspired is illustrative of its existence as an imaginative and affective medium, transforming anti-racist knowledge by incorporating a diversity of media and individuals. By extension, I wish to leave the reader with a curiosity to visit the *Master Narratives* monument, and share or listen to its associated stories.

Structure

Firstly, I begin my thesis by discussing previous research that supported and expanded my understanding of what constitutes a counter-monument, before I move on to synthesise the key theories that informed my analytical interpretations. I then discuss case-study methodology and the qualitative methods that I used: semi-structured interviews and qualitative content analysis, alongside additional contextual information on *Master Narratives*. The *Analysis* is where I weave together interpretations of *Master Narratives*, drawing primarily on interview data to highlight how the project functions as a convivial medium aimed at transforming relations and emotions connected to (anti)racism. Finally, I conclude by restating the research question, aimed towards contributing to “the ongoing social dialogue and praxis”, regarding *Master Narratives* and, more broadly, the Media and Communication field (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 139). Concerning the latter, I provide an exemplary case of how counter-monuments can be approached as ‘cool media’ to understand social and political phenomena through the theoretical lenses of esthetic experience and conviviality (McLuhan, 1964).

Literature Review

Traditionally, monuments were some of the key landmarks within cities, strategically erected in places that have socio-political significance, and commissioned by those who held power in society. These monuments were tools for nation-building, communicating a sense of national pride, achievement, celebration, and/or identification, which was especially common in the 19th Century (Atkinson-Phillips, 2018). However, as nationalism became increasingly problematised in the 20th Century, monument designs, sites, and subsequent usages have multiplied and diversified (Stevens, Franck & Fazakerley, 2018). This extension of monument functions and forms is exemplified by counter-monuments, emerging from the “development of memorial sculpture in the 20th Century across Western Europe and America”, such as Lin’s Vietnam War Memorial in Washington and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin (Suslau, 2025).

Within this developmental context, Young (1992) has been frequently cited as a key scholar who coined the counter-monument and voiced the challenge of how memory can be transmitted via counter-monuments, involving the transformation of political values into aesthetic values. For Young, counter monuments are a “memorialisation strategy particularly suited to a country seeking to remember and honour the victims of its own national crimes” (DeTurk, 2017, p. 81-82). Counter-monuments contrast to traditional monuments based on “at least one: subject, form, site, visitor experience and meaning” (Stevens, Franck & Fazakerley, 2018, p. 722). *Master Narratives* deploys anti-monumental techniques, differing to conventional subjects, sites, forms, and visitor meaning, positioning it as a counter-monument. Through a (paradigmatic) case study of *Master Narratives*, I wish to add to scholarly discussions of what counter-monuments can do as imaginative and communicative media.

The current proliferation of counter-monuments, including anti-monuments, non-monuments, counter-hegemonic monuments, non-traditional monuments, digital monuments, and post-monuments, all “embody the question of what a monument actually does” (Amsellem, 2022, p. 21). This question has manifested into normative debates regarding the role of monuments, which is reflected in the propensity of scholars and media to report on monuments’ (symbolic) contestation and (practical or functional) re-workings, such as the recent rise in Fallist-movements and associated counter-monuments (Frank & Ristic, 2020). However, contemporary monument contestations are not new, but instead “point to age-old practices of

subjecting memorial artifacts and public images to both theoretical questioning and practical challenges” (Frick, 2024, p. 90). Hence, the symbolic, theoretical, and practical dimensions of counter-monuments should not be dichotomised, since monuments are both “public materialisations of history [,built during a specific time and place,] and are aesthetic symbols” (Pinson, 2025, p. 847). Accordingly, in my case study, I aim to connect theoretical perspectives embodied by *Master Narratives*, including conviviality and esthetic experience, together with a consideration of pragmatist learning and emotions.

While scholarly interest on monuments spans various fields, it has not yet been widely researched by Media and Communication scholars (Chen & Suneta, 2024). Although media perspectives have become more common, for example, in exploring digital monuments and people’s usages of digital media to engage with monuments; it remains common for monuments to be overlooked as media, especially since focus tends to reside with either the monument’s physical structure or meanings communicated by the public (Widrich, 2018). Since both the monument and people shape the affective space in-between, I will attempt to shed light on the monuments’ design, by interviewing the two artists of *Master Narratives*, together with its experiential dimension, as communicated by several actors engaged with *Master Narratives*.

In media studies, during the late 20th Century, there was a conceptual shift from a deterministic view of media and its (quantifiable) effects on the audience, towards a more holistic (and qualitative) understanding of how media is shaped through and by users’ relational engagement with media’s associated affordance(s) (Hermes & Kopitz, 2024). This relational understanding of media foregrounds the media users agency, in concert with the media, its content, and/or developers, which, in turn, redefined the (passive) audience into (active) users (Hermes & Kopitz, 2024). Likewise, while traditional monuments transmitted a uni-directional, single narrative, counter-monuments are dynamically related to diverse publics, expanding memory production to include multiple narratives.

Young (1992, p. 290) asks: “how does one remember an absence?”, hinting at something that was and perhaps is, but has been hidden or forgotten. Approaching this question using counter-monuments, which have “affective and communicative powers”, via the field of media and communication can be illuminating (Stevens, Franck & Fazakerley, 2018, p. 722). A media perspective can help to show that “time and memory are interdependent, in dialectical flux”

(Young, 1992, p. 294), just like remembering and forgetting are conceived of as two sides of the same coin (Mitchell, 2003). Young's (1992) interest in the relation between monuments and memory has been frequently echoed by other scholars, within and beyond the field of memory studies, coinciding with the memory boom of the mid-2000s (Cudny & Appelblad, 2019; Legg, 2025). For example, Bronner (2025, p. 74) inquired: "How does one remember what has already been structurally forgotten within living memory?". Arguably, counter-monuments, including *Master Narratives*, can act as material and imaginative media that communicate convivial ideas and values that, in turn, prompt reflections, discussions, emotions, and actions, which can foster new understandings and/or relations. I seek to explore (some of) these understandings that people involved with *Master Narratives* want to and/or have developed, responding to Stevens, Franck and Fazakerley (2018, p. 735) call for future researchers to examine "the designs and meanings of counter-monuments" and how they "serve particular audiences and interests in the present".

Counter-monuments have brought my attention to how artworks, lacking connection to people and the enviroing conditions, can merely exist as physical objects. Conversely, works of art that develop through and with dynamic engagements and circulations, in both imagination and observation (in space), are animated and saturated with social meaning (Dewey, 1934). Therefore, works of art are irreducible to their materiality as they are enmeshed with social signification. For example, on a recent guided tour of the Louvre, the guide noted that the prestige status of the Mona Lisa painting is largely attributable to the frequent engagements and circulations that it has prompted in people's imaginations, comprising one symbol of Paris, and physically, such as in reproductions on tourist magnets, both of which constitute one another. Evidently, monumental works of art resist neat containment "within bounds of space and time" (DeTurk, 2017, p. 83).

Traditional monuments (i.e. artworks) were commonly created at a distance from the public and their environment and so they frequently deferred or limited attention into mere recognition, like when a person, in passing, notices a statue of a noble man on a pedestal without engaging in further thought or action (Chen & Suneta, 2024; Golańska, 2020). By extension, monuments have been primarily studied as physical structures. However, what animates monuments are the discussions and interactions surrounding them as well as other mediums and spaces that embody the monument, ranging from "memorials, museums, artistic installations" (Golańska, 2020, p. 76) to disco (Robinson, 2025) and digital memorials

(Uwalaka, 2026). Hence, scholars are beginning to extend and redirect studies, concepts, and functions of monuments, with counter-monuments presenting one such conceptual and functional effort, as exemplified by *Master Narratives* (Murphy, 2021). Considering that for something to become memorable there must exist knowledge on it, which can be mediated in plural ways, a media perspective can illuminate that which surrounds and expands the notion of the traditional monument, specifically, making it counter. Counter-monuments (i.e. works of art) attract, concentrate, and sustain attention, invoking active, and often unanticipated, perception and engagement (Krzyżanowska, 2016). Specifically, counter-monuments aim:

not to console but provoke; not to remain fixed but to change; not to be everlasting but to disappear; not to be ignored by its passersby but to demand interaction; not to remain pristine but to invite its own violation and desecration; not to accept graciously the burden of memory but to throw it back to the town's feet. (Young, 1992, p. 277).

Accordingly, a counter-monument can be conceptualised as both a noun and verb but, in this case study, emphasis is placed on the latter, since the doing is what I will argue transforms monuments into counter-monuments, necessitating a focus on their processual and mediated becoming. Specifically, *Master Narratives* can serve as a paradigmatic case for the value of understanding the processual becoming of media in connection to pre-existing media. The popular understanding of a monument as a noun, defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as a “statue, building, or other structure” (OED, 2026), is mirrored in the tendency of scholars to approach monuments and memorial landscapes through a focus on their external and physical existence (Murphy, 2021). The OED (2023) also defines a monument as a verb: “to provide with a monument”; “to commemorate with a monument”; and “to turn into a monument”. Arguably, these latter definitions reify the monument as a noun and that which pre-exists and is possessable. Moreover, there does not exist a definition of a counter-monument in the OED, thus, it can be useful to consider the definition of a similar word: ‘counter-movement’, defined as “a movement in opposition; a contrary movement”, to understand what counter-monuments do (OED, 2025a). Notably, “without the meaning of the verb that of the noun remains blank”, which explains my initial curiosity regarding why many monuments appear to be almost invisible, despite often being located in urban centres (Dewey, 1934, p. 53). In this way, such monuments can appear demanding, much like an external order, which paradoxically deters attention and interest instead of inviting participation.

Theoretical Perspectives

Drawing on the theoretical contributions of Dewey (1916; 1934) in regard to esthetics and education, I will discuss how *Master Narratives*, embodying the notion of art as experience, comes alive through its mediation and people's subsequent engagement. Mediation, as a form of communication, can contribute to furthering the educational function of counter-monuments, developing from and in relation to things, people, and environments (Dewey, 1916). Dahlgren and Hill (2023) view context and identity as key parameters shaping media engagement and I expect these parameters, whose coalescence relies on and can prompt further emotional experiences, to point to how counter-monuments can be conceived of as cultural manifestations. To understand what counter-monuments do, I will draw on the concept of emotions as theorised by Goldie (2000) and as applied to media engagement by Dahlgren and Hill (2023, p. 17), who contend that “affect, emotion and reason are always”, to varying degrees, co-existent in engagement. In like manner, Dewey (1934, p. 38) claims that the unity that characterises esthetic experience is “neither emotional, practical, nor intellectual”, for they are all necessary constituent qualities. Additionally, in contrast to common understandings of works of art as material and external products, Dewey (1934) conceptualises esthetic products, action, and perception as being permeated with and held together by emotions and imagination. This relational understanding of emotions and actions (i.e. internalities and externalities) aligns with phronesis, which emphasises value-rationality, and will inform my analytical focus on the emotion of passion and the action of education, and how they come together to form passionate education (Flyvbjerg, 2001).

Contrasting to (much of) formal education that maintains a separation between life experience (or practice and emotions) and knowledge (or rationality), counter-monuments, as affective and communicative media, can help bridge this gap, and, in turn, re-enliven education (Dewey, 1916). Hence, *Master Narratives* presents an entry point to think through “how public art can be conceived of in new and expansive ways” (Thor, 2023, p. 15), as it includes and develops from diverse, personal points of view (Goldie, 2000). Specifically, I aim to illuminate how conviviality, with its emphasis on emotional and practical being and relationality with others, can help monuments to be conceived of in a new light: from a noun to a verb (Deniz, 2024; Illich, 1973).

Emotions are neither short-lived nor solely comprised of beliefs and desires, rather “the personal point of view and the intentionality of feelings” are “centre stage in emotional experience” (Goldie, 2000, p. 50-51). In order to perceive and understand these feelings, it can be beneficial to allow the “narrative structure to speak for itself in all its detail” (Goldie, 2000, p. 71), resonating with Flyvbjerg’s (2001, p. 82) description of the ability of case studies to “close in on real-life situations and test views directly in relation to phenomena as they unfold in practice”. The process, consisting of practices, rather than the end-product, is also at the centre of Illich’s (1973) and Deniz’s (2024) conceptualisation of conviviality, as a shared experience that is what it is because of the diversity of individuals that interact with one another, media, or tools, and the environment. This view is consistent with Dewey’s (1934, p. 114) theory of esthetic experience as consisting of an act that is “exactly what it is because of how it is done”.

The end, or instrumental function, of a work of art involves a “refreshed attitude towards the circumstances and exigencies of ordinary experience”, which is internalised, carried forward, and transformed via future experiences (Dewey, 1934, p. 145). However, due to the “industrially determined shape of our expectations” (Illich, 1973, p. 33), instrumentality tends to be associated with “narrow ends”, and physical objects with “bounded edges” (Dewey, 1934, pp. 145, 200). In consequence, outcomes are narrow, bounded, superficial, and/or short-lived. Counter-monuments that are esthetically created and perceived can widen this view of instrumentality, acting as convivial tools, which provide engaged people the “opportunity to enrich the environment with the fruits of his or her vision” (Illich, 1973, p. 34). This extension of esthetic quality into “the common or mill run of things” can, in turn, help to reconnect the “continuity of esthetic experience with normal processes of living” (Dewey, 1934, p. 9). I will attempt to shed light on this reciprocal relation between art and everyday life by exploring how *Master Narratives* is brought into being via communication, including its mediation. Mediation is crucial to *Master Narratives* being and becoming, considering that every “object is perceived by a cumulative series of interactions” (Dewey, 1934, p. 228).

Perception requires interest, otherwise it is but mere observation, and involves emotions that shape action, or feelings towards (Goldie, 2000, p. 73), without which action is just moving through the motions (Dewey, 1916). Interest can be cultivated through counter-monuments that incorporate and prompt emotions that can inform prospective actions (Dewey, 1934). Specifically, counter-monuments, like interest, connect “two things otherwise distant”, which can widen people’s horizons and, thus, serve an educational function (Dewey, 1916, p. 149).

Therefore, becoming attentive to our emotional responses during an esthetic experience can reveal something about us, such as our values and ideals. In consequence, learning can occur when we “respect our emotional responses, and listen to what they have to say to us and about us”, in concert with subsequent “examination and reflection” (Goldie, 2000, p. 49). In addition to revealing something about our identities and the society in which they were formed, emotions evoked by works of art can be revealing of that which is absent or lacking in our environments. This absence is exemplified in the common artistic expression of the theme, and universal experience, of loss, creating awareness of people’s “union with one another in origin and destiny” (Dewey, 1934, p. 282).

Following a depiction of that which is non-existent or lost in the here and now, works of art are moving, involving re-considerations of current conditions and (imagined) future conditions that can guide ensuing actions. This addition of values and meanings, stemming from prior experiences, and “absent in fact and present only imaginatively”, is what makes experience emotional and human (Dewey, 1934, p. 284). Thus, it is values and meanings that are important in moulding people’s worldviews and experiences, including learning, and I will argue that *Master Narratives* embodies conviviality and, by extension, learning “by living active and responsible lives” (Illich, 1973, p. 81). Conviviality, like esthetic experience, consists of both a co-existence, and tension, between conflict and solidarity (Deniz, 2024). Put differently, conviviality is neither a glorified celebration of diversity, nor an exaggeration or obfuscation of the conflicts that arise from differences (Deniz, 2024). Instead, conviviality is aimed at unification, striving to do “away with isolations and conflicts among the elements of our being, to utilize oppositions among them to build a richer personality” that arise from the “common elements of the experienced world” (Dewey, 1934, p. 258). Education that brings in materials that personally concerns individuals, mattering to the home and community, can help bridge the aforementioned perceived divide of emotions and rationality, providing a means to reflect on and act on that which is personal and social (or cultural).

Media, like esthetic products and convivial tools, can provide prompts for “reflection and use of judgement to select material of observation and recollection”, based on “observation, imagination, and memory” (Dewey, 1916, p. 156). These active mental practices highlight a key dimension of knowledge formation and meaning-making, concerning how objects “do not influence mind (or form ideas and beliefs) except as they are implicated in action for prospective consequences” (Dewey, 1916, p. 38). Paradoxically, and to the detriment of the

creation of esthetic and convivial tools and relations, the “intellectual and emotional reaction of the forms of human association under which the world’s work is carried on receives little attention [from laymen and scholars alike] as compared with physical output” (Dewey, 1916, p. 8). Illich (1973, p. 35) explains this imbalance as a consequence of the industrially shaped nature of people’s expectations and behaviours, creating a split between people and their actions and relations to things, people, and the environment, which, in turn, hinders the “user to express his meaning in action.” Similarly, Dewey (1934) notes that the development of industrial, capitalist society has contributed to how products, which were initially used as part of community’s daily life, now function in separation from the conditions that led to their origin. This split between “works of art and the *genius loci* of which they were once the natural expression” is exemplified by the “contents of galleries and museums” (Dewey, 1934, p. 7-8). By contrast, counter-monuments, which are typically embedded in the local context that concerns the content and public, can help to restore the connection between people, their needs, and actions (Orrje, 2022).

Within schools, which Illich (1973) frequently draws on as an exemplar of an industrial tool, this split is one “between the experience gained in more direct associations and what is acquired in school” (Dewey, 1916, p. 11). Accordingly, I will focus on how *Master Narratives*, developing from collective experiences and memories of (anti)racism, can help to bridge this divide, extending subject-matter into an esthetic experience. Moreover, by situating *Master Narratives* within a broader context of a media ecology, and viewing it through the complementary lenses of conviviality and esthetic experience, I wish to contribute towards a shift in focus from the “direct moral effect and intent” of artworks to the “context in which works of art are produced and enjoyed” (Dewey, 1934, p. 360). This focus on what art does rather than what it represents necessitates a processual attentiveness, aligning with an emphasis that both conviviality and counter-monuments place on incompleteness (Kruger, 2024).

Acquisition of knowledge, as in “what is acquired in school”, reduces learning to the possession of knowledge as a commodity and, subsequently, implies a distance between the subject (pupil) and the object (knowledge), thus, narrowing means to ends (Dewey, 1916, p. 11). This acquisition of knowledge, as a noun, also reinforces the value of efficiency as propagated by rational, industrial machines (Illich, 1973). Namely, that more is better and, hence, growth is ‘objectively’ good, notwithstanding their commonly counter-productive and destructive tendencies (Illich, 1973). However, while Illich (1973) is critical of industrial tools and

mindsets, he does not contend that societies can or should do completely without them; instead, he notes that people need to develop awareness of the limits that such tools pose, entailing a personal responsibility and interest in balance, which conviviality together with esthetic experience can promote. Dewey (1916, p. 71) upholds this view, claiming that learning, as a verb, can be balanced by two types of knowledge, one being a “result of the creative action of people on their environment, and the second represents the result of man’s trivialization by his manufactured milieu.” I will pay particular attention to the former, regarding how *Master Narratives* assists with the transformation of the noun knowledge into the verb learning, via emotions and imagination. This esthetic shift from noun to verb can illuminate the richness of the social imagination (Illich, 1973).

Imagination pertains to that which is physically non-existent, arising mentally. Yet it can bring us closer to reality without which reason “cannot attain complete grasp and a self-contained assurance” or, in the case of a monument, animation (Dewey, 1934, p. 34). According to Dewey (1934, p. 34), reason “must fall back upon imagination - upon the embodiment of ideas in emotionally charged sense”. Likewise, Flyvbjerg (2001, p. 2) understands phronesis to be at the height of ways of knowing, surpassing technical, “techne”, and scientific, “episteme”, knowledge, which in a prudent and “virtuoso social and political actor” are internalised and transformed into a way of being, or “social practice”, involving value judgement. Experiences, which are foundational to phronesis, constitute a flow “from something to something”, resulting in an “enduring whole” that is “diversified by successive phases that are emphases of its varied colours” (Dewey, 1934, p. 38). This conceptualisation of esthetic experience resonates with how Deniz (2024, p. 2) drew on her participants’ understanding and comparison of living with diversity to *Ebru* art, whereby:

the boundaries of patterns are fused into each other and hence, while you can see their distinctiveness and differences, they are tightly bound to each other and are not prone to separation, nor destruction. While making ebru, you throw the colours on the water and with the help of different brushes, you fuse the patterns together, by mingling them without mixing the patterns or melting them together. You, then, put a paper on the water and pull it out, where the picture stays solidly on the paper.

Ebru, like esthetic experience, in contrast to “marbling” (Deniz, 2024, p. 2), or “industrial tools” (1972, p. 23), or an anesthetic “art product” (Dewey, 1934, p. 1), illustrates the

importance of convivial tools, or media, such as the “different brushes”, for connecting separate parts into a whole (Deniz, 2024, p. 2). In my case study, I conceive of *Master Narratives* as one such ‘brush’ or, more generally, counter-monuments as convivial tools, which foster the interaction and flow of different phases through people’s affective engagement.

In a similar way to Deniz (2024), Dahlgren and Hill (2023, p. 22-23) drew on the “metaphor of sound and chordal relations to understand how all the five parameters”: context, motivations, modalities, intensities, and consequences, “of media engagement work together” to “create a certain tonal arrangement”. Taking inspiration from these scholars, who share a pragmatic approach to research, I believe it can be useful to exemplify analytical findings or concepts with metaphors. For instance, Dewey (1934) often included simple examples connected to water, which like esthetic experiences, share a key property of flow, making them particularly revealing of how esthetic experiences form. As I read Illich’s (1973) and Dewey’s (1934, p. 63) work, I noted how energy and, more specifically, “transformation of energy into thoughtful action”, forms the bedrock to understanding esthetic and convivial practices. This transformation, of both the old and the new, results in the so-called flow state, whereby “the present impulsion gets form and solidity while the old, the “stored”, material is literally revived, given new life and soul through having to meet a new situation” (Dewey, 1934, p. 63). A water-related metaphor came to mind as I tried to consolidate my understanding of this transformational nature of esthetic practices:

After a stone is dropped in a pool of water, the water gets ripples and the stone looks brighter and shiny, representing the material that is revived. Both the water and stone change qualities and had to interact with one another to undergo the change.

Counter-monuments, as an example of an art movement, express “something new in human experience, some new mode of interaction of the live creature with his surroundings, and hence the release of powers previously cramped or inert” (Dewey, 1934, p. 316). In like manner, McLuhan (1964, p. 9) understands a medium’s function as shaping and controlling “the scale and form of human association and action”. Accordingly, it will be interesting to explore how people engaged with *Master Narratives* express this release or change in energy, such as in their emotions, thoughts, or actions that arise in connection to their work with *Master Narratives*.

Methods

Case-study Methodology

According to Flyvbjerg (2001, p. 84), case studies commonly include “a substantial element of narrative”, which can be partly attributed to their form, typically consisting of diverse voices and materials that can be tied together through narration. Counter-monuments, much like case studies, mediate narrative(s) that merge various materials, ideas, and emotions, which constitute their processual generation that, upon erection, consummate in what appears as a sudden emergence “of material above the threshold of consciousness” (Dewey, 1934, p. 78). In a similar fashion, I have brought together different actors' voices and media in an effort to expand what counter-monuments mean, placing emphasis on what they do, rather than what they are. Specifically, I focused on the (mediated and imagined) *Master Narratives*, visible on the Malmö City webpage, the *Master Narratives* webpage, pedagogical material, digital blogs and articles, the physical memory boxes, a public talk: *Plats, Motstånd, och (Mot)monument*, and the documentary film: *Letters to a Serial Killer*. Approaching *Master Narratives* via these mediated representations and people's imaginations can help to highlight the processual becoming of counter-monuments, with their associated “complexities and contradictions”, which are also characteristic of everyday life and (good) narratives (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 84).

A case-study approach, with its attentiveness to nuances and details, is well-suited to explicating processes of becoming and, hence, is particularly symbiotic to the study of works of art, considering that becoming is a quality of esthetic experience. Dewey (1934, p. 47) argues that:

some decisive action is needed in order to establish contact with the realities of the world and in order that impressions may be so related to facts that their value is tested and organised.

This practical contact and bringing together of facts and values can be accomplished via Flyvbjerg's (2001) pragmatist, case-study approach. Counter-monuments are especially suited to the act of balancing rationality and values, or emotionality, since they are an expression of the “union of the universal and individual”, such as in their common, yet artistically individualised, embodiment of the universal, and “eternal disparity of aspiration and achievement” (Dewey, 1916, p. 243). This disparity consists of obstacles and resistances that

shape works of art, and motivate action. In conducting my case study, I remained attentive to this gap, viewing it as a desire “aimed at some end”, which informed my understanding of people’s motivation to engage with *Master Narratives* related activities and collaborations (Goldie, 2000, p. 24). In addition to how case studies can foster an understanding of “real-life situations and test views directly in relation to phenomena as they unfold in practice”, they can also aid researchers in conducting, shaping, and experiencing their work esthetically, or in an abductive manner (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 82). Consequently, a meaningful and reciprocal relation to learning is fostered between the researcher and participants, including questioning or an expanding understanding of pre-conceived notions, such as what a monument is and does as a convivial tool.

‘What is this case a case of?’ (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 86)

⇒ A Counter-Monument, *Master Narratives*, as a Communicative Medium

Master Narratives is the third and final phase of the Anti-Racist Monument project that started in 2019. It was initiated by a group of civil society members, namely: Manal Masri, Nicolas Lunabba, Showan Shattak, Daniel Diaz and Robert Nilsson Mohammadi, for the purpose of consolidating discussions on (anti)racism in the public sphere (Malmö stad, 2025). This project consisted of:

public talks carried out in 2021, a series of temporary public artworks within the group exhibition *The Whole City is a Monument* carried out in 2022 and 2023, and the permanent public artwork *Master Narratives*. (Malmö stad, 2025).

Master Narratives consists of two, connected phases, representing the “means that are incorporated in the outcome” (Dewey, 1934, p. 205). These two phases are:

- 1) The social process that I discussed in relation to the memory boxes, which invited Malmö’s citizens to write down their reflections on (anti)racism, and:
- 2) The sculptural process: a monument, consisting of bronze rods, lifting a large block of stone, which will be erected in Jesusparken, Malmö, later this year (2026).

Qualitative Research Methods

For my case study, I was interested in exploring communication surrounding the *Master Narratives* monument to understand what it meant for the people engaged with the project. Semi-structured qualitative interviews were compatible with my aim of interpreting participants' meaning-making and cultivating an understanding of participants' life-worlds through the interpretation of meaning(s) of a described phenomenon: *Master Narratives* (Kvale, 2007). Initially, I used purposive sampling to contact key stakeholders of *Master Narratives*, specifically the two artists and five initiators. Subsequently, I employed snowball sampling, beginning with a video-call with the project managers, Anna and Rena. Through this initial contact, I was referred to Gustavo Nazar at the Pedagogical Institute in Malmö, who then put me in contact with two development secretaries at the same institute. These secretaries provided contact details of a senior teacher involved with *Master Narratives*, who was then also invited to participate.

In total, I conducted four interviews, two of which included two participants, which was a decision taken by the participants (see Table 1). Three of the four interviews were conducted in person, either at the participants' workplace or a quiet space within a public institution, such as a library or university. The interview with the two artists, Susanna and Santiago, was conducted via video call on Zoom because they were based in another city in Sweden. For all interviews, I created interview guides tailored to the different occupational positions and the participants' related work with *Master Narratives*. However, the majority of the introductory and concluding questions remained consistent; for example, I concluded by asking about the participants' hopes for *Master Narratives*. Using my phone, I audio-recorded three of the four interviews for the purpose of transcription, with the exception of one interview where the participant felt more comfortable with me taking handwritten notes. I transcribed all of the interviews manually and noted analytical memos where I began to notice commonalities and differences between the interviews and themes. For instance, during my analytical writing, I combined two themes that I had initially analysed separately: knowledge and action, to better align with the pragmatist philosophy of learning by doing, as was expressed by the participants.

Table 1. Sampling.

Name(s) of Participants	Profession/title	Location, Date, and Time of Interview	Duration of Interview
Charlene Rosander.	Senior Teacher in Advanced English at Söderkullaskolan, Malmö.	Söderkullaskolan, 13.03.26, 9:30 am.	49 minutes.
Juliana Öhlmajer and Alejandra Pizzaro Correa.	Development secretary for the Pedagogical Inspiration department in Malmö City.	Malmö University, 18.03.26, 10:35 am.	94 minutes.
Susanna Marcus Jablonski and Santiago Mostyn.	Artists of <i>Master Narratives</i> .	Zoom, 27.03.26, 10:08 am.	54 minutes.
Manal Masri.	Senior producer, Creative Executive, and Director of documentary film: <i>Letters to a Serial Killer</i> .	Malmö City Library Cafe, 31.03.26, 11 am.	50 minutes.

The interviews were analysed manually. Specifically, I used highlighters to mark four analytical themes, which developed from my theoretical understanding and re-reading of the interview transcripts as part of a “constant comparative method” (Bingham, 2023, p. 2). In the left margin of the transcripts, I noted in-vivo codes, and in the right margin, I wrote analytical memos, including my theoretical interpretations, which acted as my primary tool for making analytical interpretations. I also underlined anything that stood out to me, such as when participants expressed emotions, even if this did not fit a theme, so as not to lose nuance. The four themes that I highlighted were:

- 1) Knowledge: excerpts where participants referred to education or specific ways of knowing.
- 2) Action: excerpts where participants referred to a form of practice, such as activism.
- 3) Personal meaning/examples: excerpts where participants drew on examples to explain something or when they directly said what *Master Narratives* meant to them.
- 4) Monument: excerpts where participants spoke about *Master Narratives* as a structure/monument, or other monuments.

I complemented this thematic and theoretical analysis of the interviews with a qualitative content analysis of a documentary film, *Letters to a Serial Killer*, and one chapter from the book: 'I am valuable', authored by some people who are involved with *Master Narratives*. These media were chosen because of their direct relation to *Master Narratives*, contributing to the material tapestry of my case study. For the qualitative content analysis, I noted reflections that connected the content of the media to the four analytical themes that I had developed from my theoretical readings and interviews. Additionally, I wrote short case summaries to have an overview of the key events and people that had been mentioned (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2023).

Ethical Considerations

To obtain informed consent, I provided participants with a brief summary of my research aims as well as procedural details, such as the interview duration, via email. Additionally, prior to starting the interview, all participants reviewed and signed a consent form outlining their rights, including the right to withdraw at any stage, and how their personal data would be used and what this would include. Regarding anonymity and confidentiality, I made the decision to leave participant names unanonymised due to the public nature of the project and the participants' professional roles within it. A few participants asked to review the draft analyses, with the specific quotes that I included, to ensure they were satisfied with my interpretations. Finally, given the sensitive nature of this case study, I ensured to practice empathic listening and tried to end interviews on a hopeful and reflexive note; for example, asking participants to reflect on the achievements of the project thus far and their wishes for the future.

Reflections and Limitations

Prior to conducting this case study, I reflected on my position as a non-Swedish researcher, exploring a topic that has personal and local significance to the residents of Malmö. I found that this 'outsider' position was, however, not an obstacle for my research, which was potentially bridged by my own experiences of upbringing in London, a multi-cultural city, where my initial knowledge of racism developed. Moreover, all of the participants expressed eagerness to discuss *Master Narratives* and, given the project's aim of supporting discussions on anti-racism, they expressed gratitude for my academic interest in their work.

Before conducting the two paired interviews, I assumed that it might pose some limitations. For instance, I reflected on whether both participants would have equal opportunities for voicing their thoughts or might hold back from sharing something they deemed the other person might not agree with. However, my experience was contrary to such concerns. I found these interviews to be especially fitting for creating a narrative flow, as participants had extra time to think about their responses while the other participant spoke, often building on each other's answers. Additionally, by giving participants greater control over the direction of the discussion, paired interviews can minimise the power gap between the researcher and participants.

While I did not explicitly discuss power in my analysis, it was apparent in how participants spoke about *Master Narratives*: these narratives, like those in *Letters to a Serial Killer*, mediated knowledge of the unequal power relations between Malmö's citizens, society, and institutions during the Mangs era, highlighting the "realities of power" (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 98). Therefore, this project, and my case study, contribute towards shifting power towards those who experience marginalisation on racial terms. By encouraging the act of storytelling, marginalised individuals can be made "familiar in these stories", countering the lack of institutional support that was present in the Mangs era and, in other ways, today (Frank, 1995, p. 2).

Returning to the question of what my case is a case of, Flyvbjerg (2001, p. 86) claims that "the narrative itself is the answer". In resemblance to the counter-monuments' title: *Master Narratives*, Flyvbjerg (2001, p. 86) suggests that 'the narrative' is not singular, because "in addition to the voice of case actors and case narrators, there is space for the voice of the reader in deciding the meaning of a given case". This space for mutual reflexivity and learning is a strength of a case-study methodology, highlighting the symbiotic relation between cases, or mediums like counter-monuments, and the stories or examples that they mediate. Likewise, "cool media are high in participation or completion by the audience" (McLuhan, 1964, p. 8). The likeness between counter-monuments and cases, or 'cool media', which embody or mediate narratives, fostered my understanding of how counter-monuments can act as pedagogical tools that are convivial, engaging individuals in personally meaningful action (McLuhan, 1964).

Conviviality and pragmatism were particularly compatible theoretical lenses for researching counter-monuments together with esthetic theory, as they view experiences as a way of learning. Dewey (1934, p. 286) argues that:

the particular strand of experience that is offered reveals, when it is placed in contrast with esthetic experience itself, the weakness of the theory. For it is shown that the system in question has superimposed some preconceived idea upon experience instead of encouraging or even allowing esthetic experience to tell its own tale.

A common and misconceived limitation of case studies is their lack of generalisability; however, this is not a weakness when it is countered by depth, or “thick description” (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 133) and narratives, providing a means for “esthetic experience to tell its own tale” (Dewey, 1934, p. 286). While both breadth and depth are required for the development of social sciences, “the balance between case studies and large samples is currently biased in favour of the latter” (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 87). Hence, my case study contributes towards re-balancing this bias from quantitative, or epistemic, to qualitative validity measures, including phronesis, with their specific strengths. Additionally, considering that counter-monuments, as works of art, are “susceptible to indefinite perceptual differentiation”, striving for depth as opposed to breadth was more applicable (Dewey, 1934, p. 212).

Lastly, I have come to understand my case study as a phronetic and esthetic act, because throughout the research process, much like the participants who have worked with *Master Narratives*, I experienced a “sense of growing meaning conserved and accumulating toward an end that is felt an accomplishment of a process” (Dewey, 1934, p. 40). Crucially, I learned how counter-monuments, via movement towards consummation, can promote continuous action, emotional reflection, value reflexivity, and imagination, as an esthetic experience and convivial tool that can lead to qualitative change (see Analysis). Thus, my thesis has largely revolved around the value-rational question of: “What should be done?” (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 60). In answer to this question, I have exemplified how counter-monuments can support understandings of the “problems and the risks we face and how things may be done differently” and make “moral debate part of public life” (Flyvbjerg, 2001, pp. 61, 63).

Master Narratives as Experience: Continuous (Counter) Movement (Monument) towards Anti-Racism

Whilst talking to various actors about *Master Narratives*, and approaching it through the lenses of esthetic experience and conviviality, I sometimes lost sight of where my thesis project idea initially emerged from: a monument. My broadened view of *Master Narratives* is concordant with how it was emphasised as being a processual medium, rather than just a ‘high definition’ physical structure, by the different actors with whom I spoke (McLuhan, 1964). This re-direction to the communication surrounding the monument, rather than solely its physical structure, which had captured my initial curiosity, together with the theme of anti-racism, reflects a pragmatist notion that what “counts is what we do, not what we receive” (Dewey, 1934, p. 106). However, as emphasised by McLuhan (1964), it is not what a medium is used for that gives it its character, since functions tend to be numerous and can evolve. Instead, it is how a medium instigates “psychic and social consequences”, arising from the amplification or speeding up of “existing processes” that makes a medium what it is (McLuhan, 1964, p. 8). To explore these processes, I took into consideration how *Master Narratives* content and function consists of other media and individuals, with pre-existing emotions, values, and work.

Just as media constantly interact with other media, an iterative process is inherent in doing, including storytelling, whereby “the individual encounters through conversations with others and through various media such as books, television, or the internet”, or a counter-monument, an interaction between the personal biography and the collective culture (Breen & Mclean, 2017, p. 198; Frank, 1995). Consequently, works of art, as a form of doing and, by extension, an example of media, bridge the dichotomies between the “individual and universal, subjective and objective, of freedom and order” (Dewey, 1934, p. 86). Accordingly, relations give shape to works of art that, in turn, cultivates empathy, explaining why speaking with people involved with *Master Narratives* often felt emotional (Dewey, 1934).

Based on a relational understanding of art as experience, or as a process and verb, I will discuss three intertwined themes: *Personal Meaning*, *Knowledge and Action*, and the *Moving Monument*, which are connected by emotions. Together, these analytical themes demonstrate how *Master Narratives*, as a communication medium, “shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action”, building on existing relations, emotions, and media, such as

the documentary *Letters to a Social Killer* (McLuhan, 1964, p. 9). Despite emotions being a central theme in my interviews and experience of doing interviews, it won't be discussed separately from the other themes. This decision stems from how I have come to understand emotions as the pervading quality, or affective energy, that connects the various phases of (esthetic) experience in a cyclical manner, creating movement and animating works of art (Dewey, 1934). There can still exist contradictions or disjunctions in the findings, as well as emotions, but people's emotions can hopefully continue an imaginative and literal movement beyond the monument's inauguration later this year. Furthermore, "a sense of coherence can be restored" via the act of storytelling that is mediated by *Master Narratives* (Frank, 1995, p. 61).

The first theme, *Personal Meaning*, denotes instances when participants spoke about their thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and/or hopes, typically based on prior experiences that they drew on as examples, about *Master Narratives*. This theme is based on how Flyvbjerg (2001) discusses the way in which people use examples to explain general principles, drawing on examples himself to argue for a social science that utilises cases to build theories. Within this first theme, emotions are especially revealing of the personal meaning of *Master Narratives* and, subsequently, how *Knowledge and Action*, which is the second theme, are motivated by emotions, such as sympathy, connecting the personal to the social (Dahlgren & Hill, 2023; Frank, 1995; Goldie, 2000). The second theme, *Knowledge and Action*, focuses on how *Master Narratives* expands the notion of education from an industrial tool to a convivial tool, starting with what is important to individuals as members of society. This experience is emotional, consisting of different feelings, which change in the process of doing, whether through designing a monument or communicating with students in schools (Goldie, 2000). Following these two themes, which cover the more experiential dimensions of production and reception, I will discuss *Master Narratives* as a *Moving Monument*, metaphorically, in relation to its design, as well as the ideas and emotions that it evokes. But, firstly, I aim to foreground *Master Narratives* as a communicative medium, beginning with a discussion of personal experiences that necessitated its existence and, in turn, cultivated an emotional experience, consisting of a "personal point of view and the intentionality of feelings" (Goldie, 2000, p. 50-51).

Personal Meaning of *Master Narratives*

Master Narratives was frequently approached through the mediation of stories, which pointed to a collective experience of (anti)racism, such as the emotion of fear that was prevalent when Peter Mangs committed murders in Malmö. These stories that the participants shared with me represented “a specific time in our present history” (Charlene, 2026), and highlighted “what the people into whose lives [*Master Narratives*] entered had in common, as creators and as those who were satisfied with” the monument and what it stood for (Dewey, 1934, p. 3). The emotion of fear was mentioned by all participants, stemming from Malmö inhabitants' experiences and/or knowledge of what was happening between 2003-2010. Specifically, that the violence committed by Peter Mangs was racially-motivated, which had implications for individuals' behaviours and relations on-the-ground. For instance, in *Letters to a Serial Killer* (2017), after Kamal was shot by Peter Mangs, he lost contact with most of his friends, and even his relation to himself changed. He doubted his own memories and experiences since the police and mainstream news media had framed him as criminally complicit, rather than a victim of racist violence. After receiving no institutional support, Kamal and his mother decided to leave their life and family in Sweden, and moved to live in Lebanon, illustrating how “Malmö did not heal together” (Charlene, 2026). Consequently, *Master Narratives*, a communication medium that promotes storytelling, can help to repair the damage that racist violence is having, assisting individuals in efforts of “redrawing maps and finding new destinations” (Frank, 1995, p. 53).

Charlene (2026), like Kamal, exemplified an experience of doubting her memory when her teacher had informed her that what she had learned in Ghana about slave forts being built by Sweden was incorrect. These examples, viewed through Illich's (1973) critical stance on industrial tools, serve as a metaphor for how institutions, operating based on a single, master narrative, can overlook or preclude an understanding of a shared history. In like manner, traditional monuments created by a single individual in power, depicting an ideal or celebratory reality, are often far removed from the realities on-the-ground, in which “loving and fighting are all part of living together in diversity and living with difference” (Deniz, 2024, p. 243). Convivial tools, such as counter-monuments, could remedy this exclusion by transforming spectators into participants, and valuing the diverse individuals that institutions depend on, thus, the product can be conceived of in tandem with the process (Illich, 1973; McLuhan, 1964). Another example of a convivial medium connected to *Master Narratives* is the method

book: *Jag är värdefull - mot en mänskliggörande barnrättspedagogik*, featuring a chapter on *Master Narratives* and how it can be used to introduce discussions on (anti)racism in schools, such as through screenings of the documentary *Letters to a Serial Killer*.

Manal Masri (2026), the director of *Letters to a Serial Killer*, noted that she did not make the documentary for the sole purpose of sharing her personal story and traumatic experience of having a sibling who was Peter Mangs' victim. Instead, she wanted it to act as a case of reflection for Swedish society, providing an entry point for discussions on racism and racist violence, much like phronesis facilitates reflexivity and aims at social praxis (Flyvbjerg, 2001). For instance, the documentary often features scenes from public spaces in Malmö, prompting the audience to feel they are a part of the story and to reflect on their own position within a racist structure, which affects individuals, who are part of the public world that we all share and, therefore, society at large. This mediation of a personal story via a documentary developed from Manal's prolonged interaction with objective conditions and institutions, including the justice system, police, schools, and the media. Evidently, "embodied stories have two sides, one personal and the other social" (Frank, 1995, p. 2). Likewise, esthetic works of art, and phronetic research, approach materials, or structures, and individuals as entwined with one another. Accordingly, the documentary, as a counter-medium to mainstream media reportings of Peter Mang's crimes, contributes to bridging the subjective (emotionality) and objective (rationality) divide that, in turn, can help to counter "compassion fatigue" (Manal, 2026).

Understanding relations between individuals and structures is facilitated via the act of telling stories, which can cumulatively create or point to a structure, since you "need structure to give evidence of structure" (Ahmed, 2017, p. 30). Alejandra (2026) emphasised the importance of communicating stories and listening as a way of understanding both individuals and society. She noted how being able to "name things" can help to:

know that I am not alone and I have a friend that also has the same experiences, so suddenly it's not in my head or what I think. No, this is part of a structure, a pattern, a strategy, a power tool. (Alejandra, 2026).

Charlene (2026) echoed this comment, stating that "the monument represents that you are not alone". Hence, while some structures, like racism, can be isolating, as exemplified by Kamal in *Letters to a Serial Killer*, communicating personal stories is a process that can enact

collectivity. It can make “common what had been isolated and singular”, and via the expression of meaning, the experiences of the narrator and the one listening attain clarity and solidity (Dewey, 1934, p. 253). An experience is cultivated when an individual's interactions with the environment transform into communication and participation, connecting individual agency with objective conditions of society (Dewey, 1934). Charlene (2026) emphasised the importance of both communication and participation when she said that the “monument will be a great meeting point for people to talk about these issues, but also to be able to work in schools.” A transformation of the interacting self with the environment into engagement also involves comprehension, that is, an amassing of “details and particulars physically scattered into an experienced whole” (Dewey, 1934, p. 56). *Master Narratives* facilitates this act of connection making, which is particularly apparent in its first phase: the “collective memory process” (Juliana, 2026). This phase consisted of memory boxes being placed in public institutions, such as libraries and schools, in Malmö, inviting people to write a letter about (anti-)racism. The memory boxes have the following written on them: “*Malmö's minnen är ett antirasistiskt monument*”, and contain letters that will be buried under the monument during its inauguration. Together, these stories can enhance the monument's expressiveness and assist in collective reckoning with the racist violence of the past, and its endurance in memory and experience, (re)constructing Malmö's historical narrative (Murphy, 2021).

In addition to gathering memories and reflections into boxes, *Master Narratives* also promotes their dispersal, contrasting to the tendency of traditional monuments to fixate a memory in opposition to the dynamic workings of time, which often makes them appear outdated, incongruous, or dead (Young, 1992). Susanna (2026) explained that “it's about how time will change these papers into soil”, foregrounding the transformation of memories over the preservation of a single memory as typically depicted by classical monuments of a “hero in bronze, on a stone pedestal, reflecting a history, which is not necessarily connected to anyone who goes by on a daily basis” (Santiago, 2026). In contrast to the distance between classical monuments and the public, *Master Narratives*, places primacy on individuals personal experiences, connecting time, as what is officially documented, and memory, as what lives on in people's bodies, in “dialectical flux” (Young, 1992, p. 294). Consequently, the wall that masks (classical) monuments' significance is shattered, because the *Master Narratives* monument, representing a specific time, becomes inseparable from its parts, like the individual memory notes, which grounds it within the public context of its origin (Dewey, 1934). In addition to making ideological connections, the *Master Narratives* artists aimed to promote

physical closeness between the public and the monument through the installment of benches around the monument, which can encourage sensorial engagement. Considering that children are important to the *Master Narratives* pedagogical application, creating an opportunity to physically interact with the monument can bring the children's "natural impulses into play" and, in turn, make learning more accessible by narrowing the gap between life outside and in school (Dewey, 1916, p. 228).

Emotions can appear surprising or isolated from the environment or object that stirs them, and their role in ensuing actions 'out of emotion' might be absent from perception, considering that most of our "emotional thought, feeling, and action is unreflective" (Goldie, 2000, p. 65). Therefore, even though engagement with media constitutes a routine part of people's daily lives, seldom are we aware of the emotions that precede and pervade this engagement (Dahlgren & Hill, 2023). Public art, as media, can bring awareness to our and others emotions and, in turn, support emotional expression, considering that "a sense of need for personal voice depends on the availability of the means" (Frank, 1995, p. 7). *Master Narratives* presents a means for this reflection and voicing personal experiences, such as through the act of writing a letter or discussing what the monument stands for, which can, in turn, prompt changes in emotions. For instance, Charlene (2026) observed how introducing the theme of racism in Malmö into her lessons changed the stories that her students told as well as the atmosphere in her classroom, creating a "warmer climate", with some students staying after class to share "stories, thoughts and how it felt during the lesson".

Some structures, such as racism, are invisible in a material sense, contrasting to physical structures like monuments, but they are nonetheless felt by those who come up against them (Ahmed, 2017). Hence, attending to emotions can be revealing of that which is invisible, hidden, or made to disappear, just like Kamal's experience of a racist attack was, for a long time, neglected by the police, media, and wider society. According to Goldie (2000, p. 5), an understanding of emotional lives requires consideration of how emotions form a "part of a larger unfolding narrative, not merely as a series of discrete episodes taken out of, and considered in abstraction from, the narrative in which they are embedded." Similarly, Dewey (1934) asserts that art critics should be reeducated in their way of reviewing works of art from objective/quantitative standards, which are better equipped for the measurement of physical fact, to seeing and hearing, or experiencing, the work of art for themselves. This experiential emphasis resonates with Flyvbjerg's (2001, p. 60) claim that phronetic studies should not only

act as “a mirror for society but also as society’s nose, eyes, and ears”, which qualitative methods attentive to the relations between qualities can facilitate. Counter-monuments, much like qualitative methods, are particularly akin to exemplifying relations, such as temporal relations, prompting reflection on the past and how people act in response to this memory in the present (Young, 1992). Taken together, attending to and expressing one's emotions during media engagement can embody a diversity of feelings that “relate to the subjectivity of the self, both individual and collective” (Dahlgren & Hill, 2023, p. 15). *Master Narratives*, by incorporating emotions, can transform knowledge of structures by facilitating a view and practice of learning as an experience and not merely as education for narrow ends (Dewey, 1934; Illich, 1973).

Learning as an experience is advanced by conviviality, during the process of “living active and responsible lives”, which involves creative (inter)action with others and the environment (Illich, 1973, p. 81). Therefore, collaboration, which was a key characteristic of how *Master Narratives* came into fruition, explains how *Master Narratives* embodies learning as a convivial tool. Susanna and Santiago viewed *Master Narratives* as a product that emerged via a process, consisting of discussions “with many groups of people involved in the making of this work; bronze engineers, the stone cutters, stone suppliers, transporters...” (Santiago, 2026). This collaboration, together with the artist's experiences of interacting with society and the environment, is illustrative of how esthetic works of art are moulded by what has previously been done and emotionally experienced. Santiago and Susanna shared commonalities with the people involved with *Master Narratives*, for instance, when they spoke about having “experiences in many vastly different ways of outsidership” (Santiago, 2026). Another example of how personal experiences informed *Master Narratives* was discussed by the artists during a public talk on *Plats, motstånd och (mot)monument*. I learned that the monument’s bronze rods were inspired by Santiago’s encounter with young bamboo shoots, which despite their small size, expressed strength in numbers. This inspiration, taken from nature, exemplifies how the value of materials that stir the artist(s) can be transformed into the material of a new experience, thereby changing materials into mediums that express something new (Dewey, 1934). Similarly, Alejandra (2026) mentioned how the memory boxes “create a connection, a feeling of belonging, a feeling that I am a part of this, and our collective memory is important”. This comment gets to the core of what classifies an esthetic experience, namely, when “tangled scenes of life” are unraveled and, following this, something new arises in the experience of both the spectator(s) and artist(s) (Dewey, 1934, p. 302).

Knowledge and Action (from Interaction)

Upon learning that the letters from the memory boxes were going to be buried under the *Master Narratives* monument, I inquired whether it would be possible to read and analyse the notes as part of my thesis project. Similarly, Alejandra (2026) “asked the question: why? These stories should be out there...” when she learned about the burial. This was a common response that the artists encountered, which made them reflect on why it was “almost the opposite of what” they were interested in doing, as expressed by Susanna’s (2026) concern for not wanting to “make a spectacle out of people’s traumas”. In this way, *Master Narratives* resonates with Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz’s ‘disappearing’ monument in Hamburg, which invited the public to inscribe notes on its lead surface (Young, 1992). The purpose of it being gradually lowered underground was to redirect memory work to the public (Young, 1992). In a similar fashion, Susanna and Santiago spoke about their decision to make the *Master Narratives* monument “analog” as a way to root it in the local context of Malmö, enacting its existence “as something which is shared by word of mouth and anecdotally” (Santiago, 2026). By contrast, if the monument was digital, it would no longer be anchored in Malmö’s local context or its residents whose personal stories would instead be on public display, which Santiago (2026) explained is “not for your eyes, as a viewer, as an audience member. It’s something that is personal, which is only between the sculpture, the work, and the person contributing.” Susanna (2026) also placed emphasis on contextual embeddedness, when she stated that the “trauma literally changed the landscape of the city”, and so “raising a monument is a kind of way of changing a landscape” (Susanna, 2026).

Communication is animating the *Master Narratives* monument and changing the landscape via an extension of the site of memory from the monument to the public engaged with the monument via personal reflection and interactions among themselves. This way of working with monuments in dialogue with the public aligns with Dahlgren and Hill’s (2023, p. 78) pragmatist understanding of knowledge as an active, “constructionist process”, “rather than some static cerebral archive”. Dewey (1934) similarly acknowledges that materials do not influence beliefs or values unless they are actively used in view of achieving prospective outcomes. Echoing this relational view of objects and subjects, Illich (1973, p. 23) notes that “individuals need tools to move [and be moved] and to dwell [imaginatively]”. These implications of tools correspond with McLuhan’s (1964, p. 8) assertion that media, as an example of a tool, “alter sense ratios or patterns of perception”.

The endurance and (re)construction, or mobility, of memory through action explains why a final work of art is only ever complete materially, while its influence on imagination and behaviour, or cumulatively in experience, continues to manifest in numerous and often unexpected ways (Dewey, 1934). Therefore, monuments move “through scales of memory, even as the stone itself remains in place” (Mitchell, 2003, p. 457). *Master Narratives* is a medium for expressing collective memory, as exemplified by Charlene’s (2026) aim and approach to teaching by fostering connections between her students’ personal experience and structural and collective experiences. For example, she introduced Malmö as a theme to support her students “in working with their own thoughts...so that when it's time for them to visit the monument they understand why it is important” (Charlene, 2026). Juliana (2026) also expressed a complementary understanding of knowledge and practice when she noted how her experiences of being a teacher, and sympathising with children who were negatively affected by racism, shaped her motivation to provide students and teachers “knowledge about the word racism. What it is, how it can be worked with, and how children put their feelings, emotions into the word.” Evidently, Juliana, like Charlene, is not only concerned with racism as a noun but, more crucially, how it is experienced as a verb, which can be facilitated by a counter-monument that in being ‘counter’, like anti-racism, foregrounds action. Dewey (1934) affirms this connection between language and action, with the latter, action as content, giving meaning and shape to the form(er). Thus, he argues that “without the meaning of the verb that of the noun remains blank” (Dewey, 1934, p. 53).

The incompleteness inherent within (esthetic) experience is illuminated by the *Master Narratives* monument, considering that it does not yet exist as a physical structure, but in people’s imaginations and discussions, illustrating the importance of language for doing and understanding. Language not only facilitates communication and understanding, but through an expression of meaning, it also shapes subsequent (inter)actions (Deniz, 2024; Flyvbjerg, 2001). The way in which Susanna and Santiago (2026) described *Master Narratives* as a “solidarity monument” is a good case in point:

It was interesting for us to think about what it meant to make something which was defined from the beginning as an anti-racist monument. But also as something that was defined by this negation of anti. We really quickly said to ourselves from the beginning of the process that we weren’t so comfortable with the definition being a negation, so we started thinking and talking about it as a solidarity monument. So rather than

something that goes against racism, which is centered, grammatically. The work that we make and how we think about this process is as something which is pro-active and centres this strength of the community. (Santiago, 2026).

Susanna (2026) added that anti-racism “is a word that exists because of racism, and for our artistic process we had to look at it in another way.” These excerpts are indicative of how a counter-monument, functioning as a convivial tool, allows “the user to express his meaning in action” (Illich, 1973, p. 35). The artists were especially motivated to get involved with *Master Narratives* because of how it was initiated by the public, rather than a private commissioning body, which inspired their way of thinking about and working with *Master Narratives*. Much of their initial work involved spending time in Malmö to speak with and listen to the individuals who initiated the monument, and from this engagement with the local context they observed how “it seemed so much about a reckoning of these traumatic events” (Susanna, 2026). Alejandra (2026) also noted that her thinking about anti-racism in relation to *Master Narratives* had changed when she saw how:

people in the reference group who are most vulnerable because they have experienced racism, this has strengthened them...it’s something that I feel very proud of and excited for because we are a part of that together.

These examples of transformation of knowledge and feelings during collective work are revealing of how esthetic experience involves conversion of “material that constitutes a problem...into a means for its solution”, such as the letters on racism that will become a part of the anti-racist monument (Dewey, 1943, p. 143). Thus, *Master Narratives* reflects that neither a reality “wholly obdurate and sullen in the face of man nor one so congenial to his wishes that it gratifies all desires is a world in which art can arise” (Dewey, 1934, p. 353). It is this co-existence between ideal and non-ideal realities that makes *Master Narratives* a medium for and of conviviality that requires and inspires action. Specifically, resistance is necessary or, more crucially, overcoming resistance, such as through the creation of a counter-monument, which unites “what we undergo and what our activity of attentive perception brings into what we receive by means of the senses” (Dewey, 1934, p. 258).

Conviviality involves not only perception, but also respecting, valuing, and practicing differences through engagement in sociable socialities that fuse emotions and senses to both

other people and the shared environment (Deniz, 2024). This fusion of undergoing and doing is apparent in the way in which Charlene, Juliana, Alejandra, and Manal all spoke about the problem of racism and, following this, solutions that informed their actions. For example, towards the end of our interview, Alejandra (2026) mentioned that she wished to talk more about “collective responsibility, to become aware of what my role is and what can I do, as I said, to be anti-racist you need action.” This action, or solution, was frequently referred to using words, such as ‘care’, ‘solidarity’, and ‘community building’, arising from individual experiences and knowledge of racism, with its associated feelings, such as fear. Collectively, these feelings brought about the need for a public monument and, currently, during the process of bringing the monument into existence materially, feelings were united and transformed. Evidently, esthetic works of art start off from an internal force that is connected to a need, which often depicts something that is lacking in reality (Dewey, 1934). In turn, during the process of coming into existence, the works of art can accommodate new experiences and related feelings, highlighting the reciprocal relation between individuals and (artistic) structures (Dewey, 1934).

Before discussing the final theme, *Moving Monument*, as a case of conviviality, I will explicate how *Master Narratives* functions as a paradigmatic case that facilitates a recursive transformation of knowledge, arising from personal meaning and practice, into action. It is hard to imagine, let alone practice, social change without phronesis; it informs imagination and action by turning attention to both present conditions and future aspirations, valuing lived experience as well as technical rationality (Flyvbjerg, 2001). For instance, when considering the questions: “where are we going?” and “what should be done?” (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 60), a wholly objective stance is insufficient, as all communicative action, knowledge, and emotions are rooted in a situated point of view, which is subjective (Goldie, 2000). This balance between values and rationality reminds me of how Santiago (2026) described every work of art as:

shaped entirely by the relationships between you as an artist and the commissioners with their interests in what the work can be. But it’s also shaped materially by what’s really possible.

Together, social relationships (or values) and materials (or rationalities) comprise the diverse details of works of art (or cases). These details vary for every work of art (or case) because of the individual medium of expression, like the aforementioned personal point of view that is

also a feature of case narratives (Dewey; 1934; Flyvbjerg, 2001). However, since works of art consist of materials and qualities that are common to the public world, they can become expressive and, in turn, educative (Dewey, 1934). Subsequently, engaging with a work of art, as the product of the artist's individual medium of expression, can lead to an expanding experience, because the one who is engaged can see and make new connections (Dewey, 1934). In a similar manner to how works of art become expressive, cases are paradigmatic when they can teach us something about the qualities or characteristics that are generalisable to many cases, serving as a metaphor for the phenomena in question (Flyvbjerg, 2001). Susanna (2026) pointed to this generalisability when she spoke about how:

the same ideas usually manifest in different ways, and a lot of my sculptural practices are just looking at value, structures of materials, and kind of turning them around, and pushing different materials to become different in terms of how we perceive them.

An expanding experience that follows the creation and perception of works or art, or cases, highlights their value for teaching and learning, specifically, for their ability to communicate something that is personal, but also expressive of characteristics that many individuals and societies share. Accordingly, Dewey (1934, p. 258) argues that art's purpose is to be unifying and to "do away with isolations and conflicts among the elements of our being, to utilize oppositions among them to build a richer personality." In addition to supporting a widened experience, or personality, works of art and cases, can help people to understand and explain what emotions they and others might be experiencing. To do this, the object that stirs people's emotions and thoughts should be clarified (Goldie, 2000). Hence, cases, and works of art, being tied to specific medium(s) and context(s), are particularly well-suited to this task of bringing attention to thoughts and feelings (Goldie, 2000). Charlene (2026) exemplified the use of "case studies to enhance understanding and empathy" amongst students, when she observed that:

[racism] became more visible for my students when it's an anti-racist monument because it is something concrete and we are going to visit it...they are tying the anti-racist work to it and understanding it a bit more.

Charlene also used mediums as cases connected to *Master Narratives*, for example, her students read and translated parts of Mattias Gardell's *Raskrigaren* book. She mentioned that this was a valuable learning approach because her students had to "have discussions" and "pay

attention to details”, which are also key characteristics of case narratives (Flyvbjerg, 2001). Another example of case-work is when Kamal Masri held a lecture at her school to share his experience of being shot by Peter Mangs, providing students the opportunity to ask him questions and tie their knowledge of racism to a very personal, and extreme case. In addition to learning about others' experiences and perspectives, Charlene (2026) encouraged her students to reflect on their personal experiences and thoughts, for instance, asking them to write a speech on a topic of their own choice. One student wrote about racism and Charlene (2026) noted that she thought that this student “had the speech in her for many years, but now she felt there is room for me”. Thus, using cases, whereby “ideas and facts communicated by others who have had a larger experience” are assimilated by students, can assist with “the realization of the meanings implied in [their] present experience” (Dewey, 1916, p. 227). Consequently, when such connections are made via a process of communication, learning attains purpose and meaning for individual students, furthering personal reflection and humanising the curriculum.

Moving Monument

As previously noted, the *Master Narratives* monument has not yet been installed, but it has already taken seed in the public imagination and discussions, illuminating how works of art come into fruition via a continuous experiential process, involving communication and participation (Dewey, 1934). Without this engagement, a work of art ceases to be expressive, becoming as inert as a block of rock present in nature, but disconnected from the public who would merely perceive its form rather than experience its meaning. Dewey (1934, p. 41) imagines how a rock rolling down a hill could have an esthetic experience, if it looked:

forward with desire to the final outcome; that it is interested in the things it meets on its way...that it acts and feels towards them...and that the final coming to rest is related to all that went before as the culmination of a continuous movement.

The relationality between materiality, or mediums, and imagination, or emotions, which together express meaning, or meaningful action, was a common theme in Deniz's (2024) ethnographic study of conviviality in Burgaz. Burgaz islanders frequently came together to engage with esthetic products and/or practices, including rituals like sewing, going to church, and dancing (Deniz, 2024). These practices did more than meet a social need; they were

enjoyed in and of themselves, and bonded the islanders together and to the island via sensorial engagement that, over time, moulded their collective identity and memory. This processual doing and becoming echoes Dewey's (1934) conceptualisation of an esthetic experience, and points to the significance of media for enacting social relations and, in turn, learning by doing. Ultimately, both conviviality and esthetic experience take form from personal interest and participation in something shared, whether material, emotional, or cognitive (Dewey, 1934; Illich, 1973).

Shared interest was visible in the passion and curiosity participants expressed for their work related to *Master Narratives*. Juliana (2026) described how the “creative process in this city by a monument” is a “fantastic way to build up a city, not just from what it was, but from what it is right now”, mirroring Susanna's understanding of the monument as shaping Malmö's landscape. This affective dimension propels the movement of a work of art, both in regard to the emotions it transpires and the action that it inspires, as Dewey (1934, p. 44) noted: “emotion is the moving and cementing force”. Susanna (2026) acknowledged this movement, stating that:

I really liked how they had already put all this thought and dialogue into [the monument] and we wouldn't be the artists coming in with a solution to a problem. But it was already in movement.

As I began my research, I wondered whether motion was needed for something to become monumental, which would explain the likeness between the words: ‘monument’ and ‘momentum’. According to the OED (2025b), a momentum is “expressed as the product of its mass and its velocity”, which is comparable to the *Master Narratives* monument as being an expression of a mass (from the social collective) and velocity (from the continuous dialogue that sets the work of art into motion). I started to build my understanding of this quality of motion as I read Dewey's work and spoke to participants engaged with *Master Narratives*. For Susanna (2026), “all sculpture or object making has a monument aspect to it. When you are putting meaning into objects, it's kind of an act of monument making.” Here, she highlights the practical dimension of esthetic experience, as an ongoing act, and the importance of objects, as mediums, for the expression of meaning.

In addition to practical and material dimensions, I noted that for a medium to become monumental, it must be collective, just like a social movement requires numbers (Ahmed, 2017), and a painting to become a picture must have rhythm and mass (Dewey, 1934). *Master Narratives* is a manifestation of this collectivity, assisting with the galvanisation of a collective motivated to work towards the same end. For example, Manal (2026) spoke about how her documentary had brought her in contact with other Malmö-based activists who had watched her documentary. Together, they formed an anti-racist monument association, arising from their shared commitment to continue discussions on (anti)racism. This formation of a collective, arising from engagement with a medium, resonates with how Frank's (1995, p. 20) memoir (about his personal experience of illnesses) had become "the basis of continuing personal encounters, letters, phone calls, conferences, and lectures" that kept him connected to insitutional groups and individuals with similar experiences. Likewise, Manal (2026) viewed *Master Narratives* as an extension of her documentary. It was important for her that the documentary continued a dialogue without her active involvement, since it would not have been sustainable to have to repeatedly talk about her most traumatic life event. Thus, she explained that her documentary was successful in the sense of "reaching many different people and organisations, for example, schools have been screening it...so it still has a life" (Manal, 2026). In like manner, Manal mentioned that her personal involvement with *Master Narratives* diminished over time as it started to engage more people, elucidating how collectivity can help sustain action that stems from something personal and emotional. This collectivity ensures that individuals can participate on their own terms, and even if some do not actively participate, the monument can continue to exist, or move, in the collective imagination and practice. Susanna (2026) spoke of this collectivity, or mass, when she described the *Master Narratives* monument:

the block, 29 tons of solid stone, is being raised off the ground by 160 bronze rods. None of those rods could individually support the weight of that stone, but all together they can support that great weight.

Santiago (2026) added motion to Susanna's emphasis on (social) mass, stating that:

the rods are arranged in this sweeping movement, as if they're coming up from the ground, and the ones that are highest up are taking the weight. There are others coming up behind them, which can take over the weight when they get up to the right height.

Evidently, for a monument to become a convivial tool, it must provide individuals with freedom to control how much, how often, and to what ends it is used, allowing personal meaning and motivation to drive engagement (Illich, 1973). Manal (2026) considered how many people to include in the *collective memory phase*, and noted that: “it did not make sense to ask everyone to be involved, and having it in public space leaves it up to those who wish to participate.” This freedom to choose how one participates resonates with a key event of Deniz’s (2024) ethnographic narrative, and Burgaz islanders’ collective memory: when Burgaz islanders prevented an outside attack in 1955. Notably, not everyone was engaged in the same way; some islanders protected the bays, whilst others helped the most vulnerable islanders to remain out of sight, but altogether they created “a memory of conviviality and act of solidarity” (Deniz, 2024, p. 137). In like manner, Santiago (2026) highlighted that “the physical sculpture [*Master Narratives*] is very clearly a gesture of solidarity.” However, this freedom to participate does not mean that no conflict or resistance is encountered; on the contrary, resistance and conflict shape and act as reminders for why an esthetic product is necessary, acting as a learning tool (Dewey, 1934). Alejandra (2026) noted this resistance, stating: “we are working with anti-racism, but at the same time we are exposed to racism.”

Thus far, I have explored ‘moving’ monuments in terms of affectivity, materiality, and collectivity. I will now discuss how monuments, like movement, require balance between the elements that together make up a monument that is esthetic. Balance is also a key quality of conviviality, which involves fluctuation between tolerance/coexistence and conviviality, based on the wider political climate (Deniz, 2024), resembling the way in which phronesis bridges instrumental-rationality with value-rationality (Flyvbjerg, 2001). Santiago (2026) likened the process of developing a monument to navigating a balance between technical-rationality and value-rationality, when he described the *Master Narratives* monument as:

a balancing act, so the first step was to discuss with engineers, but is this possible? A big part of this work was to figure out how it is possible. And the non-official aspect of it is that not all the rods reach all the way up. They are all different lengths, because not everyone needs to be part of the carrying to be a part of the collective.

In contrast to having to act in the same way due to external pressure and/or personal disinterest, following the perception of a general object or a demand made by an industrial tool, conviviality, like solidarity, is relational, and reciprocal, rather than merely rational, and entails

care (Illich, 1973). Care was frequently mentioned by the participants in regard to the work that they were doing. For example, Juliana (2026) mentioned that after Susanna and Santiago were invited to talk about the monument and the memory boxes in the reference group at Pedagogical Inspiration, she described the:

feeling of digging the letters under the monument felt like they are planned and planted to grow with the monument as a creation of people's voices with its strength, like the roots of a powerful tree standing firm.

By the same token, Santiago (2026) described how the:

notes will be gathered and placed into the ground underneath the sculptural monument, almost as if they are nurturing or are the reason for this giant block being raised off the ground.

In other words, emotions represent the seeds of the *Master Narratives* monument, which will manifest materially, like a flower or tree. Viewing the act of writing or burying the notes, and engaging with the monument, through the lens of esthetic experience, I became attuned to the way in which the participants' emotions changed, or were moved by the monument, both in the way in which they expressed emotions during the interviews, as well as retrospectively when they reflected on their work. Such changes in emotions following action connected to *Master Narratives* can contribute towards restoring balance between individuals and their environment, as expressed by Santiago (2026):

the hope is that anyone who has written something, and knows that it will be a part of this sculpture, will feel some kind of a connection to the sculpture, to the city, and to their place in society as well, which is perhaps a little different to how they felt before.

To understand esthetic experience, Dewey (1934, p. 2) drew on an example of how people can express admiration for flowers, but without motivation to learn about the relations: the "soil, air, water and sunlight that condition the growth of plants", they cannot be understood. For *Master Narratives*, such conditions include the different media, such as the notes and memory boxes, in tandem with people's communication and engagement with media. Restoring balance proceeds when emotions prompt reflection and "interest in objects as conditions of realization

of harmony” (Dewey, 1934, p. 14). Thus, the materials of reflection are embedded as the objects’ meanings and, in turn, “sensuous material and relations are completely merged” (Dewey, 1934, p. 107). This unison of material and relations animates works of art, as Santiago (2026) hinted at when he spoke about the process of making art and not knowing “what it will be in the end, but then you sort of learn something as it starts telling you what it needs.” By common consent, Juliana and Alejandra emphasised the necessity of listening to children when practicing anti-racism in schools, which they tied to children rights principles, such as:

the right to have an opinion and be listened to, and when I listen to you, I get to know what is best for you. And when I have done that, I have also automatically done number six, which has to do with your right to live and develop. (Alejandra, 2026).

This right to live and develop, which is similarly propagated by conviviality and phronesis, is facilitated by *Master Narratives*. It was evident in how participants not only thought back to what the monument reminded them of in the present, but also in how they spoke about what can be done in the future, whether this was directly tied to the monument or more indirectly regarding what it stands for. As expressed by Juliana (2026) when mentioning that the process and the work with *Master Narratives* in schools provided:

a deeper insight and knowledge of the meaning of the anti-racist monument. It made an impact on the school’s anti-racist work, and it also gave a power of strength, courage and healing from the racism of Malmö city’s past and today’s act of solidarity in a time where we need to be united and be strong together.

In connection to thinking about what can be done in the future, Charlene (2026) envisioned schools where “each personality is appreciated and acceptance amongst students wouldn’t be norm-driven”. She proposed that incorporating anti-racism, with case-study methods, into more subjects and grades would help with fostering this convivial school environment. These examples of an imaginative dimension, while incorporating an element of hope and motivation, also include an element of unexpectedness or wonder, supporting a claim believed to have been made by Matisse: “when a painting is finished, it is like a new-born child. The artist himself must have time for understanding it” (Dewey, 1934, p. 111). This wonder was expressed by Susanna (2026) who said that the “social part of it has been so incredibly exciting and beyond anything I could have imagined. Within the schools especially.” An element of wonder was

also expressed by Kamal in *Letters to a Serial Killer* (2017), in the last scene, where Kamal and his friend are looking forward whilst driving in a car in Malmö. Kamal converses with his friend and jokes about how he might have become a professional soccer player had he not been a victim of Peter Mangs. This light-heartedness and their discussion of future plans contrasts to the heaviness of the past that Kamal had carried alone, precluding his ability to move forward, as was cinematically depicted by the frequent inclusion of the public space where Kamal was injured throughout the documentary. Similarly, the *Master Narratives* monument, by engaging different individuals and having a counter-monumental structural style, aims to lift the burden and create lightness, as reflected by the bronze rods that permit natural light to pass through, for those who have been or are affected by racism.

Emotions can be viewed as the connecting thread of *Master Narratives*, motivating people to direct their energy towards imbuing the physical environment with personal meaning (Illich, 1973). Dewey (1934, p. 113) explains that a work of art is universal when it can “continuously inspire new personal realizations in experience”, which can be observed through changes in emotion. Santiago (2026) noted this connection between the personal and universal when he mentioned how rituals are a universal gesture, but consist of “something sacred or painful, or personal leaving the body in the act of writing or whispering and being placed somewhere.” He further reflected on how “the process of writing it, leaving it, putting it away, there is something emotional that happens there on a personal level” (Santiago, 2026). This personal meaning of participation echoes Juliana’s (2026) acknowledgement of how “everyone will be affected in their own way”, connecting the moving nature of the monument to the first theme that I discussed: *Personal Meaning of Master Narratives*.

Conclusion

This thesis has explored the final phase of an ongoing anti-racist project: the *Master Narratives* counter-monument that will be installed in Jesusparken, Malmö, later this year. I began this thesis with a curiosity to understand how public art can function as physical and imaginative media for reflection and learning; thereby, highlighting why it matters and, crucially, for whom. Drawing on a case-study methodology, suited to the study of phenomena as it evolves in practice, I found the unfinished nature of the monument to be illuminating of its function as a ‘cool media’, communicative process, and a convivial and pedagogical tool, providing an answer to the research question: ‘How does the *Master Narratives* counter-monument mediate and transform anti-racist knowledge?’ (McLuhan, 1964). By involving a diversity of actors and media, such as the documentary, letters, books, and other pedagogical material, the *Master Narratives* content becomes expressive and transformational, embodying personal stories, which “do not simply describe the self; they are the self’s medium of being” (Frank, 1995, p. 53).

Conviviality and esthetic theory are both concerned with processes of being and becoming, and doing and undergoing (Deniz, 2024; Dewey, 1934). In like manner, phronetic research focuses on practices, like communication, to probe present conditions and values as a point of reference for action, or in this case, a counter-monument, for looking forward (Flyvbjerg, 2001). Additionally, these theories share the goal of animating phenomena that are, by common consent, regarded as bounded, static, or merely descriptive, like a traditional monument. Unlike an inert monument, a counter-monument, like *Master Narratives*, as a case of conviviality, can help to bring together the artistic (productive), the esthetic (perception and enjoyment), together with the ordinary conditions of everyday life. These processes are often viewed in isolation, precluding their mutual relationality and affectivity (Dewey, 1934). Accordingly, I aimed to shed light on how exploring conviviality and esthetic experience together, as mutual, active processes with similar characteristics, can help to reinstate continuity between esthetic experience “and the everyday events, doings, and sufferings that are universally recognized to constitute experience” (Dewey, 1934, p. 2). I exemplified their interrelatedness with the three analytical themes of: *Personal Meaning, Knowledge and Action*, and *Moving Monument*, which were tied together by emotions directed at the imagined *Master Narratives* counter-monument and what it stands for.

The processual becoming of the *Master Narratives* counter-monument was apparent in the diverse ways in which the participants described it; it was imaginatively in flux. For example, in response to the question: ‘What does *Master Narratives* mean to you?’, the participants shifted between discussing their personal experiences and views to those of others and, more broadly, for Malmö city. This relationality aligns with one of the project’s statement’s: “we want to make an anti-racist monument that is grounded in Malmö’s individual and collective experiences” (antirasistisktmonument, n.d.). Interrelationships between the individual and the collective, which are expressed in “deep, concrete detail”, were manifest in the *Master Narratives* monument in various contents, such as its structural form and the pedagogical tools it inspired (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 114). For example, Charlene (2026) imagined how students in art classes could “shape things out of clay. They could create their own monuments that we can have in our school to represent anti-racism.”

A Counter-monument, as a Case, creates Space-Time for Reflection and Learning

To answer the question: “why build monuments at all today?” (Thor, 2022, p. 21), we should look beyond the monument as a finished or discrete artistic product (Dewey, 1934; Young, 1992). Instead, attention should be shifted to the conditions that informed its creation as well as the ensuing experiences, including human association and action. Hence, I approached *Master Narratives* by interviewing different actors involved in the project, which I complemented with the *Letters to a Serial Killer* documentary and a public talk where Susanna and Santiago presented *Master Narratives*. This contextualisation aligns with Flyvbjergs’ (2001) phronetic case-study approach, Dahlgren and Hill’s (2023) conceptualisation of media engagement, and Dewey’s (1934) claim that in order to understand works of art, we should focus on the everyday conditions of experience that tend not to be considered esthetic. Case studies incorporate “a substantial element of narrative” (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 84) that can facilitate both researchers and participants understandings of everyday conditions of experience, presenting “media for body-selves to express and reflexively monitor themselves” (Frank, 1995, p. 52).

By drawing on theories of esthetics and conviviality, counter-monuments, together with the values and power relations that they express, can be understood as always in the process of becoming; they are only ‘final’ in the moment of perception. Subsequently, an understanding

of media as a process (or a convivial tool), rather than a discrete product (or an industrial tool), can be advanced (Illich, 1973). Ahmed (2017, p. 196) claims that there is value in considering “life as always potentially in crisis, to keep asking the question: how to live?” when working towards justice, which is a key value of convivial societies (Illich, 1973). Arguably, counter-monuments, as convivial media and relations, open up space for this question to be reflected on, as exemplified by the *Master Narratives* anti-didactic nature. It encouraged reflection and discussions on personal experiences that pointed to (anti-)racism and, in the process, opened up space for imagining other ways of being and relating to people. Notably, counter-monuments can alter the position of those who are marginalised, becoming “involved in our lives, as we in theirs” (McLuhan, 1964, p. 5). Consequently, a heightened awareness of responsibility not to forget what happened at the time when Peter Mangs was committing racist crimes, whilst moving forward and supporting those who lack structural or societal support is advanced.

Understanding systemic structures like racism can be difficult for those who do not personally encounter them or lack the curiosity to understand them. This barrier to understanding can be exemplified by someone who is experiencing an esthetic work of art, illustrating the necessity of curiosity or interest and experience for understanding, or pragmatist learning (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Goldie, 2000). Typically, after having encountered an architecturally impressive building on holiday and experiencing emotions as part of an esthetic experience, one would later advise others to see it for themselves (to understand what they felt). Likewise, public art can serve as a medium of imaginatively ‘travelling abroad’ and experiencing that which is communicated by others, with their experiences and emotions that informed the work of art. Unlike visiting impressive architecture on holiday, which requires interest and curiosity, among other factors; public art can be encountered incidentally, especially when it is located in a space that is frequented for everyday activities, such as Jesusparken in Malmö. In a similar way to how going on holiday often involves curiosity or a priori interest, viewing ‘digital monuments’, such as the Twitter hashtag and movement, ‘Black Lives Matter’, might also be a more intentional act compared to stumbling upon a counter-monument in a park, where one would have been for other purposes.

While a counter-monument might at first glance escape attention as a communication medium, because it has no textual content, and requires “completion by the audience”, it nonetheless can prompt reflection, learning, and emotions, which lead to changes in actions or associations

(McLuhan, 1964, p. 8). For instance, *Master Narratives* facilitated the expression of personal knowledge and experience of (anti)racism. This communicational function was important for Charlene, Juliana, and Alejandra, who all acknowledged the difficulty of talking about racism and being listened to. ‘Object-based learning’ presents an example of how media can inform learning: materials are introduced into teaching methods, which facilitate learning driven by personal curiosity and sensorial engagement, in consequence, it is contextualised and convivial (Chatterjee, Hannan & Thomson, 2015). A counter-monument, like *Master Narratives*, is exemplary of how thoughts and feelings can be expressed differently, such as through a memory note, poem, or speech. Collectively, such esthetic acts can amount to something new, for example, blurring the boundary between everyday life and anti-racist education and, in turn, transforming emotions into affect, as was apparent in the changed atmosphere within Charlene’s classroom.

A Counter-monument, as a Medium, fosters a Transformed Relation between Society and the Environment

Letter-writing appeared as a commonly recurring medium, beginning with *Letters to a Serial Killer* (2017), in which Manal Masri wrote letters to Peter Mangs in the hopes of getting him to confess his crime. Following this documentary, a group of activists, including Manal, wrote a letter to Malmö city, asking for an anti-racist monument, and once *Master Narratives* was initiated, it also incorporated letters in connection to the memory boxes. This letter-writing thread, and the participants' collective wish for the monument to become a gathering place, is illustrative of how both communication and participation are necessary for creating an experience. Additionally, it is revealing of how “without external embodiment, an experience remains incomplete” (Dewey, 1934, p. 53). This external embodiment is not a passive process. Instead, through the act of creating or perceiving an esthetic product that has personal meaning attached, or buried, like with the memory notes, emotions can undergo changes and motivate action. Juliana spoke of multiple instances when the memory boxes seemed to come alive as people discussed them or wrote notes. She explained that the memory box “is not just a box, it’s people’s knowledge, experiences, memories, and questions to Kamal and for what happened. They are all experiences” (Juliana, 2026). In like manner, Manal Masri turned her lived experiences of having a sibling who was a victim of Peter Mangs (the topic) into a documentary (the object), representing an activity with a purpose: raising awareness of racism

as a structure that affects individuals. This documentary, as an example of an external embodiment, inspired collectivity and action, such as the development of the anti-racist monument association that led to the creation of *Master Narratives*.

The *Master Narratives* counter-monument was initially described as an anti-racist monument, and act/process, by Charlene, Juliana, and Alejandra, as well as in online blogs and the *Master Narratives* webpage. However, during the course of our interviews, they also began to talk about convivial values and action, such as co-production, which became particularly apparent to them during the process of working on *Master Narratives* together with others. This collectivity was evident in how they similarly spoke of *Master Narratives* being about ‘community-building’, ‘solidarity’, and ‘care’, reconstructing what they were working against: racism. In a similar manner, Susanna and Santiago viewed the counter-monument as a “gesture of solidarity” (Santiago, 2026). They mentioned having this view of *Master Narratives* even before they had begun designing it, since they knew that the project had come from a group of activists and their discussions and work on (anti)racism. This contextual knowledge that was attained from both researching the monument and spending time in Malmö during which they spoke with different actors, emphasises how in order to understand a work of art, which is connected to everyday life, one must understand the conditions from which it had emerged.

Shifting understandings of *Master Narratives* in the process of engagement exemplifies reconstruction, which involves posing the question: “anti-racism for what ends?” (Anderson & Herr, 2007, p. 173), echoing Flyvbjerg’s (2001, p. 60) value-rational question of “where are we going?”. It is also reflective of how passion that directs observation can lead to the creation of a new form, and learning (Dewey, 1934). While media engagement tends to be viewed in rational terms, focused on “ideas inside the heads of individuals”, the value of affect was highlighted by the participants’ tendency to talk about *Master Narratives* in relation to “shared social experience with an emotional valence” (Dahlgren & Hill, 2023, p. 75). This emotionality was also observable in the way in which participants’ facial expressions and tones changed during the interviews, such as when they spoke of what the project had achieved, how it had been engaged with, and how it had personal meaning for those involved.

Final Reflections and Future Directions

Taken together, relationality between the individual and the collective and the immaterial and the material presents an overarching theme of the analytical findings, supporting Dahlgren and Hill's (2023, p. 23) understanding of media engagement as a "nexus of relations" and, in turn, "public art as a form of care" (Enqvist, Modig, Thor & Zawieja, 2022, p. 9). Anti-racist knowledge cannot be effectively taught over a short period, or disconnected from the emotions that it involves, since it is lived, felt, and co-constructed through the acts of communication and living with others inside and outside of the school classroom (Anderson & Herr, 2007). A counter-monument, like *Master Narratives*, located in a public space, can promote an understanding of anti-racism by expressing relationality and emotionality. Specifically, the cyclical and recursive relation between personal meaning and experiences, or (inter)actions, and their transformation into knowledge and action.

The connectivity between feeling and doing makes a work of art esthetic, or moving, in regard to its emotional and imaginary dimensions that act as a connecting thread for temporalities and individuals. By foregrounding the everyday through the theories that have informed my thesis: phronesis, conviviality, esthetic experience, and media engagement, I hope to have foregrounded the salience of both individual and collective efforts for understanding and working towards anti-racism, and for bringing and connecting this subject outside the classroom, as the *Master Narratives* has done. Bridging the everyday and educational teaching is valuable considering that the majority of anti-racist learning happens through everyday interactions between different actors; students, family members, friends, teachers, and the general public (Anderson & Herr, 2007). Object-based learning presents one teaching method that can bring these actors together, such as by challenging the hierarchy between teachers and students.

By valuing processes together with products, or rather viewing products as processes, we can imbue works, whether educational or artistic, with values and meaning and, in the process, they can become more expressive, sustaining the happiness of citizens and promoting equality (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Illich, 1973). This convivial way of being and relating to others was exemplified by Santiago (2026) who spoke about how:

Art is always made in dialogue and as a collective. We collaborate constantly, even in small ways, like how we live, and our friends and families who are part of our art.

Master Narratives presents a simultaneously anchoring and moving medium for encouraging sustained engagement, (re)interpretations, gatherings, and interactions throughout time. While all art is ephemeral, what is important and lasting are the emotions that they can continuously inspire; this is how works of art continue to live. Santiago (2026) noted this sustained persistence as one benefit of the counter-monument's installation date delay, noting that the "the group will benefit from that kind of commitment." The function of monuments and the interpretations that follow change with time, reflecting broader societal changes. Yet the way in which different societies that "exist on the same ground" continue to choose to memorialise certain memories as monuments, opens up space for reflection and imagination (Santiago, 2026). It is "the cumulative afterlife effects of [monuments that]...matters the most"; therefore, in the future, I could expand on this thesis by exploring how the physical monument will be engaged with, to analyse potential changes in the public's relation to Jesusparken and, more broadly, Malmö and its citizens (Marciniak, 2019, p. 96).

Media and Communication scholars can use a work of art as an entry point for understanding conviviality as an (esthetic) praxis, broadening a narrow view of media as a product or technology, and its effects (as posited by the transmission model), to what it does: the processual media engagement embedded in context (Jensen, 2012). This latter focus on function is important considering that esthetic works of art arise from social needs and function in experience, which render their form and function complementary, resonating with the value of bringing together subject matter and method within education (Dewey, 1916). I hope to have inspired a deeper understanding of the value of researching, and living, with a view of products and processes in tandem, whether in anti-racist teaching or monument building, and how consideration of emotions can facilitate an understanding of media engagement. Crucially, participants' interest in *Master Narratives* was not solely bound to the physical monument that will be installed in the near future, rather it was sustained and motivated as an outcome of their collective efforts, communication, and passion, which they all noted would not cease after the monument will be installed. Evidently, *Master Narratives*, as a case and medium, "is nothing different from its parts or members" (Dewey, 1934, p. 200), affirming "a mutuality of need, when each is for the other" (Frank, 1995, p. 25).

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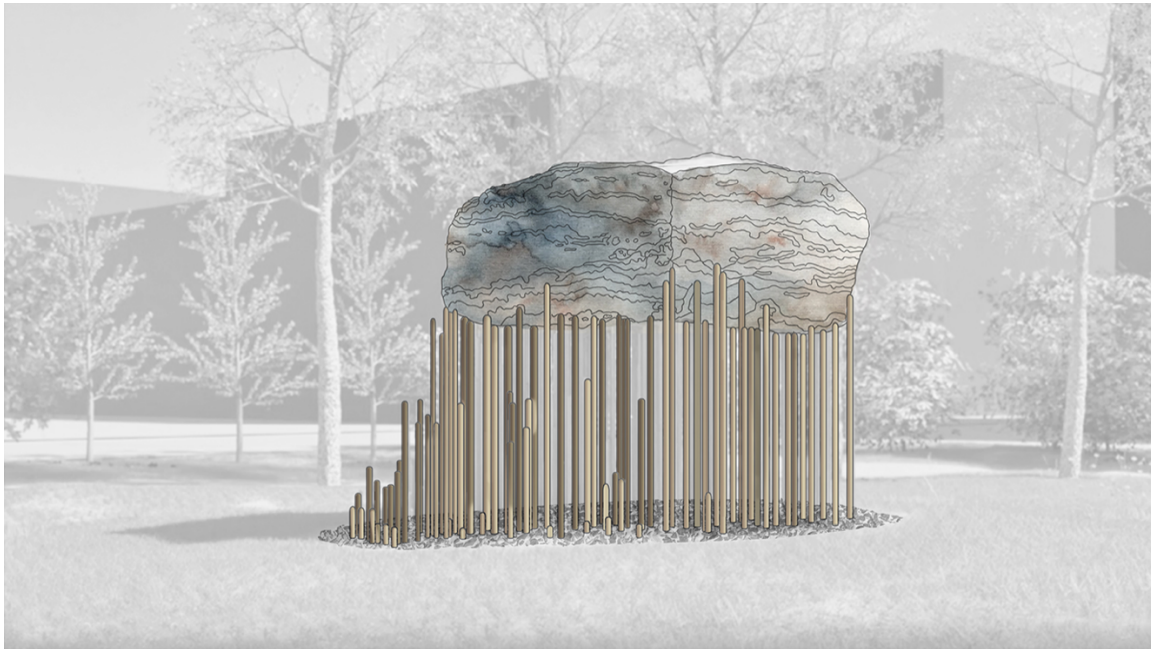
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Appendices

Appendix A: Monumentet *Master Narratives* (malmö.se).



Appendix B: Memory Box, photographed at the Malmö City Library, 2026.

