Drawn together: illustration, community and collective world-making

by
Luise Schreuer
known as Luise Vormittag

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

University of the Arts London
London College of Communication

June 2023

Abstract

How does illustration bring to light the concerns, interests and challenges of (a) community? Can illustration help us think about the conditions of sociality more generally? And how do participatory project-structures, one of the key methods used in this research, impact on the practice of illustration? This practice-led PhD argues that collaborative illustration projects can create the possibility for individuals to encounter one another in an expression of community. In carefully considered participatory project-structures illustrations that refer to joint matters of concern can act as catalysts for an encounter, focal points for the duration of the interaction and as its record thereafter.

Three discrete illustration projects were undertaken as part of this research. For each one of them I collaborated with a group or organisation in London, inviting participants to contribute to a collaborative illustration that emerged through the project: *Walking the Elephant* was conducted with the local community in and around the now defunct Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre; *Write Women into History* emerged from my collaboration with a writing-group of older feminists; and *Cracks in the Pavement* is the result of a walking and collaborative mapping project during the Covid-19 'lockdown'.

Drawing on 20th century European philosophers such as Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Hannah Arendt and Jean-Luc Nancy whose work discusses question of world-making, sociality, relationality and the political – this PhD interweaves my collaborative illustration practice with philosophy in order to expose and delineate aspects of our social co-existence. Illustration, in the form of co-created visual documents, presents itself as the space where we can reconsider, record and reflect on the relations that occur in our everyday experience of community and practices of collective world-making.

Table of contents

Acknowledgements 9

Introduction | Exploring the world in the companionship of others 13

Hypothesis, aims and objectives 16

Contributions to knowledge 20

Notes on methodology 25

My projects 31

Walking the Elephant / Recorriendo Elephant 31

Write Women into History 42

Cracks in the Pavement 47

Chapter overview 62

Chapter 1 | Colouring outside the lines: new territories for illustration 65

Illustration reinvents itself (2000 – today) 67

Authorial practice 72

Political illustration / Political images 76

Satirical commentary & seeking social justice 76

Ideological unmasking 78

Alternative manoeuvres 81

Communal enterprise 81

Assembling a public 85

Sketching definitions 93

Chapter 2 | Working with others 99

Participatory art and design as politicised practice

– processes of inclusion **102**

Climbing frames 105

Synthesis of divergent needs 110

Communicative outputs as shared goal 112

Lest my methods fossilise: staying with the particular 116

'But I can't draw!' – processes of inscription **121**

Drawing things together

– processes of assembly and consolidation **129**

Harnessing vitality 130

Representation and invention 140

'Lebenswelt' and 'mondialisation'

– processes of collective worldmaking **145**

Reflective acts of attention 145

Singular spaces, plural worlds 149

Chapter 3 | Tracing expressions of community 155

Being in relation, being in common **159**

Gathering – illustration as a catalyst for community **163**

A politics of communication

– illustration as an enactment of community **167**

Collective sense-making

– illustration as a trace of community **173**

Chapter 4 | The Afterlives 181

Indexicality, documentality and suggestiveness **184**

Indexicality 185

Documentality 188

Suggestiveness 191

The public sphere – a space of appearance **197**

Future worlds **201**

Conclusion | Common grounds? 209

Summary of argument: catalyst, focal point, trace 209

Relevance: What is illustration (research) good for? 214

Methodological reflections 219

Lockdown visions 222

What next? 225

Bibliography 229

Appendix 239

Interview with Mitch Miller 239

Interview with Hefin Jones and his project participants 275

First interview with Hefin Jones 275

Second interview with Hefin Jones 286

Interview with project participant: Elin Jones 292

Interview with project participant: Gareth Farr 297

Interview with project participant: Ken Pritchard 301

Interview with project participant: Ian Raymond 304

Interview with Gavin Wade, Eastside Projects 315

Consent form samples 330

Feedback: Write Women into History 337

Feedback: Cracks in the Pavement 343

Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful to all my collaborators and participants who worked on the three projects I undertook for this PhD with me. Patria Roman, Santiago Peluffo and Natalia Perez at Latin Elephant were instrumental in shaping my first project *Walking the Elephant*. Alongside the many wonderful participants who dropped in and took part in the workshops, the fantastic workshop assistants Cristina Errea, Daniel Hopkinson and Ana Rita Otsuka helped me set up, run and document the workshops – thank you. I am also very grateful to Mike Stevens and Lucy Maria from See, Also (a creative design studio) who worked on the digital output of this project with me.

For the success of my second project, *Write Women into History*, I am indebted to Anne-Marie Payne from the City and Hackney Carers Centre. Anne-Marie saw the potential of me collaborating with the Hackney HOWLers Writing Group, introduced me and persuaded them to work with me, even though they were initially somewhat sceptical of working with 'an artist'. I would like to thank all fourteen 'Hackney HOWLers' who took part in the writing group for their trust. Thank you for allowing me to listen as you shared your life experiences with each other, it was an honour to be part of this. An especially warm thank you goes to Gail Chester and Celia Burgess-Macey, the two main group facilitators, for working on this project together with me. I am also grateful to Houman Momtazian who kindly reviewed my layouts and my typographic choices in *Write Women into History*. Rich and Estelle at Duplikat Press, who printed the booklets, were kind and patient with my many questions, and truly a joy to work with.

I would like to thank all walkers who took part in *Cracks in the Pavement*. I felt like a child impatiently anticipating their birthday every time I collected a map and had to wait for the quarantine period to pass before I could open the folder and take a look. All the diverse perspectives presented on the maps have been a delight to behold. I am grateful to the team at Panopus Print who operated a Covid-secure large-scale scanning service during the pandemic, which was instrumental to documenting this project. I am also incredibly grateful to Lydia Julien at the Hackney Archives, who hosted such a thoughtful handing-over ceremony for the maps and who has given them such a great new home at the archives.

I wish to thank Mitch Miller, Hefin Jones and Gavin Wade, all of whom spent multiple hours with me in the early stages of this PhD discussing the minute details of their work and the ideas and values that underpin their projects. Thank you for the generosity of sharing your thoughts and your time with me. I am additionally grateful to Hefin for putting me in touch with some of the people he worked with in Wales, who in turn welcomed the many questions I had about their experience of working on a participatory project. Thank you Elin Jones, Gareth Farr, Kenneth Pritchard and Ian Raymond.

This PhD was blessed by a brilliantly supportive team of supervisors. Ian Horton, Alison Barnes and Lawrence Zeegen accompanied me through the thick of it all. I am endlessly grateful for their acumen and their humour, for not allowing me to get away with a shoddy argument and for spurring me on when the road felt too long. I will really miss our meetings.

I was fortunate to benefit from a broad range of great minds working in other disciplines (such as anthropology, geography, archaeology, urbanism etc.) for the various discussions we had about my work. Thank you Toma Peiu, Patricia Markert, Franz Buhr, Sarah DeMott, Alexandra D'Onofrio, Lucy Hunt, CIELab members and Sergios Strigklogiannis. Your questions and insights opened up new vistas for me.

It would have never occurred to me that it might be possible to do a PhD in illustration if it had not been for Stephanie Black. Thank you, Steph, it's all your fault. Mitch Miller is also one of my illustration research heroes, who demonstrated how these things can be done. Without these intrepid pioneers I might have never embarked on this journey.

I would like to thank my colleagues at UAL who created a warm environment that supported my research and made me feel part of a community. Thank you Rebecca Ross, Rachel Emily Taylor and Mireille Fauchon for your encouraging friendship. Thank you also to the Design School management at CCW, who graciously allowed me the time I needed to complete this PhD.

My friend Vic took me out for a drink when I was applying for this PhD, and talking it over with her demonstrated how *fun* research can be. Sadly, not all details of our 'genius' plan withstood the cold, harsh light of day, but the spirit lives on. Thank you Vic.

I am indebted to my parents who always trusted my endeavours and allowed me to pursue my interests. Without their support I would have never made it to this point. Stewart, thank you for putting up with all the ups and downs of this PhD over so many years and for the seemingly never-ending supply of Jean-Luc Nancy books. Without you this would have been a different thesis, probably not even half as interesting. And little Malka, thank you for allowing your mummy to spend so many hours on her computer and reading ‘boring grown-up books without pictures’. I have been working on this your whole life. I look forward to many more years together (with more fun books, I promise).

Introduction | Exploring the world in the companionship of others

The popular image of the solitary illustrator sequestered in their studio, assiduously labouring over their drawings, represents at best a partial picture. Yes, numerous illustrators spend many hours on their own while working on their images, but even while they do so they are usually embedded in a network of relations with other people such as clients, agents, collaborators, editors, graphic designers, and anticipated audiences. In her essay 'Making Meaning of Illustration' (2018) the US-American art historian Michele Bogart describes illustration as a 'collective, negotiated enterprise' and as 'collectively generated material culture' (Bogart 2018). Rather than focus on individual practitioners or discrete images, Bogart suggests, scholarship should extend its range and consider the multitude of other people, as well as historic, institutional, social and cultural forces that impact on an illustration's creation, distribution and reception.

While I share Bogart's view of illustration as a socially negotiated enterprise, there is a considerable difference between the type of work she studies – American advertising images of the 1950s – and the illustrative projects that were generated as part of this practice-led PhD research. Most illustration, including the body of work surveyed by Bogart, does not highlight the multiplicity of people and other forces that contributed to its creation; quite the opposite – many illustrators strive to develop 'a personal voice' in their work – a recognisable style that speaks of singular and identifiable authorship. In contrast, this PhD is concerned with illustrated documents that speak of heterogeneity and that work hard to foreground the relational processes that led to their creation.

This research arises from a set of problems I encountered in my practice as an illustrator working with members of a local community in partial fulfilment of a property developer's

so-called Section 106 agreement[1] in 2012. The development in question was a new hospital building for a small town in England. My commission was to produce permanent artwork for the interior spaces and 'involve the local community' in its creation. I was struck by the contradictions of my situation: private global capital was financing a development which I was to embellish with what felt like token gestures of communal cooperation. While the developers' interactions with me were always courteous and professional, my impression was that their interest in my project was minimal, apart from my report that detailed the number of people I had 'engaged' with. The superficiality with which conceptually complex terminology such as 'community' was used in this commission frustrated me. My resulting project attempted to critique the unreflective use of this term while at the same time fulfilling my brief – a contortion that proved only partially successful. I wrote about this experience in some detail in the *Journal of Illustration* (Vormittag 2015) but continued to feel that the questions that were raised through this project deserved a more substantive inquiry, the results of which you are now reading.

Illustrators are increasingly employed by real estate investors to fulfil their Section 106 requirements: A debate in *Varoom* #38 (Jost & Whadcock 2018:58-63) rehearses the pros and cons of this development[2]. Going beyond the specifics of Section 106, this PhD is animated by the ambition to arrive at a more theoretically grounded understanding of what is at stake when illustrators work in a participatory way with a 'community'. The main question that I am pursuing in this research is: How does illustration bring to light the concerns and challenges of (a) community? This question offers several possible emphases: How does illustration draw out a specific set of concerns and challenges from a community? How does it represent these to the community itself as well as external publics? How can illustration help us think through notions of community and conditions of sociality more generally? And

---

1 In the UK Section 106 agreements are legally binding obligations imposed by local government on property developers. These obligations require the developers to mitigate the potentially negative impacts of a development proposal. Developers may be asked to contribute to local infrastructure, affordable housing, education and/or other initiatives that are seen to be beneficial to the local community, such as public art projects. The details of the policy can be found on the UK's government website under https://www.gov.uk/guidance/planning-obligations [accessed 3 April 2023].

2 Emily Jost (member of Artists Against Social Cleansing) and Ian Whadcock (Senior Lecturer in Illustration with Animation at Manchester School of Art) debate the merits and pitfalls of illustrators working with developers. Jost argues that developer-led 'artwashing' is a highly contentious practice which ultimately harms the communities that the illustrator is asked to work with. Ian Whadcock maintains that positive outcomes can be achieved by illustrators building bridges and educating commissioners (Jost & Whadcock 2018:58-63).

finally: what do participatory project-structures, one of the key methods used in this research, teach us about the practice of illustration itself?

Traditionally illustration is conceived as a commercial activity where a professional illustrator visually enhances a text or an idea with a crafted image. The recently published *History of Illustration* (Doyle, Grove & Sherman 2018) defines illustration as '[an] artwork […] in service of an idea [that] seeks to communicate *something particular*, usually to a specific audience' (2018:xvii, emphasis in original). Over the last two decades illustration has encountered various challenges as a commercial practice, and there are now an increasing number of initiatives and attempts to develop alternative ways of practicing. The even more recently published *Illustration Research Methods* (Fauchon & Gannon 2021) charts and discusses a plethora of innovative illustration practice models that cluster around a number of shared 'operational principles' such as communication, responsiveness and empathy (2021:16).

Illustration is now also starting to establish itself as an academic discipline: A recent editorial of the *Journal of Illustration* suggests we are currently witnessing a 'Theoretical Turn' in our discipline (Grove 2018:179-190) and refers to my work as an example[3] (2018:181). Thrillingly Bloomsbury Visual Arts (an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing) announced in 2021 that they intend to publish a 'illustration research' series of monographs. As the dates on the publications mentioned above indicate, these books, articles and initiatives did not exist at the start of my PhD. It has been exciting to witness this trend towards diversification and theorisation of the field while developing my own research and seeking out opportunities to take part in these emergent conversations. There is still very little published research on illustration as a method for engagement with and reflection on experiences of community – a lacuna which this PhD proposes to address.

3 She is referring to my article 'Making (the) Subject Matter' (2014) published in the *Journal of Illustration*.

Hypothesis, aims and objectives

The **aim** of this research is to develop a theoretically grounded portfolio of practice that demonstrates how illustration offers opportunities to reconsider, record and reflect on the relations that occur in our everyday experiences of community. It is my **hypothesis** that illustration has the ability to create the conditions for individuals to encounter one another in an expression of community. In carefully considered participatory project structures illustrations that refer to joint matters of concern can act as catalysts for an encounter, focal points for the duration of the interaction and as its record thereafter.

The existence of community – both of a particular community (e.g. 'the Latin American community') as well as 'community' itself as a social formation – is often taken for granted. For example, my aforementioned commission to produce artwork for a new hospital building included the prompt to 'engage with the local community', their existence and nature going unquestioned. But what does it actually mean to think of our existence in terms of multiplicity, rather than singularity? In contemporary parlance the word 'community' is often used to evoke a warm feeling of mutual solidarity and social cohesion, positioned in contrast to the harsh individualism of neoliberal capitalism. However, when zooming out to larger motifs of recent European histories, the devastating and murderous consequences of a unified and therefore exclusionary 'we' become all too apparent. How might it be possible to work with ideas of 'community' in ways that acknowledge these difficulties?

Twentieth century European philosophers such as Martin Heidegger, Hannah Arendt and Jean-Luc Nancy remind us that the very idea of community cannot be taken for granted. Their work presents us with a detailed and systematic examination of ideas of sociality, multiplicity and the political. It is because of their in-depth elaborations on the fundamental principles of being with and towards others, that I draw on their philosophy in the development of my thinking on illustration and community. Nancy's careful considerations of the nature of community in particular combine with my reflections on practice to reveal collaborative illustration as a site for ontological disclosure: illustration presents itself as the space where we can evaluate and examine our experiences and enactments of collectivity.

The illustrative documents resulting from this research delineate plural, shared worlds that emerge through the process of the participants' interactions. Phenomenological concepts

such as ‘Lebenswelt’ (life-world) and ‘Alltagswelt’ (world of everyday life) by philosophers Edmund Husserl and Alfred Schütz offer opportunities for discussing the possibility of collaborative illustration projects to create collective worlds that shape participants’ subjective experiences.

The projects I am discussing demonstrate how illustration has the power to reconfigure the social fields in which it appears. Illustration has the capacity to act like a magnet: to gather up individuals, modify the relationships between them and shift the way they understand themselves, both in relation to each other and the matter of concern, the subject matter, the ‘content’ of the illustration at stake. My invocation of the ‘magnetic’ power of illustration is not related to any mystical sense of totemic or animistic images – magic portraits, masks and mirrors, living statues, and haunted houses (Mitchell 2005:31), far from it. The gravitational pull that an illustration project can exert on the social field surrounding it is the result of the direct involvement of individuals gathering in the process of its creation. By drawing the lines, they are drawn in and drawn together.

Of course, these processes are neither predictable nor smooth. Just as paper can wrinkle, so do these projects. The publics they assemble are patchy, their pull is variable, leaving swathes of the social field unmoved. And yet – it remains my hypothesis that despite this patchiness illustration has a meaningful contribution to make to contemporary discourse on community and the challenges of coexistence.

How does it do it? The illustration projects discussed in this thesis exert their pull through their material presence in the form of co-produced, visual documents relating to joint matters of concern. Through participating in the creation of these illustrative documents, privately held knowledge, experiences and imaginaries are translated into material inscriptions visible to all. This does not result in a distilled, agreed synthesis of what people had imagined prior to participating in the project, but in an altogether new picture that emerged through the interlocking articulations of many. Collaborative illustration projects can thus serve as an arena for collective sense-making that mediates and binds us together around shared themes and provide a ‘space of appearance’ (Arendt 1998:50) for marginalised groups. Depositing the outputs of this work in publicly accessible repositories introduces the possibilities of expanded temporal reach towards futural communities of communication.

During the course of this PhD I completed three discrete illustration projects that taken together constitute the practice element of this research. For each of them I collaborated with a number of individuals and/or a pre-existing group or organisation, inviting participants to contribute to a collaborative illustration that emerged through the project: *Walking the Elephant* was conducted with the local community in and around the now defunct Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre; *Write Women into History* emerged from my collaboration with a writing-group of older feminists; and *Cracks in the Pavement* is the result of a walking and collaborative mapping project during the Covid-19 'lockdown'. As even these very brief descriptions indicate, my three projects differ from one another in numerous ways, but they each offered the opportunity to test, reflect on and develop my hypothesis of illustration as a space for community to reveal and enact itself. Despite the individual projects' many variations there are also significant overlaps: All three focus on a particular geographic place in London at a distinct moment in time and resulted in the production of one or more illustrative documents that capture shared matters of concern in relation to the place and time in question.

Conducting action research in the form of three participatory illustration projects formed one of the key **objectives** for this research. The other two objectives were to critically analyse and review existing participatory creative practice (in illustration and closely related disciplines such as design and publishing), which took the form of studio visits, in-depth interviews with practitioners and – in one case – insightful conversations with a number of people who had taken part in a speculative design project, and finally to bring conceptions of community, theoretically grounded in political philosophy, into relation with illustration practice. Work on these three objectives was not carried out in a strictly linear sequence, however broadly speaking the analysis and review of existing practice examples took place towards the early stages of the PhD and was followed by the action research. The intertwining of practice and theory came about through the writing of this thesis, most of which was authored in the latter stages of the PhD. However, throughout the duration of this research some form of writing – may that be in the form of conference papers and lectures, project reports and reflections, or perhaps most importantly the PhD confirmation document – continuously contributed to the evolution of the ideas that I am putting forward here.

I have contributed to many conferences during the work on this PhD, which have enabled me to test some of the ideas in this thesis. These include *The Falmouth Illustration Forum*

in 2019, The Royal Anthropological Association conference in 2020, the International Visual Sociology Association, the Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers, as well as the *Urban Encounters* conference hosted by Oxford University, all in 2021. In the same year I also contributed to the *11th International Illustration Research Symposium* at Kingston University, and the *Remote Sensing Symposium* at UAL.

My participation in *Urban Encounters* resulted in an invitation to contribute an article to *Migrant Studies*, a journal published by Oxford University Press. My article which centres on my project *Walking the Elephant* and expands some of the considerations developed in this PhD has just been accepted for publication after a double-blind peer review process. In 2020 I also put myself forward for consideration as a contributor to a research project with a Swiss and German group of academics called CIELab who are interested in 'the participatory image'. I took part in a sequence of interesting discussions and exchanges and have submitted a chapter to an edited collection the organisers of this research initiative are publishing. For this I have used *Cracks in the Pavement* as focal point and built on some of the insights from this PhD research.

All these experiences and exchanges – the exposure to concerns and conventions in other areas of scholarly practice, the cross-disciplinary conversations and questions, as well as the various peer review processes have contributed to the ideas I am now able to present in this thesis.

Contributions to knowledge

Perhaps rather typically for research students, I embarked on this PhD with a set of ideas and ambitions that were somewhat different to what this study ended up becoming. I expected my main contribution to knowledge to emerge from the combination of participatory, creative methods with illustration practice. This has indeed remained, in a somewhat modified form, one of my contributions. However, the process of working through my various objectives detailed above – the in-depth interviews, the action research, the immersion in various areas of theory and philosophy – modified, deepened and expanded what I am now able to offer as new knowledge to illustration research, or illustration 'studies', as the field has more recently been termed (Horton 2023).

The experience of working on the first of my three projects, *Walking the Elephant* (2017-2019) was followed by a period of reflection, scrutiny and consolidation through the process of PhD-confirmation, which recalibrated my ambitions. Prior to this I had sought to illustrate what I had been calling 'collective urban imaginaries', a term I formulated in reference to philosopher Charles Taylor's idea of 'social imaginaries', defined as collectively held mental images, that arise from 'the way in which ordinary people "imagine" their […] surroundings […] carried in images, stories and legends' (2004:23). However, attempting to pursue these ideas revealed that collective imaginaries – should they even exist – are difficult to access and even more difficult to illustrate. How was I to reliably know what goes on in people's minds? Is it indeed likely that multiple people are imagining the same kind of thing? Are imaginaries even visual? Well-known art historian and theorist W.J.T. Mitchell suggests that mental images are made up of 'dreams, memories, ideas and fantasmata' (1984:508) but he also reminds us that the very concept of 'mental image' itself is contested (1984:507-511), depending on specific theories of perception and the mind.

I wavered. It gradually became clear that there were more productive ways for illustration to draw out collective worlds. Rather than attempting to represent something pre-existing, participatory illustration could be thought of as a process of collective sense making, where 'sense' emerges as part of an encounter, instead of something that existed prior to the meeting or the project. Nancy suggests that we think of images as 'performative' forms of knowledge creation: in their act of existence, they create the world they refer to (see Janus 2016:3). I came to see that instead of trying to visualise supposed 'collective imaginaries'

that purportedly reside in people's minds prior to the project, the process of gathering around a common interest can create new shared worlds. The two subsequent projects – *Write Women into History* and *Cracks in the Pavement* (both carried out 2020-2021) enabled me to test these ideas in practice and reflect on their implications for illustration practice.

The writing of the thesis has turned out to be just as much of a process of creative discovery as working on the other two objectives. The same insight that shifted my thinking on the possibilities on illustration – that it can operate as an emergent process of situated sense-making, rather than a device to record a pre-existing reality – proved to also hold true for the practice of writing. The ideas put forward in this PhD were not conceived of independently and then neatly rendered in crystalline paragraphs. They emerged relationally and materially – tangled up in the experiences of working on my projects, the lines I was reading in a book, and the words and syntax that offered themselves to me during the many hours at various desks and libraries. Language, like illustration, is always already enmeshed, entangled and implicated in the worlds we are hoping to understand and describe. This thesis intertwines the processes and outputs of my illustration projects with reflective, analytic and interpretive writing typically used in the humanities. In doing so I have attempted to harness the generative and productive qualities of words to think things anew and forge new paths for our discipline.

The **contributions to knowledge** that I am putting forward in this PhD are thus twofold. The first is the main, explicit argument I make in this thesis and my methodology that allowed me to arrive at this statement. This is a version of the contribution I had always hoped I would be able to offer, although it took the duration of the PhD to crystalise from its hazy beginnings into its current form. I propose participatory illustration projects as a site for ontological disclosure, where we can enact, record and reflect on our experiences of community. Collaborative illustrated documents can reveal how we co-constitute each other in collective acts of communication.

While I am not offering a guide or a 'toolkit' for other practitioners to use in their own participatory projects as part of this PhD, my contribution to knowledge includes the methodology for producing this kind of work. This is comprised by a range of situated methods and operational principles (discussed in detail in Chapter 2) which I developed through my three projects. It is in fact my emphasis on the situated and responsive methods,

that enables me to arrive at a form of illustration that can operate as a site for ontological disclosure. Other practitioners might find it useful to reflect on my methods and considerations developed as part of this PhD, but, perhaps more importantly, my work demonstrates the value for practitioners of developing their own situated methods that respond to the context they are working in, as well as their own position and capabilities as illustrators.

I will discuss my hesitation to develop a more prescriptive set of steps or recommendations at various points in this thesis (see p.116-119, 161, 209-210), but I would like to briefly add here that my reluctance to instruct is shared by two of the key philosophers I draw on in my research – Arendt and Nancy. While both can be described as political thinkers, they refrained from drafting principles of governance as is otherwise common amongst political philosophers (Canovan in Arendt 1998:11, Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy 1997).

Another aspect of the methodology that allows me to arrive at the main argument that I am putting forward in this thesis, is the combination of practice with theory that I have carried out in this thesis. The intertwining of illustration practice with European philosophy is revealed as a productive, generative process, where critical analysis and conceptual elucidation expand and advance the knowledge generated in practice, and practice, in turn, complicates and advances theory, ultimately leading to the production of new knowledge in illustration. Overall, this methodology – comprised of the various, carefully considered situated methods in practce as well as the combination of practice and theory in this thesis – advances the 'Theoretical Turn' identified by Grove (2018) in our field.

My second contribution to knowledge relates to the *mode* of knowledge production at play *in the illustrative documents*. As I describe above, the realisation that illustration can best be understood as a performative mode of knowledge production was a threshold moment in my research trajectory. The second contribution to knowledge in this PhD is therefore the positioning of illustration as a performative knowledge creation practice. Rather than conceiving of illustration as mimetic or representational, I propose that illustration in the process of its creation produces the reality it refers to.

Illustration has traditionally been an under-theorised area of creative endeavour, and although this has started to change during the last decade, there is still not very much theoretically grounded practice-led research in our field. As I am writing this introduction

in spring 2023, the recent release of multiple AI image generators is causing concern for some illustrators, who fear, probably with good reason, their livelihoods to be imperilled (AOI 2023, Shaffi 2023). While it is impossible to know precisely how and to what extent artificial image generators will impact on our discipline, these developments give additional impetus to illustrators to reflect on and articulate all the other things that our discipline is capable of, apart from the kinds of 'illustrative' tasks that can easily be performed by AI.

The methodological advancement of the field is therefore of crucial importance. Illustration academics Mireille Fauchon and Rachel Gannon's book *Illustration Research Methods* (2021) lays the groundwork for this with their broad survey of innovative practice models in illustration. The newly announced *Illustration Research Series* by Bloomsbury Visual Arts, promises to take up ideas in greater depth, demonstrating possibilities for illustration to propel itself towards new and exciting possibilities as a creative, cultural practice that is able to meaningfully contribute to complex debates. While design research has recently positioned itself as an important voice in responding to contemporary concerns (for example Bloomsbury Visual Art Series *Designing in Dark Times*) and is formulating thoughtful possibilities for *shaping* future worlds (for example Escobar 2018, Avila 2022), I believe that illustration has a critical role to play in *illuminating* and *interpreting* our complex and plural present realms and conjuring more hopeful visions for our interdependent futures[4]. My contributions to knowledge will add to this methodological advancement of illustration and offer practitioners and researchers new ways of thinking about and pursuing their work.

I am aware that the overlap of participatory methods and illustration practice is being investigated by two other illustrators. Mitch Miller, whose work I discuss in some detail in this PhD, draws mostly on ethnographic theory and uses different methods to mine (Miller 2016). Karen Sung, a current PhD student at Loughborough University's Storytelling Academy, is working on developing methods for visual self-expression with South Korean participants using semiotic analysis and interpretation, and is producing a toolkit for other facilitators. Both of these researchers are making valuable contributions to the field, but even though there is some general overlap in terms of our interest in working with others towards the articulation of their perspectives, Miller's and Sung's work significantly differs in their project design and their theoretical orientations.

---

4 See Grove (2023) for an excellent account of illustration as a force for conjuring visions for alternative futures.

My work is concerned with exploring the world in the companionship of others – learning about, through and with other people. There is thus another body of knowledge that emerged from my research that I have yet to mention. While working on my three projects with different groups of people I gained many specific and particular insights about their lives and perspectives. I learned about the ways in which they navigated and interpreted their environments at a particular point in time and as a result each project generated a body of knowledge that is situated, embodied and particular: the spatially grounded memories and habitual routes of a community on the brink of its displacement (*Walking the Elephant*), the spirited initiatives and emotional responses to the Women's Liberation Movement in East London (*Write Women into History*) and the collective body of sensory and observational impressions and associations of isolated walkers during the Covid-19 pandemic (*Cracks in the Pavement*). It is however the mode and process of generating and expressing this knowledge in collaborative illustration projects, that is the focus of this PhD, rather than the particular knowledge itself. In other words, my research is not about the regeneration of Elephant and Castle, the Women's Liberation movement, or the sensory and associative power of walking in Hackney, but about the potential of illustration to bring us together in our articulation (and creation) of these worlds. This, alongside the process of arriving at these insights, is what I would like to offer as my contribution.

Notes on methodology

Overall, this PhD was conducted as a piece of practice-led research. Creative practice PhDs are still a relatively recent form of inquiry in the UK. They rose to prominence in the late 1990s, prompting the publication of regulations in a report by the United Kingdom Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE) in 1997 that aimed to address some of the great variance in the sector (Candlin 2000:97). There has been much discussion around the formulation of a research methodology that is sympathetic to the way creative practitioners work (see for example Barrett & Bolt (2010) and Dean & Smith (2009)). Key features of these debates are reflections on the nature of knowledge, its production and presentation. Artist and researcher Carole Gray defined 'practice-led research' in a much-cited paper as 'research which is initiated in practice, where questions, problems and challenges are identified and formed by the needs of practice' (1996:3). This is an apt description of the inception of this PhD: While working on my 2012 commission for the hospital building and operating in a forcefield of contradictory interests, values and flows of capital, I took umbrage at the casual mobilisation of complex terms such as 'community'. I realised that the questions I was asking could not be resolved through practice alone and decided to embark on this research.

In a further specialisation of terms, practice-*led* research (as opposed to practice-*based* research) has been more specifically described as generating new knowledge that has 'operational significance for that practice', where practice forms an integral part of the research method, but the contribution to knowledge may be fully described in text form (Candy 2006:1). This description is applicable to this PhD.

I have previously described the three projects I have worked on as part of this PhD as 'action research'. This term is derived from educational researcher Donald Schön's key text on the nature of professional knowledge and action *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983). He suggests that professionals have the ability to solve some problems on the spot – through a form of improvisation which he calls 'reflection-in-action'. If that doesn't suffice, it can be extended by 'reflection-on-action' which takes place after the event and allows the practitioner to review, analyse and evaluate. This form of reflective practice, developed by Schön, David Kolb ([1984] 2014) and other educational theorists during the 1980s, is a key feature of action research, where multiple cycles of abstract conceptualisation, concrete planning, acting,

reflecting and renewed conceptualisation build on each other to produce new knowledge for the practitioner.

Gray's definition of 'practice-led research', which describes my overall methodology, and Schön's definition of 'action research', which applies specifically to the three projects I worked on, should make it abundantly clear that the role of practice in my research is not to provide proof for a claim or bear out the veracity of a hypothesis. Practice is, in Paul Carter's words, 'material thought' (2004), it serves as a method for advancing ideas through material and action-oriented means. One could argue that I could have reached the same conclusions in my PhD by considering other people's practice, rather than working on my own projects. However, placing myself in the midst of social and material relations in my action research pressed my face against questions with a force that studying other people's work would never have. The sheer intensity of Schön's 'thinking-in-action' creates situations where you are repeatedly confronted with the limitations of your preparations – both the theoretical preparations (i.e. the kinds of questions you are asking) and the practical preparations (there is never enough of one thing, always too much of another thing, it is never smooth-running). The material and social realities are always more complicated and interesting than anticipated. The resulting work, and the resulting thoughts and questions, are never quite those that were anticipated. It is precisely this disparity between a project's expected results, and one's actual findings that, although occasionally somewhat disorienting, generates a productive force moving the research forward.

Artist and academic Barbara Bolt's writing on creative arts inquiry offers a philosophically grounded take on these ideas by drawing on Heidegger's work. In her numerous publications (2004, 2007, 2011, 2013) she uses the term 'art' to refer to creative practice animated by open-ended inquisitiveness, but her claims can equally be applied to the kind of illustration and design work that emerges in a research-driven practice such as this PhD. Bolt highlights how for Heidegger understanding and knowledge do not emerge from theoretical contemplation (2011:87). Instead, a relational being-in-the-world, being involved in it, handling things and relating to others is what generates new insight. In Heidegger's writing the world is never objective, separate, rigid and settled. It cannot be known in advance, and we cannot master or take hold of it through representational practices (ibid: 64). Bolt suggests that creative practice can be 'the unconcealment of that which has never before

been revealed' (ibid:68). She explains that a 'praxical engagement with tools, materials and ideas produces its own kind of [in]sight' (2004:187).

Bolt does however also remind us that knowledge does not solely manifest itself in practice. She distinguishes between the 'artwork' and 'the work of art'. The latter is defined as the effects and significance of a piece of creative practice, which, crucially, need to be articulated through a written 'exegesis'. She explains that '[i]n the exegesis, the nature and authority of the knowledge claims that flow from practice-led research are able to be sustained beyond the particularity of a practice to contribute to the broader knowledge economy' (2007:34). This overlaps with my experience of working on this PhD. It was precisely the relationship between periods of being involved in practice, followed by slow and laborious phases of articulation through writing that produced the ideas and claims I am putting forward. The generative process of intertwining the experiences and insights arising from practice with theoretical literature through writing is the locus of knowledge creation in this research.

The choice of literature used for this delicate process of productive enmeshment of practice and theory is of course of vital importance. Through working on this PhD I have become mindful of the kinds of theoretical attitudes that are conducive to practice-led research. Writing that is broadly deconstructive can delight with piercing insight but may well impede the development of practice. For example, one piece that I read early on in my research was feminist Iris Marion Young's astutely argued article 'The Ideal of Community and the Politics of Difference' (1990). Young proposes that when constructing terms in an oppositional binary (e.g. individual versus community), where each term is defined by its negative relation to the other, the simple reversal of their evaluation (ie. valuing 'community' more than 'individual') does not hold much critical force. When examined more closely both concepts rely on the same basic principle: the ideal of a unified whole. Using 'community' in this way, Young argues, can actually lay the groundwork for ethnocentric identitarian politics.

While I agreed with the argument, I did not find this particularly useful for bringing forth new insights or knowledge in conjunction with my practice. This form of critical analysis reminds us to be wary of seemingly universal or neutral terms, but the deconstructive approach, sometimes referred to as 'ideological unmasking' or the 'hermeneutics of suspicion', can make it hard to know how to proceed in practice. In contrast, an approach that grapples with thinking things anew, using language in its generative and productive quality is more

helpful, perhaps simply because it is more similar to what the practitioner does. In the work of Heidegger as well as Nancy language doesn't represent or reflect reality, but cautiously attempts to sketch out the possibility of thinking things afresh. Words are handled reflexively and self-consciously. Writing thus conceived as constructive, rather than deconstructive, mirrors the idea of illustration as a performative form of knowledge creation – generating and presenting a new world, rather than representing something pre-existing.

Besides the philosophers that I have already mentioned, Heidegger, Arendt and Nancy, whom I draw on in the construction of my main argument, I also engage many other theorists, practitioners and concepts in the successive formation of reflective spaces that allow me to consider the various facets of my projects and identify and advance relevant points of interest. This is the enactment of Gray's definition of research 'formed by the needs of practice' (1996:3). As will become obvious, the central logic that structures this thesis is the consecutive demands made by the various phases of my projects.

Working with other people as part of my research I was acutely aware of my ethical responsibilities as a researcher. Each of the projects had a rigorous protocol in place for ensuring a process of informed consent. I took care to explain the research I was doing to each participant and asked them to sign a consent form. This wasn't always easy: *Walking the Elephant* operated as a series of drop-in workshops, with people coming and going at different times. In this case I elicited the support from dedicated volunteers whose primary role it was to ensure consent procedures had been followed for each person taking part. In *Cracks in the Pavement* each participant worked on the project on their own due to the Covid-19 'lockdown' and in this scenario some participants simply forgot to complete and sign the consent form. In these scenarios I contacted them to make sure they had understood the research dimension of the project and returned the form to them for completion. I always offered participants to withdraw from the project, although I am happy to report that nobody took me up on this offer.

In terms of crediting the artwork, I was keen to strike a balance between recognising and celebrating everybody's contribution while also enabling those to participate who were not happy, for whatever reason, to have their name linked to the project. I asked each person to let me know whether they would like to use a pseudonym or remain anonymous when publishing the results. In all three projects a small percentage of participants did opt for

this, although overall I had the impression that most people were happy and proud to be associated with the work. Sample consent forms that offer these options to participants can be seen in the Appendix pp.330-336.

Beyond the crucial process of eliciting informed consent, I was also always eager to make participation feel worthwhile and desirable for the group. I took care to design each project through a process of dialogue and co-ownership (although this was not possible for *Cracks in the Pavement*). The theme of each project was developed in relation to the participants explicit interests, and the orientation was always towards an output which would serve and/or delight those who took part. In each of the three projects I produced outputs that were distributed to participants free of charge, making it my priority to present them with something that was crafted with obvious care and attention.

My position in relation to each of the groups was that of an outsider and non-expert on the specific theme. I was mindful of this status and recognised the necessity for building up trust in each of these scenarios so that would-be participants may feel confident to embark on the process of taking part. Each project achieved this in a different way – through my association with a trusted community organisation (*Walking the Elephant*), through my continuous group attendance before the actual 'art session' (*Write Women into History*) and through a chain of individual introductions through a known friend or acquaintance (*Cracks in the Pavement*).

I conducted the in-depth interviews with practitioners who had worked on similar projects in the early stages of this PhD. I spent a hugely engaging day with illustrator Mitch Miller – inventor of the so-called 'dialectogram' (www.dialectograms.com) – in and around his studio in Glasgow learning about his impressive work. Hefin Jones, a designer and creator of the fascinating project *Cosmic Colliery*, met with me twice for long and thoughtful conversations about this project that had unfolded in his native area of Southern Wales. He kindly put me in touch with some of his participants, who in turn were generous enough to meet me and discuss their experience of working with Jones on this unusual project. The day I spent doing so in the Rhymney Valley in Wales enabled me to get a much fuller understanding of Jones' work. Gavin Wade, artist and curator, also very kindly spent multiple hours with me in his artist-run gallery space Eastside Projects in Birmingham, discussing Eastside Project's *User Manuals*. The insights I gleaned from this meeting on *User Manual #6: The Artist and the*

Engineer, which Wade had worked on with illustrator Peter Nencini, were valuable for the development my own projects.

All these conversations were recorded and transcribed. I explained my research to all people I spoke to, and they each consented to take part, allowing me to quote and cite them in this thesis and associated research outputs. I offered my transcripts to my conversation partners for review, with some of them taking me up on the offer and amending minor details in the record. The transcripts of these conversations can be found in the Appendix p.239-329.

Although I broadly identify as an illustrator, I clearly did more than 'just' illustrate, when working on my PhD practice projects. In addition to doing some illustration work, my projects prompted me to take on a whole number of roles. I acted as a facilitator, project manager, graphic designer, production controller and general administrator at various stages of the projects. While assembling the participants' contributions I worked as an interpreter, editor, translator and scribe.

Overall, this thesis is the product of many contributors and numerous creative processes of transcription and inscription, listening, articulating, drawing out, drawing in, drawing together, making, unmaking and remaking. It was an enjoyable process, and more hours of work than I had ever thought it possible to dedicate to a single undertaking.

My projects

For my research I undertook three discrete illustration projects that taken together constitute the practice element of this PhD. For each of them I collaborated with a number of individuals and/or a pre-existing group or organisation, inviting participants to contribute to a collaborative, illustrative document that emerged through the project. The three projects described below differ from one another in numerous ways, but they overlap in their focus on a particular geographic place in London at a distinct moment in time. All three projects capture shared matters of concern in relation to the place and time in question, while also exposing the vitality that emerges in their polyvocal articulation.

The first project, *Walking the Elephant*, was produced before Covid-19 reached the UK in March 2020, while the other two took place during the pandemic with all the restrictions that this crisis forced upon us. For *Write Women into History,* my co-facilitators and I were able to translate a project that had originally been planned to take place in person into an online context without significantly altering its basic aims or structures. In contrast to this, *Cracks in the Pavement* is a direct response to the public health crisis and its resulting social and spatial restrictions.

Walking the Elephant / Recorriendo Elephant (2017 – 2019)

In this project I worked with the charity Latin Elephant, an organisation representing the interests of the Latin American community in an area of South London known as Elephant & Castle. The work consisted of a number of participatory mapping workshops, and resulted in the production of printed outputs and a webpage, that capture the vitality of the site at a moment in time when it was facing imminent demolition.

The Elephant & Castle neighbourhood in London is well known as the biggest centre of the Latin American community in the UK. There are around 150 Latin American and minority ethnic businesses in the area. The Elephant & Castle Shopping Centre, which was cleared and demolished after a long legal battle in 2021, was the home of many of these businesses. At the time of my project, the Shopping Centre was still standing and although the proposed development was ominously looming, it had not yet been fully confirmed, being held off by various challenges, objections and appeals that were playing themselves out through their respective channels. While it maintained its importance as a vital centre for the Latin

American community and many other groups and individuals, it was in a critical state of disrepair. With its iconic pink elephant statue at the front, the centre upheld its somewhat troubled presence in its liminal state of (non-)existence.

I contacted Latin Elephant in early 2017 and expressed my wish to collaborate on a project that brought people together to visualise the rich social and cultural networks of the site. Latin Elephant, who were involved in fighting for the continued existence of and increased support for local small businesses, were interested in a project that highlighted the importance of these businesses for the local community. Over the following months we collaboratively designed the project called *Walking the Elephant* or *Recorriendo Elephant* in Spanish.

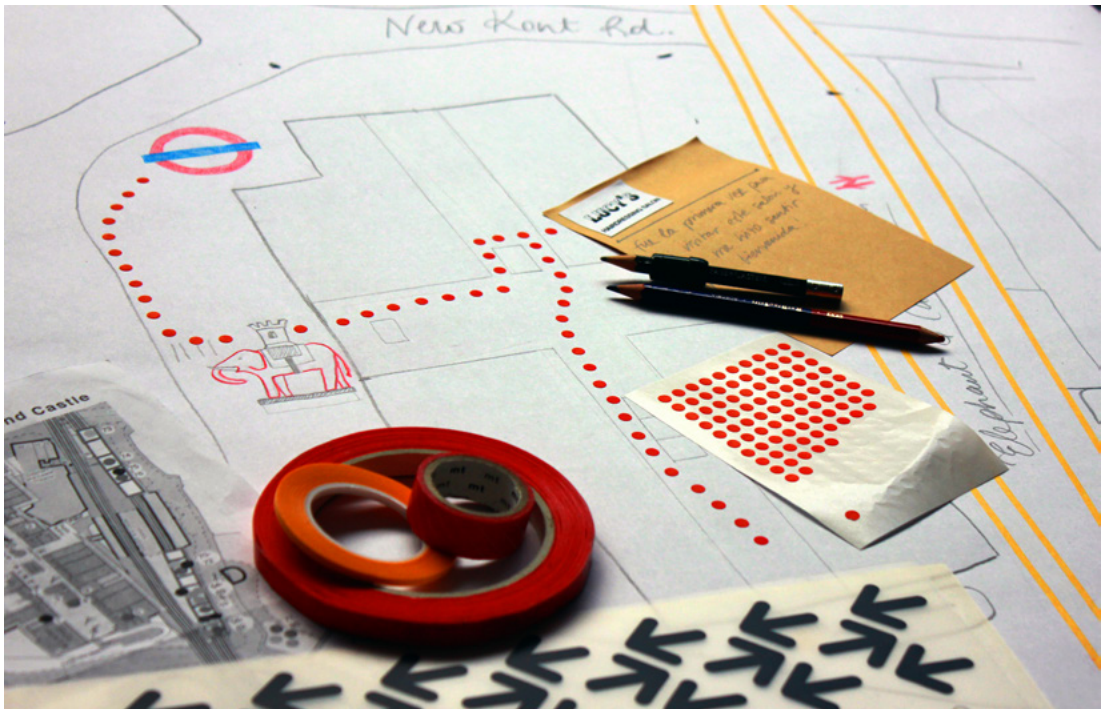
The first phase was to capture residents' topographical imaginaries via a series of participatory mapping workshops. During the following phase I would process and reformulate the outcomes of the workshops into visually more legible illustrated outputs, that would represent a collectively produced representation of the site. The third phase was loosely planned to be concerned with the distribution of the material.

I held my workshop four times at various locations in and around the shopping centre throughout 2017. The workshops were designed for participants to drop in and contribute at any time. For each workshop I prepared a large-scale map of the site, where I sketched out the area roughly in pencil and tape. I supplied stickers, tapes, variously designed post-it notes and pens and invited participants to share their habitual walking routes by drawing them on the map and adding their stopping-off points with a short note about

Fig. 1 (below): Promoting the workshops via the local Spanish language community radio station Radio Extra (April 2017)
Fig. 2 (right): Posters advertising the workshops in the Elephant & Castle shopping centre (April 2017)







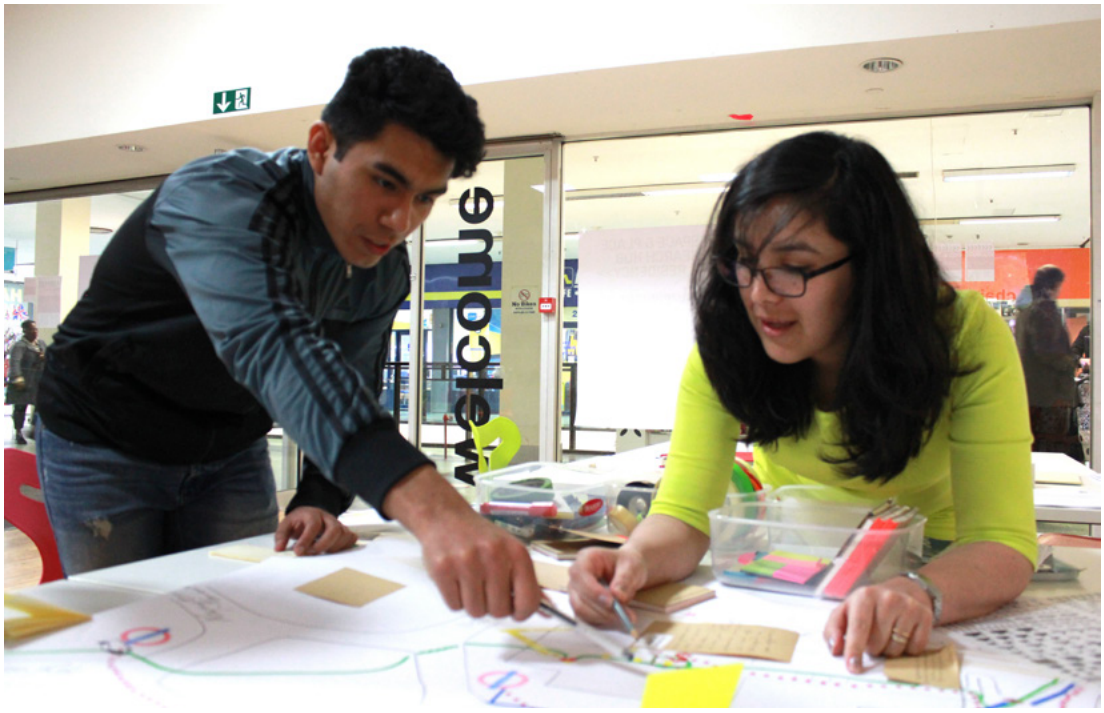


Fig. 3 (top): Preparing for the workshops (April 2017)
Fig. 4 (below): Workshop 1, Elephant & Castle shopping centre (27 April 2017), photo by Cristina Errea

what they did there. Most participants were keen to study the emerging map and see what previous residents had added. When there were multiple participants contributing to the map simultaneously spontaneous conversations and discussions emerged. Each workshop produced a colourful and heterogeneous map, full of stickers, lines, and notes in both English and Spanish.





Figs. 5, 6: Workshop 2, Elephant & Castle shopping centre (28 April 2017), photos by Cristina Errea

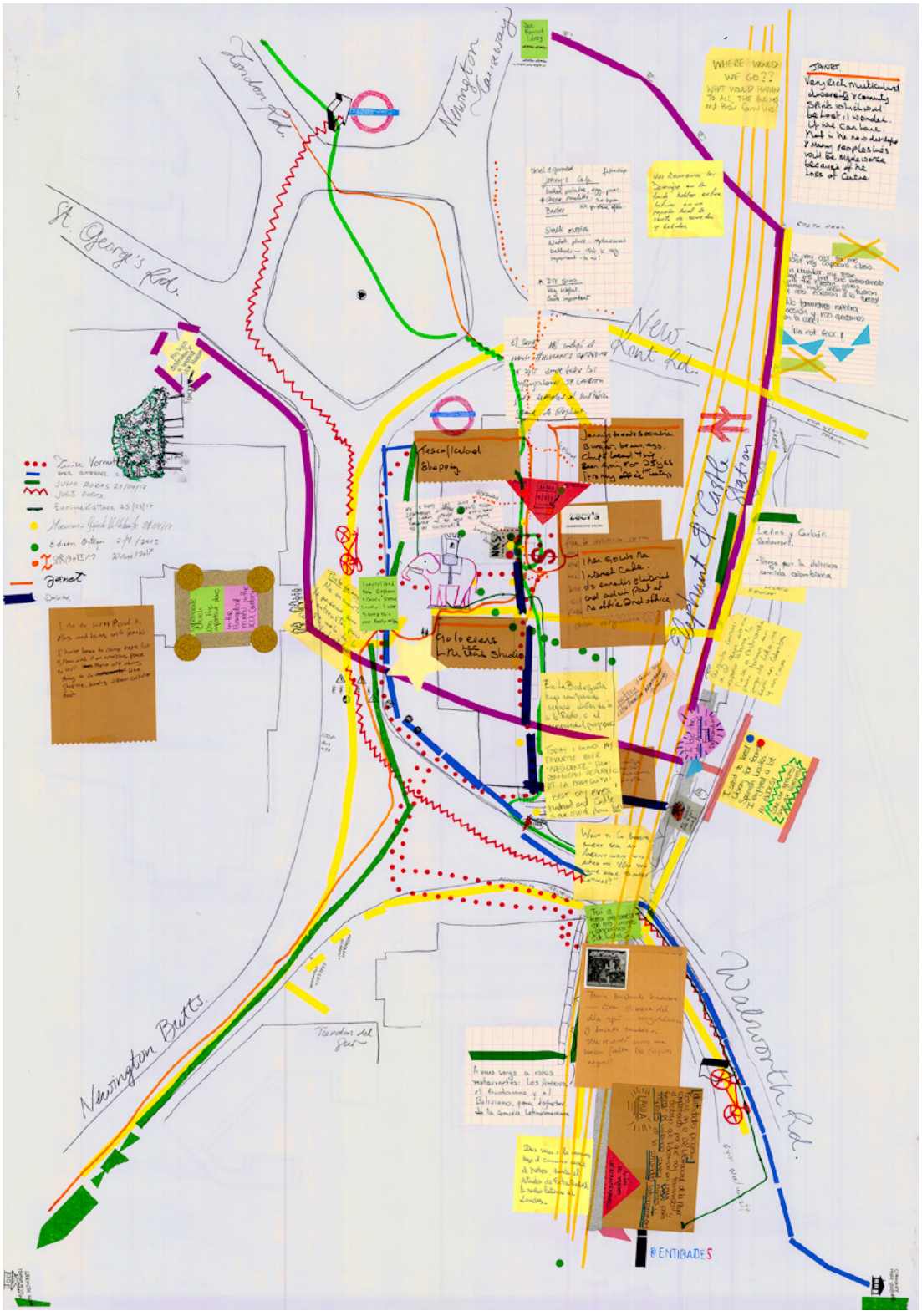


Fig. 7: Combined workshop outputs of workshops 1 and 2





Figs. 8, 9: Workshop 3, Walworth Festival (1 July 2017), photos by Daniel Hopkinson

I transcribed the participants' notes and identified the most frequently named places. As part of my analysis I produced an interim output in the form of an A2 poster that visually highlights some of these. This poster was displayed at subsequent workshops.



Fig. 10 (right): Interim output. A2 poster that highlights the most frequently named stopping off places. Produced after workshops 1 and 2, displayed druing workshops 3 and 4. Combination of digital print and screen printing.

Fig. 11 (below): Workshop 4, Draper Residents' Great British Summer Day Fair (8 July 2017), photo by Daniel Hopkinson



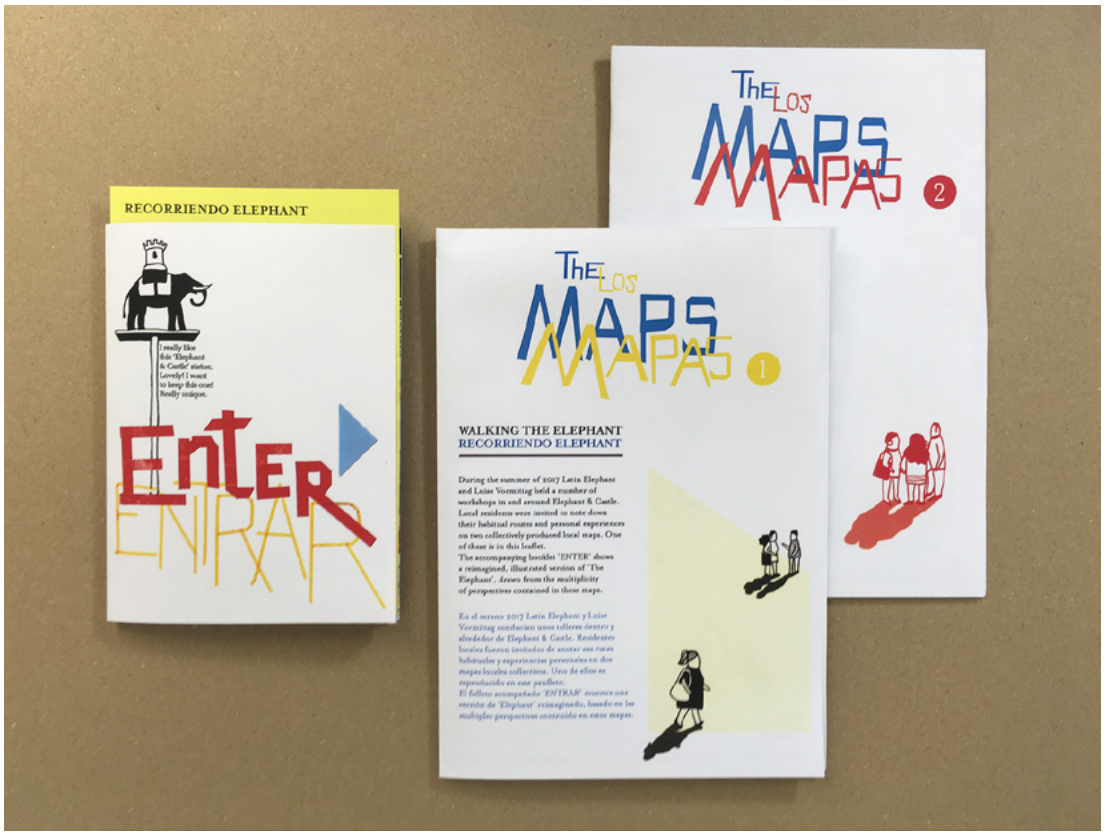
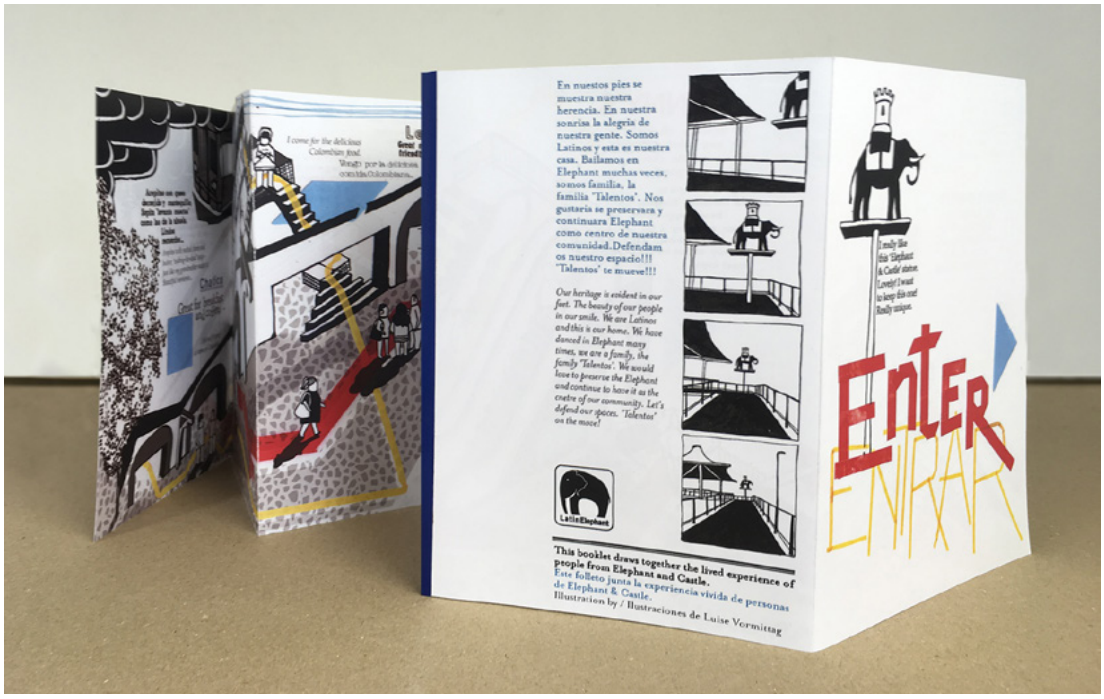


Fig. 12: Printed outputs for *Walking the Elephant*: *Enter/Entrar* and *The Maps/Los Mapas 1* and *2*
© Hazelle I Clark, Diego Ehereny, Macarena Gajardo, Jael García, Ever Guttierrez, Gerald B Leakey, David McEwen, English Ninja, Edison Ortega, Santiago Peluffo, Julio Rodas, Janet Yaták, Tracey Browne, Marek, Elizabeth, Carolin Hohenegger, Cheryl Downes, Naomie Abraham, Tina Kacici, R Chen, Jon Fitzgerald, Andrea Greenwood, Mike Kear, Julian Adamoli, Gareth Morris, Corrina Eastwood, Charlie Smith, Susan Vericat, Richard Reynolds, Lyla Patel (& Zoya and Cyra), Herman H. Lopez and four further participants who prefer to remain anonymous / Luise Vormittag / part of *Walking the Elephant / Recorriendo Elephant* 2017

After an eight-month period of parental leave in 2018 I returned to find the situation in Elephant and Castle altered. The redevelopment had now been approved, with one final judicial review pending. Latin Elephant had succeeded in negotiating some concessions for the traders. In this situation any material I produced would now take the form of a record or archive, rather than an actor in an agonistic situation.

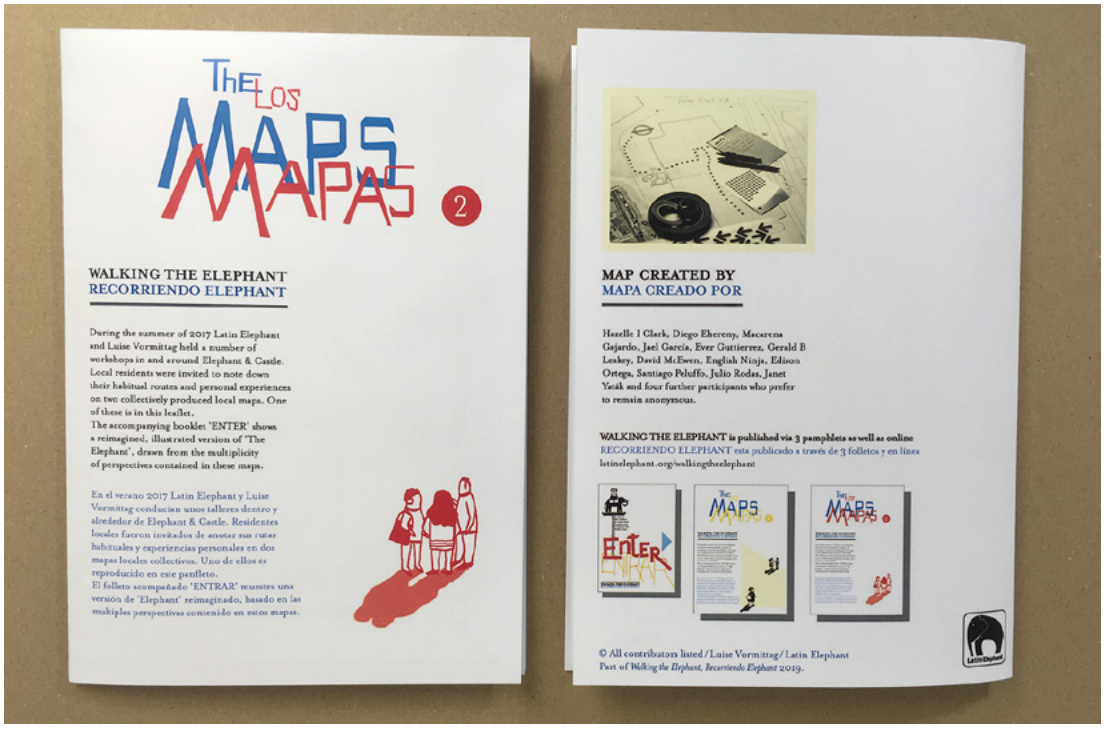
I produced three pamphlets: *The Maps/Los Mapas 1* and *2* are a record of the workshops and the resulting maps. *Enter/Entrar* is my attempt at translating the workshop data and maps into a more coherently illustrated representation of the site. The pamphlets were mailed to participants and given to Latin Elephant to use as they see fit, but the fraught situation on the ground regarding the pending demolition, followed by the Covid-19 outbreak effectively meant that an official launch or celebration of the material never took place.

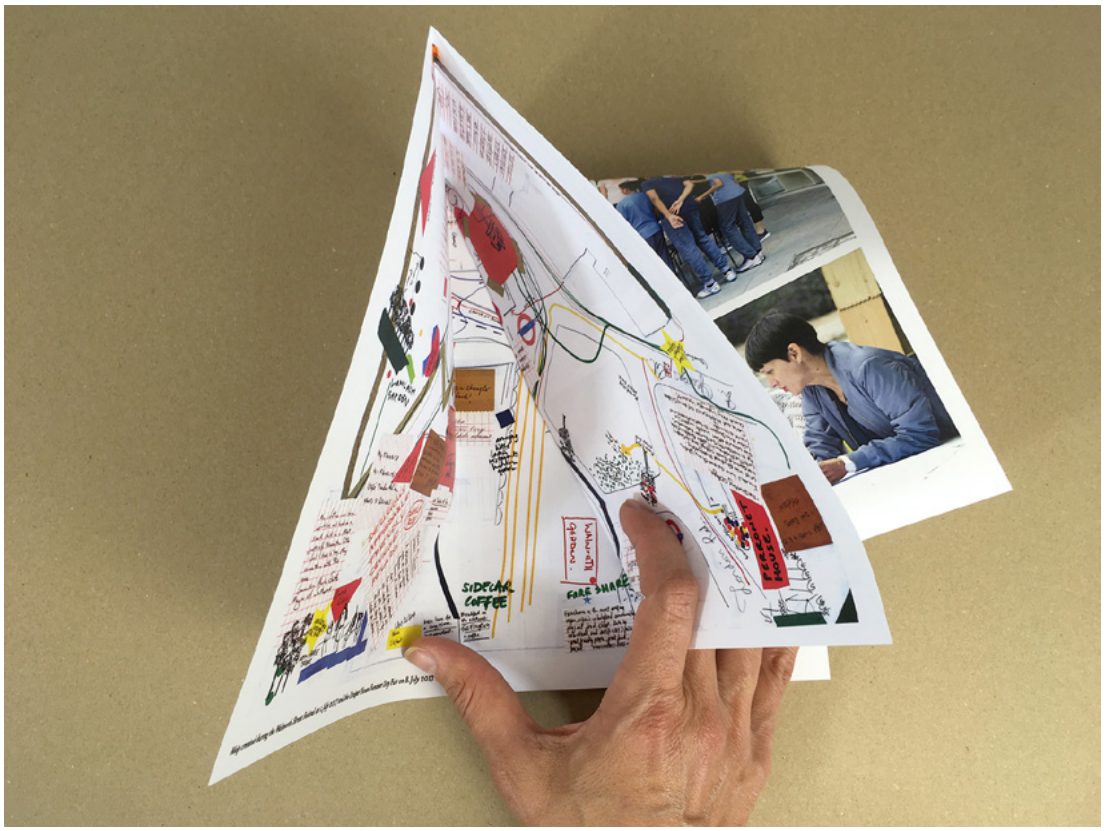




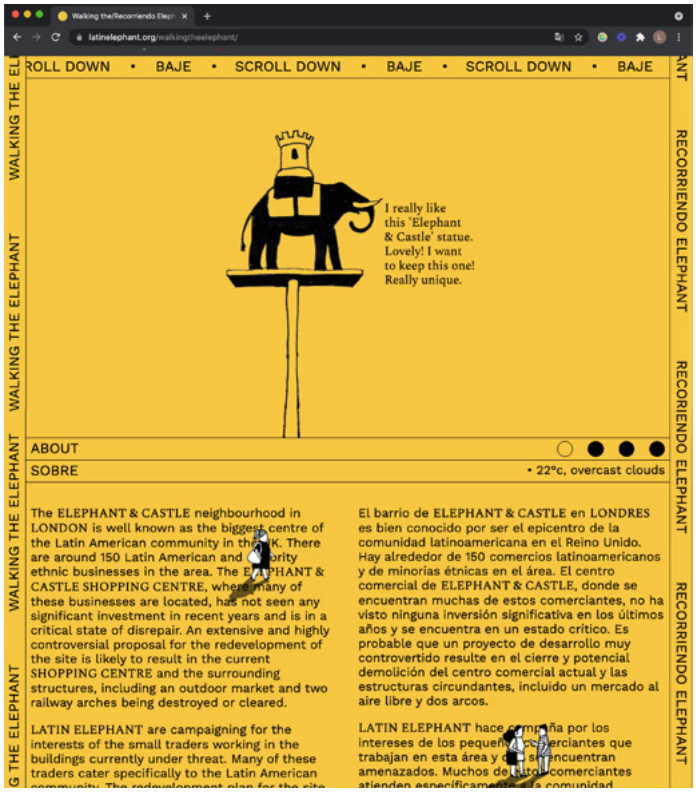


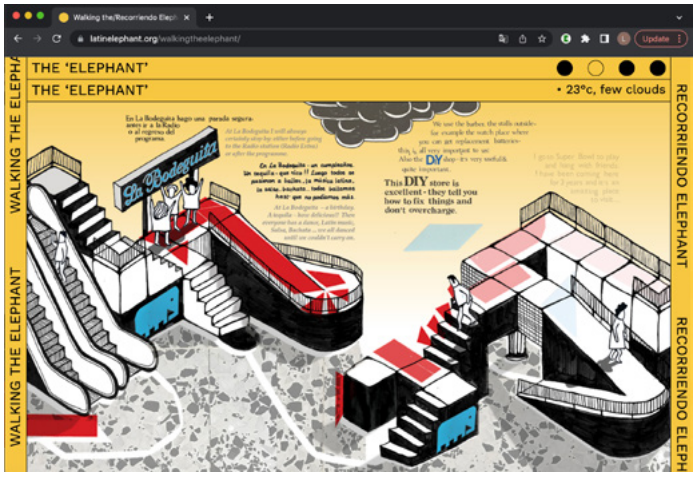
Figs. 13, 14, 15: Details of *Enter/Entrar*: illustrated concertina-style leaflet with a single sheet (yellow) that contains a project introduction, approx A6 size when closed





Figs. 16, 17: Details of *The Maps/Los Mapas*: A5 size leaflets that unfold to A4 – containing workshop photos and eventually to A3 which shows the maps resulting from the workshops. *The Maps/Los Mapas 1* has materials from workshops 1 and 2, *The Maps/Los Mapas 2* has materials from workshops 3 and 4.





Figs. 18, 19: Screenshots of *Walking the Elephant* webpage, designed in partnership with design studio See, Also.

Instead, I decided to partner with design studio called ‘See, Also’ (Lucy Maria and Mike Stevens) to develop a webpage about the project. This webpage was launched in November 2019 and sits as a tab on the main Latin Elephant website. The webpage is now the most visible and significant output of the project. It combines a description and documentation of the workshop process, the maps and my illustrated outputs in an engaging and impactful manner. It exists alongside other material that Latin Elephant have collated to record the life of the Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre before its demolition and it can be viewed following this link: https://latinelephant.org/walkingtheelephant/

In 2022, when I was repeatedly confronted by the jarring sight of a big, gaping hole, where the shopping centre had once stood, I decided that I would like to register the project in a more general, public repository too. I logged it on *Layers of London*, a crowd-sourced, map-based history website developed by the Institute for Historical Research (SOAS, University of London). It can be accessed following this link: https://www.layersoflondon.org/map/records/walking-the-elephant

Write Women into History (2020 – 2021)

This project was initially conceived by Anne-Marie Payne, a community facilitator from the City & Hackney Carers Centre, and Gail Chester, an older Hackney feminist and member of HOWL – the History of Women's Liberation, a group of women who were involved in the Women's Liberation Movement of the 60s, 70s and 80s and want to take control of narrating their own history. Anne-Marie was keen to support Gail in assembling a women's writing group who would write about their involvement in the Women's Liberation Movement in and around Hackney and thereby feed into HOWL's overall aim of capturing women's narratives. Anne-Marie suggested that I get involved in this project as an 'arts facilitator' who could help the women generate some visual material to sit alongside their writing, and who could collate the material in the form of a booklet, thus producing a distinct output for the writing group.

Soon after these initial conversations Covid-19 reached the UK, and the project was cancelled. Some months later it was decided that it could go ahead online, and after a Zoom training session for potential group members the writing group started their regular meetings in January 2021.

A total of seven two-hour meetings were scheduled at bi-weekly intervals. Gail and her co-facilitator Celia Burgess-Macey took on the main task of running the sessions. I was assigned the fourth session as the 'arts session' and attended the previous meetings as a listener. Membership of the group initially fluctuated somewhat and eventually settled at 14 (including Gail and Celia).

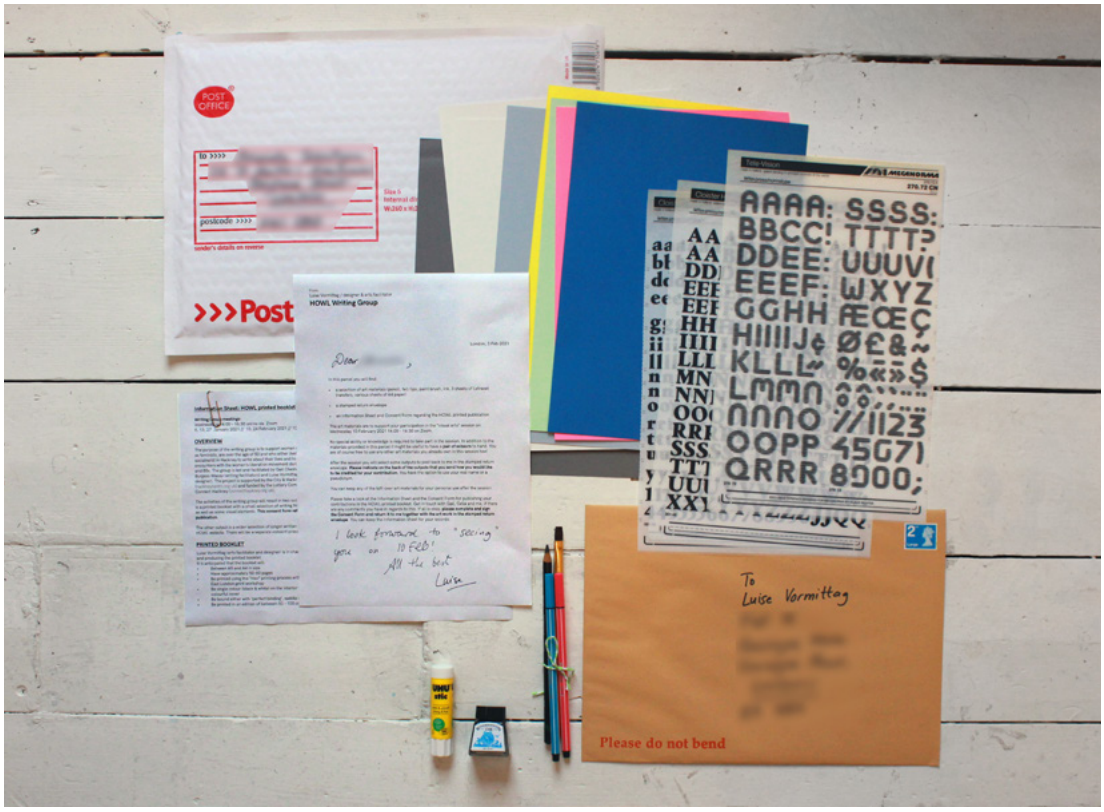
The meetings were loosely structured around various themes, and often included some quiet writing time. The majority of the sessions were taken up with group members reading out what they had written, and others responding. The most interesting aspect of the responses

was that by sharing and listening the women found previously unknown connections to each other's experiences.

As my other two projects had a strong relation to place, I was initially looking for a way to focus the visual session on an aspect of Hackney's geography. When I was listening to the writing that was being shared, however, I couldn't identify a particular geographical focus that stood out strongly enough to be a focal point for the whole group. One thing that everybody did have in common was the spirit of protest and rebellion. All group members had strong memories of organising and attending protest marches, so I decided to make this the focus of the visual session.

At the training session in December 2020 I took note of the varying levels of technical ability in the group. As a consequence, I decided that while the meeting would be on Zoom, the creative work the group did would have to be haptic and involve actual materials. I assembled parcels with art materials including paper, inks, pens and Letraset dry-transfer lettering and distributed them to all group members.

Fig. 20: Contents of the parcels I delivered to the 14 members of the Hackney HOWLers writing group in advance of the 'arts session' in February 2021: Introductory letter, information sheet with the consent form on the reverse, various sheets of Letraset, ink, paintbrush, pencil, pens, glue, sheets of coloured paper and a stamped return envelope



During the arts session I suggested that to create a collective illustration of a protest march, we needed images of heads and designs for placards. After some brief warm-up exercises, that helped the women to familiarise themselves with the art materials, I created break-out rooms, randomly placing two women in each 'room'. They were then invited to draw each other, without placing too much emphasis on resemblance. During the second exercise everyone created a design for a placard with a slogan of their choice, using Letraset dry-transfer lettering.

After the session I collected the material either by post or by bicycle and worked on the cover design. One group member's placard leant itself naturally to become the title of the book: 'Write women into history'. I paired this with a strong and stern looking portrait and added bodies and hands to all the figures, uniting the illustration with a coherent colour scheme and a grid-design.

Fig. 21: Overview of material I received after the 'arts session' from the women







Fig. 22 (above): Front cover of *Write Women into History* (for full credits for cover artwork please see caption Fig. 24) held by a member of the next generation of feminists, Malka, age 3

Fig. 23 (left): Inside spread showing contribution by Catriona Courtier



Fig. 24: Front cover and back cover of *Write Women into History*
Cover artwork © Ayesha Khawla Usmani, BJ, Carol Smith, Catriona Courtier, Celia Burgess-Macey, Gail Chester, Helen Bishop, JS, J. Copperman, Jennie Lazenby, Stephanie Henthorne, Sue O'Sullivan, Wendy Knight & one more anonymous contributor / assembled by Luise Vormittag, 2021

While I was working on the cover, I continued attending the writing sessions. I became increasingly involved in my capacity as graphic designer and production controller, as the group worked on selecting and organising the writing into a publication. After the editing and design process, the booklet was printed by *Duplikat Press*, a local print-shop using the risograph process. The first edition of 200 copies was sold and distributed through local networks. A version of the book is also on sale through print-on-demand service *Lulu*, while a second (digital) print-run has delivered more copies and is awaiting a distributor. The writing group continues to meet informally, and Gail Chester is holding classes for other women across the country who are interested in starting up their own writing groups. We are currently organising the distribution of copies to relevant libraries and repositories. More photographs of the book can be seen on my website following this link: https://luisevormittag.com/WWIH

Cracks in the Pavement (2020 – 2021)

I designed this project specifically in response to the restrictions and various 'lockdowns' brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK. When the rules were at their most severe, one of the few admissible reasons to leave the house was to go for a walk, preferably alone. I took this as the limit of what I would invite people to do; planning around any other kind of activity was too risky, as regulations were constantly fluctuating.

I decided to design a project that enabled people to walk 'together' along the same routes in my local neighbourhood, but at different times. Participants would annotate their thoughts, ideas and observations on a shared A1-sized sheet of paper, that was passed from one walker to the next.

The first walkers set out in December 2020 and determined the route and focus of each map. I recruited these walkers through my own connections and networks in East London. I also approached some people I did not know personally – a prominent local tour-guide agreed to take part, while others initially agreed but then faded away. Some people heard about the project on social media and contacted me to volunteer their contribution. For each new map

Fig. 25: Stylised photo giving an impression of the contents of the pack the walkers received. In reality they received many more art materials such as pens, tapes and coloured paper.





Fig. 26: A pack waiting on a doorstep to be retrieved by a walker

that was started the first walker sent me an approximate description of their intended route. I then sketched out a rough pencil map on an A1 sheet of paper, that served as the basis for the walker's drawings… and annotations. After a few weeks, I had five maps in circulation.

After the route had been laid down, subsequent walkers, one by one, followed the steps of those who went before them (more or less), adding to and expanding upon their predecessors' notes, drawings and observations, so that the map grew in complexity with each contributor. I asked each person to nominate the next participant, thereby creating a chain of socially connected walkers. This worked most of the time. When it did not, I found others to pick up the baton.

Prior to the walk, participants received a zip-locked envelope containing a large physical paper map. I designed the map to fold down to a leaflet that contained instructions and suggestions for participation on the reverse of the map, alongside illustrative collage-style vignettes and some reflective writing on the difficulties of lockdown. The pack also contained a selection of materials such as stickers, tape, pens and paper. I cycled around

East London to deliver them to pre-arranged dropping off points — usually people's front doors, where walkers received the pack in a Covid-secure way. Each participant went on the walk individually or with members of their household, marking up and annotating their route, thoughts, discoveries and observations. Sometimes the annotations happened during the walk itself, sometimes afterwards at home. If walkers were reluctant to draw and mark up the map themselves, they sent me photos, notes or audio files and I annotated on their behalf.

Walkers returned the map and materials in the zip-locked envelope to me. I produced an interim scan of the map, uploaded it to a specially designed website, stocked up on materials and delivered the map to the next walker.

As restrictions were gradually lifted during spring and summer 2021 the project petered out. While each map was designed to accommodate up-to six walkers, they ended up with four to five layers each. Once I had decided to end the project, I produced thank-you packs for all participants, containing prints of the maps and a leaflet that described and reflected upon the process.

Fig. 27: One of the walkers adding their annotations to *Map 3: Arnold Circus to Cat & Mutton Bridge*





Fig. 28: Scan of the finished version of *Map 1: Walthamstow Wetlands*. Contributors: Chris, Laurie Elks, Harry Hewat and Louise Goodison (2020-2021)



Figs. 29, 30, 31, 32: Individual layers of a detail of *Map 1: Walthamstow Wetlands*

Fig. 29: Layer 1: Chris (27.12.2020); Comment: 'This is a figure of eight, 10mile-ish from my door. Turn around at the engine house it it's too long!'



Fig. 30: Layer 2: Laurie Elks (15.2.2021); Comment: 'This is one of my favourite walks. I could do it again and again.'



Fig. 31: Layer 3: Harry Hewat (4.4.2021); Comment: 'Easter Sunday. A beautiful day. Sharp sunlight reflected over the reservoirs.'



Fig. 32: Layer 4: Louise Goodison (8.5.2021); Comment: 'I walked in a storm. Wind high and occasional rain created a dramatic backdrop. Diversions at the red bridge and Northern Reservoir closure – subtly altered route.'



Fig. 33: Scan of the finished version of *Map 2: Chatsworth Road.* Contributors: Jørn Tomter, Steph von Resiwitz & Lucia (7), Eleanor Bembridge and Linda Culverwell (2021)



Figs. 34, 35, 36, 37: Individual layers of a detail of *Map 2: Chatsworth Road*

Fig. 34: Layer 1: Jørn Tomter (17.1.2021)



Fig. 35: Layer 2: Steph von Resiwitz & Lucia (7) (11.4.2021); Comment: 'I really noticed how connected I feel to this area, and all the great things lockdown has been depriving us of.'

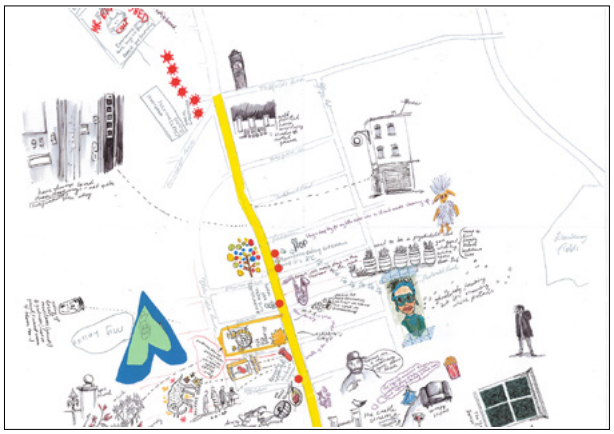


Fig. 36: Layer 3: Eleanor Bembridge (25.4.2021); Comment: 'It was a market day so half of the walk was vibrant and noisy and half was peaceful.'



Fig. 37: Layer 4: Linda Culverwell (29.5.2021); Comment: 'The sun was out at 5pm and everything was glowing! I felt such positivity and hope!'



Fig. 38 (sideways): Scan of the finished version of *Map 3: Arnold Circus – Cat & Mutton Bridge.* Contributors: Patricia Seex & Huw Davies, Rachel Faulkner-Gurstein & David Madden, Poppy Payne and Dan Buckley (2020-2021)



Figs. 39, 40, 41, 42: Individual layers of *Map 3: Arnold Circus – Cat & Mutton Bridge*

Fig. 39: Layer 1: Patricia Seex & Huw Davies (27.12.2020); Comment: 'This is a route we walk frequently. We saw new things and things in new ways.'



Fig. 40: Layer 2: Rachel Faulkner-Gurstein & David Madden (5.2.2021); Comment: 'A beautiful day to walk a familiar but not recently visited route.'



Fig. 41: Layer 3: Poppy Payne (3.4.2021); Comment: 'The mosaics were beautiful, we did animal themed pictures.'



Fig. 42: Layer 4: Dan Buckley (23.5.2021); Comment: 'My cycle to work for 7 years pre-Covid. Great to revisit.'



Fig. 43: Scan of the finished version of *Map 4: London Fields*. Contributors: Sean Gubbins, Rebecca, Charlie, Emily and Claire (2021)



Figs. 44, 45, 46, 47: Individual layers of *Map 4: London Fields*

Fig. 34: Layer 1: Sean Gubbins (4.1.2021); Comment: 'Completed the walk at dusk – a different perspective I have never tried before.'



Fig. 45: Layer 2: Rebecca (25.1.2021); Comment: 'Walked early starting before dawn in the dark – then twilight, dawn and early light.'



Fig. 46: Layer 3: Charlie (15.2.2021); Comment: 'More people around than usual. Mid afternoon, cloudy, relatively calm.'



Fig. 47: Layer 4: Emily (25.5.2021); Comment: 'Lovely to take a lunch time walk. It's warming up! A great reason to look for manhole covers.'



Fig. 48: Layer 5: Claire (27.6.2021); Comment: 'It was an overcast, though warm Sunday lunch time. I was struck by how quiet it was, even when there were people and traffic, as if the volume had been turned down. I looked UP, rather than down, somehow. Forgot people, and was just aware of surroundings.'

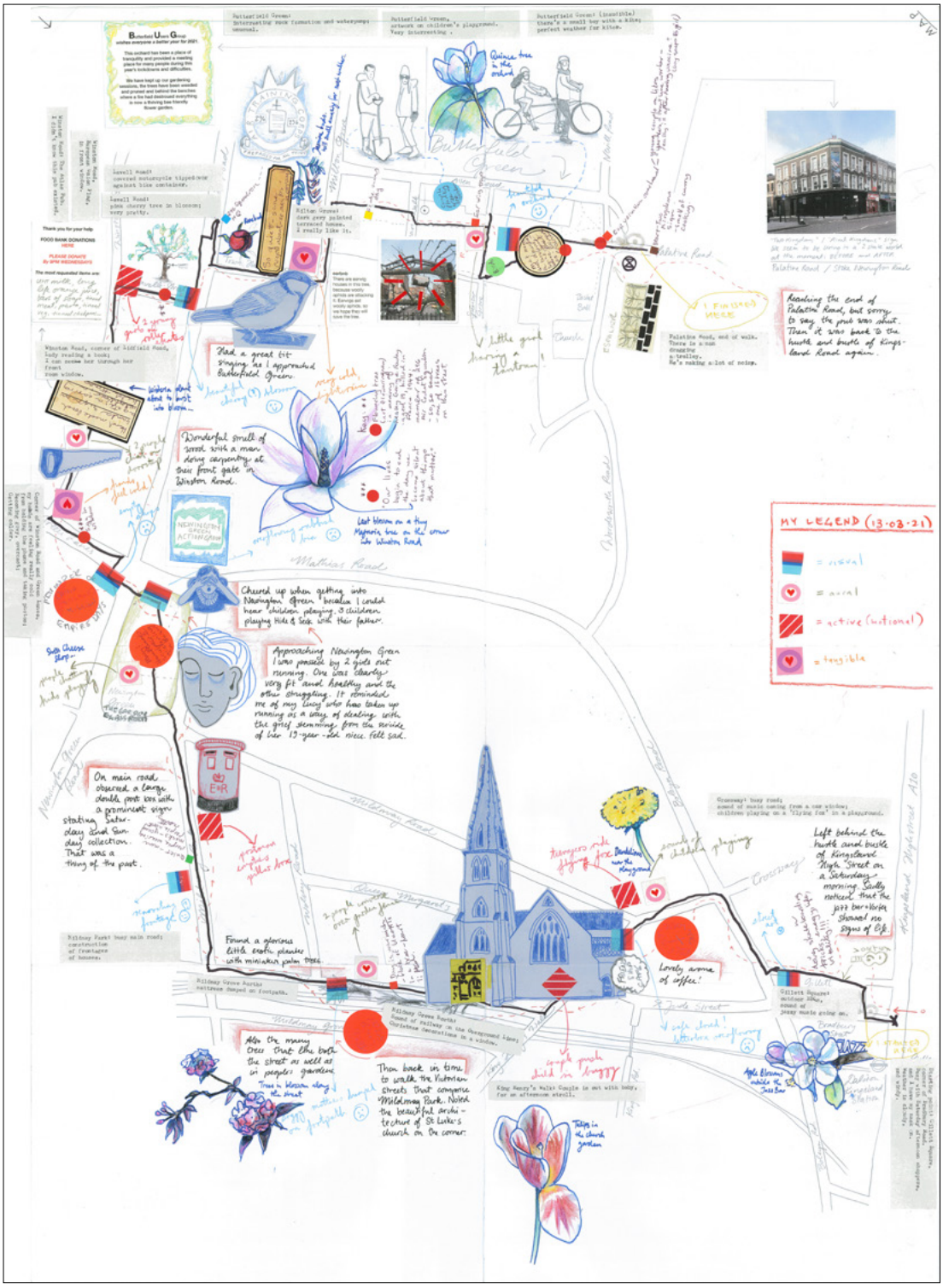
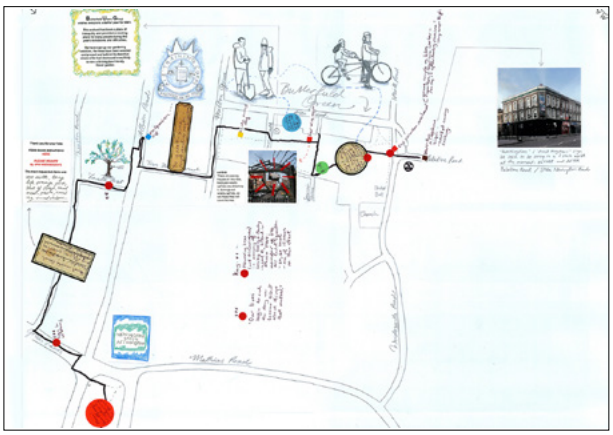


Fig. 49: Scan of the finished version of *Map 5: Butterfield Green – Newington Green.* Contributors: Jeannie Farr, Ena Fry, Jeremy Sharp and Gabriel (2021)



Figs. 49, 50, 51, 52: Individual layers of a detail of *Map 5: Butterfield Green – Newington Green*

Fig. 49: Layer 1: Jeannie Farr (17.1.2021); Comment: 'Newington Green was full of people socialising with each other (in pairs & small groups) – I enjoyed this. Saw birds, haven't seen them in other places. I loved doing this.'

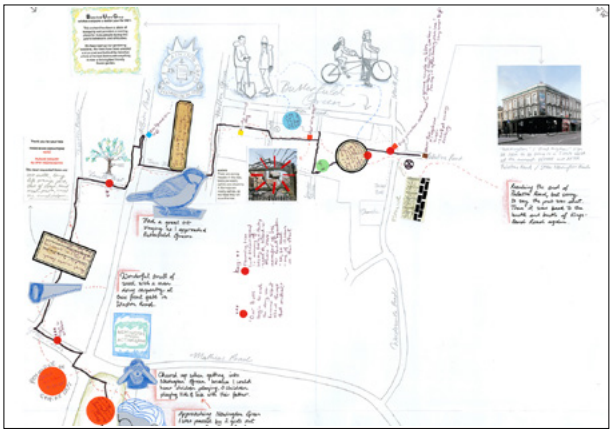


Fig. 50: Layer 2: Ena Fry (6.2.2021)

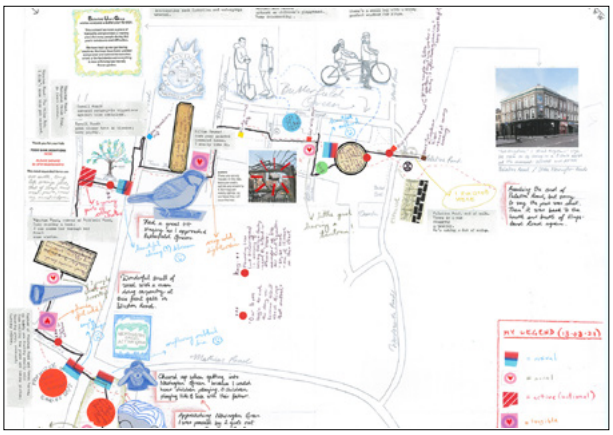


Fig. 51: Layer 4: Jeremy Sharp (13.3.2021); Comment: 'Amazing sensual experience. I really understood how mindful I can be.'

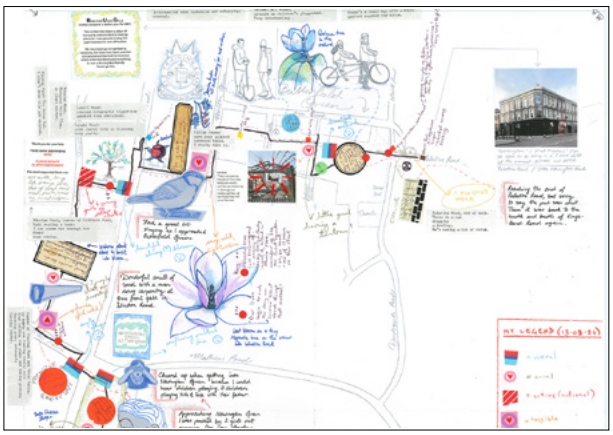


Fig. 52: Layer 4: Gabriel (24.4.2021); Comment: 'I chose to look at the flowers I encountered along the way. It was a beautiful day for it.'







Figs. 53, 54, 55: Contents of thank-you-packs, which I prepared for and delivered to all participants

In response to participants' feedback I subsequently started considering an exhibition or event, that would take place once all Covid-19 restrictions were lifted, and that would enable all of us to get together in person and celebrate the project together. I contacted the Hackney Archives, who were enthusiastic about the project and were keen to hold the maps in their collection. In September 2022 we organised a show-and-tell event at the archives, which was attended by about half of the original participants. One of the senior archivists has expressed the desire to include the maps in relevant future events.

All the visual material can also be viewed on my website following this link:
https://luisevormittag.com/Cracks

Overall, these three projects were conceived to test and advance ideas regarding the intersection of illustration practice and community. The problems and questions they raised have guided my selection and organisation of contextualising theoretical material, as well as the review of other people's practice in related fields. The following chapter overview makes clear how the various ideas in the projects are revisited, unpacked and developed in written form throughout this thesis.

Chapter overview

I wrote earlier that the central logic that structures this thesis is the consecutive demands made by the various phases of my three projects. The chapter structure therefore roughly follows the temporal framework of these projects. This seemed like the most sensible way of organising the material, and it also illustrates how practice-led research follows the demands of practice.

Chapter 1 sets out the context for my research. In this chapter I give a brief historical overview of recent developments in illustration practice and research. My emphasis is on the UK, with some reference to developments in other regions in Europe and North America. I describe how illustration has sought to reinvent itself in the past two decades after a period of retraction during the 1990s, and how this has given rise to a plethora of self-initiated or 'authorial' projects amongst illustrators. I argue that an emphasis on individualised authorship and self-expression is not the only alternative to commercial practice and propose that as an alternative illustrators can ally themselves with a plethora of other causes and initiatives. Because I evoke 'the political' in this PhD and draw on political philosophy, I briefly discuss what is usually understood as 'political illustration' and explain how my work differs from this. I introduce the three case study projects (on which I conducted my interviews with practitioners), where illustrators and designers work towards eliciting civic engagement in participatory practice models. The chapter closes by drawing up a definition of illustration. For the purposes of this PhD, I define illustration as a process of relational image making that results in co-produced, visual documents.

After creating a backdrop in Chapter 1, Chapters 2, 3 and 4 follow the successive stages of my three projects, discussing each phase in relation to cognate theory and practice. Chapter 2 has four parts, in each of which I reflect on a distinct aspect of my projects. I consider devising strategies for including people in the projects with reference to participatory art and design practice; the challenges of persuading participants to draw and mark up pieces of paper with reference to reflections on the processual nature of drawing; my role assembling and consolidating the material with reference to critical translation studies as well as ethnography; and consideration of the finished documents, which I describe as a form of collective world-making with reference to the everyday world of subjective experience and its formulation in phenomenology in 20th century European philosophy. In this chapter numerous

principles emerge that animate my work. While these are to some extent generalisable and some practitioners might find these to be useful starting points to consider their own set of methods, I also explain my reservations regarding formulaic toolkit approaches. This chapter can be understood as a successive series of reflective spaces that draws out knowledge and expands on the various situated methods in my practice.

Chapter 3 contains the main argument of my PhD. Building on the philosophy that I have started to introduce at the end of Chapter 2, I discuss how participatory illustration projects have the capacity to assemble community and constitute the political. I bring conceptions of community, theoretically grounded in the political, into relation with the possibilities of illustration practice. Building on the work of Heidegger, Arendt and Nancy I argue that collaborative illustration has the capacity to assemble, enact and record community. I explain in detail what I mean when I characterise collaborative illustration as a site of ontological disclosure, and as a performative, generative act of world-forming.

Chapter 4 continues the process of following through the temporal unfolding of the projects by considering their afterlives. What happens after a project comes to an end? In this chapter I discuss how the illustrative documents function beyond their initial role as focal points for an enactment of community. I describe how I ultimately decided to submit each of my projects' outputs to a publicly managed and accessible repository. For audiences and publics beyond the participating group the outputs can be experienced as meaningful through their status as documents, material inscriptions that attest to the enactments of community that took place in their creation, while also speaking of the particular concern at hand. I submit that collaborative illustration projects can connect us through shared concerns over periods of time extending into the future, provide a 'space of appearance' for marginalised groups and contribute to the continuity of a shared and plural public realm.

The Conclusion revisits the questions I have set out here at the outset and considers more broadly the potential value of illustration practice and illustration research. It closes with an optimistic perspective on the potential of illustration as a cultural activity that can make meaningful contributions to many spheres, but I maintain that in order to do so, we must be able to articulate the nature and the value of our contributions. This thesis attempts to offer one such articulation.

Chapter 1 | Colouring outside the lines: new territories for illustration

Many writers and academics have commented on the relative paucity of theoretically grounded writing in illustration. In 2000 designer and educator Teal Triggs noted that while graphic design had recently witnessed a transformation towards becoming a more rigorously theorised subject, illustration was still in its critical infancy (Triggs 2000). Ten years later design writer Rick Poynor decried the continuing lack of a critical framework that would serve as a measure of illustration's qualities (Poynor 2010). In 2018 the US art historian Michele Bogart laments the lack of interest in illustration as a subject worthy of scholarly attention (Bogart 2018). This continuous scarcity has been keenly felt by the pioneering generation of illustration PhD candidates attempting a literature review only to discover that there was little to review (e.g. Black 2014a:5, Hoogslag 2014:14, Miller 2016:22, Morgan 2014a:19). The dearth of theoretically grounded writing *on* illustration practice alongside a historical lacuna of practice-led research *through* illustration practice has long fuelled the sense of illustration as a diminished and impoverished discipline.

Recently however a number of new platforms and initiatives have started to galvanize more scholarly illustration practice models and discourses. Networks, conferences, journals and other publications have begun to harness more nuanced and reflective writing and practice. Practice-led research projects such as illustrator Catrin Morgan's publication *Phantom Settlements* (2010) or illustrator Mitch Miller's so-called 'dialectograms' (since 2009) exemplify innovative new practice models. Since 2014 the *Journal of Illustration* published by Intellect Books, initially under the editorship of Desdemona McCannon, then Nanette Hoogslag since 2022, provides a space for the in-depth examination of emerging ideas around our discipline. New publications such as the *History of Illustration* (Doyle, Grove & Sherman 2018) and *Illustration Research Methods* (Fauchon & Gannon 2021) are making an impact. In 2020 Bloomsbury Academic announced their intention to launch a new series of titles on illustration research. Alongside all of these new initiatives within our own discipline, some visual studies scholarship, emerging from the various crossovers of art history, cultural studies and the social sciences, as well as other sub-fields such as visual anthropology and

visual sociology are discussing issues arising from the nexus of image, text and society, which can be applied to our own field. Comics studies too are increasingly generating a rich vein of scholarship, a lot of which is also relevant to illustration.

In this chapter I describe and review relevant literature and practice in illustration so that the context for my proposed contribution to knowledge in this thesis becomes clear. I will start by chronicling more general recent changes in the field of illustration, its various efforts to reinvent itself in the face of developments in the commercial arena and establish an illustration research culture. My focus here will be mainly on the UK, where I am based, but I will also consider some developments elsewhere. For the purposes of this PhD I have confined my analysis to Europe and the Global North, as a more comprehensive survey would go beyond the parameters of this research. As one of my central methodological concerns is to bring illustration practice into relation with political philosophy, I will then sketch out ways in which images are commonly politicised and will explain how my own approach is distinct from this. In the next part of this chapter I introduce examples of contemporary illustration practice that are more closely related to my own concerns – image-led creative practices that gather up individuals in an attempt at collective sense-making in response to place. The final section of this chapter lays out my working definition of illustration which provides the basis for my considerations in this thesis.

Through this chapter I am setting out the context for my research. Illustration as an area of practice and scholarship has struggled to fully articulate the contributions it can make to society more broadly as a valuable cultural practice that offers us interpretations of the world around us. As a result of having been side-lined and overlooked for a number of years some illustrators have tried to regain authority by striving for self-expression and claiming independent authorship. I argue that the alternative to unsatisfying commercial conditions does not have to be an emphasis on the authorial self – illustrators can develop relationships with a host of other causes, groups and organisations. The alternative model that I develop in this PhD is for illustration as a form of ‘art-in-service’ proposed by illustrator and illustration historian Jaleen Grove (Grove 2011:292) and I combine this with Bogart’s understanding of illustration as a ‘collective, negotiated enterprise’ (2018). Building on Grove and Bogart I set out how in my work illustration is practiced as a process of relational image making, where I facilitate groups of people – brought together by a common cause – to jointly articulate shared worlds.

Illustration reinvents itself (2000 – today)

Broadly speaking illustration in the UK today can be divided into three overlapping and interlinked fields: commercial practice, authorial practice (i.e. practitioners pursuing their own projects independent from commission), as well as an emerging scholarly practice.

Commercial illustration practice is the most developed and established field and historically the majority of available literature on illustration was geared towards this area. This literature can be divided into two types of publications: Firstly, books that serve the aspiring illustration professional by explaining typical industry working practices and offering advice on how to build a commercially successful career, and secondly publications that seek to simply showcase contemporary practice. Examples for the first category include Lawrence Zeegen's *The Fundamentals of Illustration* (2005, 2012, 2020), Darrel Rees' *How to be an Illustrator* (2008, 2014) and Derek Brazell and Jo Davies' *Becoming a Successful Illustrator* (2013, 2017). The second category – showcase publications – is best exemplified by the *Illusive* series published by Gestalten or by the *Illustration Now!* series by Taschen. Both released titles from around 2005 to 2015, with *Illusive* counting four instalments and *Illustration Now!* at least five (with an additional dizzying array of various adjunct books, calendars and compilation editions). While it was undoubtedly positive that illustration received the kind of celebratory attention these showcase style publications propagated, they did little to contribute to a meaningful engagement with the work. Their impeccable production values cannot conceal the fact that they offered a somewhat vacuous and superficial celebration of our discipline. In these books images are generally stripped of context and reproduced without much indication of their conditions of creation, publication and dissemination.

It is interesting to note how the publication dates of these publications relate to industry developments. Around 2000 illustration was just resurfacing from a crisis that had extended over the previous decade (Poynor 1999, Heller 2000, Mason 2000, Rees 2000, Triggs 2000). The development of digital image-making tools and publishing platforms during the 1990s had had a profound impact on visual culture, which illustration practitioners were somewhat slow to react to, anxiously holding on to the more traditional craft-based approaches. Adobe's Photoshop, first released in 1990, spurred a taste for digitally manipulated imagery. This initial fascination with a digital aesthetic lasted about a decade, during which time traditional, hand-crafted illustration was side-lined in visual culture. By the turn of the millennium illustrators

had belatedly started to embrace digital tools, while simultaneously a renewed interest in handcrafted imagery brought illustration back into the visual landscape. The confluence of these two trends resulted in a renewed interest in illustration. British illustrators Ian Wright and Andy Martin were amongst the first generation to combine analogue and digital techniques in their experimental work for *NME* and similar publications. Wright speaks of being more closely associated with graphic designers (rather than illustrators) and therefore having more ready access to techniques that allowed for his hand-rendered work to be integrated into reprographic and digital processes (Chamberlain 2019). By the early 2000s this method of integrating hand-rendered and digital work had finally become standard practice for many illustrators (Bell 2003).

Arguably the period of crisis during the 1990s had a continuing corrosive effect on commercial illustration. Commissioning practice had undergone significant changes, which proved detrimental to the commercially practicing illustrator: Easily available stock imagery, hierarchical (as opposed to collaborative) relationships between commissioning graphic designers or art directors on the one hand and illustrators on the other, and a limited understanding of illustration's potential meant that when illustration did re-emerge around 2000, it did so in a diminished role (Poynor 1999, Mason 2000).

One decade into the new millennium the working conditions for the commercial illustrator had not greatly improved. By 2010 advertising and publishing clients had adapted to increasingly digital and social-media-driven communication channels. The global financial crisis had dramatically affected advertising budgets and publishers were yet to take full advantage of the visual potential of digital platforms. This was the period during which the aforementioned books offering showcase-style celebrations and career advice were taking hold – a time when illustration had reasserted itself as part of the visual landscape but was often struggling to elicit the respect and the budgets to function as a viable profession[5].

It was also around this time that a cluster of articles appeared that vociferously accused illustrators of adopting a timid and submissive stance. Bowman (2008), Poynor (2010) and Zeegen (2012, 2014) complained that contemporary illustrators were inward looking,

5 Undoubtedly trends in higher education had a role to play in this scenario, too. New Labour's education policy meant many more young people were studying at university from the turn of the millennium onwards. Courses in creative subjects proliferated and as a result many more recent graduates were looking for work and accepting commissions under sub-optimal conditions (Mason 2000, McRobbie 2011).

conservative, lacking the ability to meaningfully contextualise or critique their work, and were generally guilty of intellectual flimsiness and vacuity.

Today these complaints have been heeded to some degree. Scholarly research activity and authorial practice have gained prominence during the last decade and are now complementing the commercial field. New discursive spaces are being created to reflect on the discipline. Pioneering initiatives include *The Falmouth Illustration Forum*, hosted annually by Steve Braund (now retired) and his colleagues at Falmouth University since 2003, and *Varoom*, the publication of the Association of Illustrators, which published thoughtful and reflective articles on illustration under the editorship of Adrian Shaughnessy (2006-2009), John O'Reilly (2009-2018) and Olivia Ahmad (2018-2022). From 2012-2016 *Varoom*'s scholarly wing *VaroomLAB* hosted conferences at various UK universities and published selected papers in two issues of a peer-reviewed journal online. The Illustration Research network, comprised of academics and practitioners, has organized annual conferences since 2010 and is publishing the peer-reviewed bi-annual *Journal of Illustration* since 2014 – a huge enrichment for our discipline. Several smaller initiatives also briefly emerged, such as the *Mokita* symposia at Somerset House (2011, 2012 & 2014) and the *Limner* journal (publishing four issues from 2011-2015). Conferences and symposia that offer the opportunity for reflective debate amongst practitioners and theorists now also exist in Portugal (*Confia*, since 2012), Norway (*Illuminating the Non-representable* since 2020) and Australia (*Illustration Academics* since 2022). My own recent collaborative publishing initiative with Stephanie Black, *Colouring In* (launched 2021) also contributes to the growing number of discursive platforms for illustration.

There is also growing scholarship on illustration. The recently published *History of Illustration* (Doyle, Grove & Sherman 2018) for example offers a serious historical account of our discipline that analyses illustrations within their social, cultural and indeed political context. Illustration scholars Rachel Gannon and Mireille Fauchon's *Illustration Research Methods* (2021) maps and analyses the breadth and complexity of emerging working methods in our discipline. Alan Male's edited volume *A Companion to Illustration* (2019) brings together many emerging theoretical perspectives on contemporary illustration practice, education and research.

These exciting developments since roughly 2010 have been retrospectively described by Grove as the 'Theoretical Turn' of illustration (2018). The heady mix of academic inquiry and

illustration practice, which has now increasingly taken hold in HE illustration courses has not been without its sceptics and detractors (ibid.). However, it seems that some educators are embracing this development, although the precise mechanics of the integration of theory and practice are still throwing up many questions in curriculum design. Exactly what kind of theory illustration students ought to be taught, and how this is to be brought into conversation with making practices remains a lively topic of debate (Leishman 2018). Nonetheless, we now see a much broader range of student illustration projects emerge from HE courses, that probably would not have been possible without the encouragement to enmesh illustration practice with other academic traditions brought about by the 'Theoretical Turn'. Examples include Hugo Drummond's project *Looking through my Phone* (Drummond 2021), where he visually cites the conventions of scientific and natural history illustrations to question outdated totalising knowledge claims in the context of globalised supply chains (produced during his time at UAL), or Caitlin McLoughlin's *The Yellow Wallpaper* (McLoughlin 2022), a reflection on the limitations of historiography and its attendant failures to animate marginalised voices (produced during her time at Kingston School of Art).

Since roughly 2010 there has been a sense of the field of illustration embarking on a process of self-discovering, staking out its potential and laying claim to greater areas of expertise and application. There was talk of a 'theory of illustration' (Mokita 2010), the value of illustration research (Grove 2011), the nature of 'illustration thinking' (O'Reilly 2013) and 'the future of illustration' (Illustration Research Conference, Shrishti, 2014). A sentiment frequently expressed was a general urge towards ideas and gestures that 'expand the discipline'. This talk of expansion tended to cite and celebrate two broad trends: an increasing media-agnosticism amongst illustrators (who traditionally have mainly been associated with drawing) and a greater prominence of self-directed work.

Typical examples of the trend towards broader application of materials and techniques during the 2010s include Laura Carlin's ceramic works, Rob Ryan's paper cuts, Chrissie McDonald's photographed installations, Quentin Jones' collaged fashion-animations and Jack Sachs' 3D digital illustrations – all innovative and commercially successful practitioners whose work has undoubtedly made an impact on mainstream visual culture. Illustrator and academic Nanette Hoogslag (2015) points to this diversification of techniques and materials to propose that a whole range of creative gestures can be considered an illustration, citing examples such as sounds, short films and even events such as a communal lunch. She

defines illustration as ‘the secondary story that emphasizes the primary idea’ (ibid.) which therefore can take many forms. However, by stripping away the pictorial and conceiving of illustration as a specific type of relationship between an idea and its material manifestation, I am concerned that we risk losing the specificity of illustration as a distinct field as it becomes synonymous with communication. Furthermore, referring to illustration as the ‘secondary idea’ reinforces its status as the subservient partner in a binary relationship.

The recent release of AI image generators such as Midjourney AI, which is causing alarm amongst some illustrators, is also set to impact on our discipline, although it is still too early to tell how this might unfold. Undoubtedly there will be practitioners who will breezily describe AI as ‘just another tool’, while others defend their craft and scramble to protect their online portfolios from becoming a learning tool for machines. There are already some interesting forays into AI illustration, for example designer Meng Koach’s creation of cover artwork for a book on the subject of AI (Spicer 2023) or Ilan Manouach ‘synthetic comic’ *Fastwalkers* (2021).

While I enjoy the creativity and innovation of these playful and expansive practices, I remain unconvinced that they present a meaningful angle to argue for illustration’s expansion or maturation as a discipline. I propose that more meaningful innovation in illustration grows out of more fundamental considerations what illustration can do, most frequently achieved through the combination of practice with periods of study and reflection that draw out and articulate the effects and significance of the work.

Authorial practice

Self-directed work, which is also called authorial practice, i.e. projects that are pursued without commission, has been receiving greater prominence and encouragement over the last decade. For example, renowned graphic designer and writer Adrian Shaughnessy observed in 2011 that: '[t]oday it is routine to see illustrators who have produced self-directed works: books, comics, saleable goods such as clothes, posters and assorted objects' (2011:195). It is often precisely through these self-initiated projects that illustrators articulate their distinct approach to practice and develop and evolve their style, which in turn can lead to greater commercial interest (Leishman 2018). The increased visibility of this work is probably a result of the continued commercial stresses of practitioners (not enough well-paid commissioned work for everyone), an education that encourages more experimental and entrepreneurial projects, and the greater availability, some might even say pressure, to showcase this type of work on social media platforms. Shaughnessy comments that '[i]n these times of dwindling budgets, clip art and the decline in editorial commissions, the authorial instinct is no longer a choice for illustrators – it is a necessity' (2011:195).

So-called authorial practice is of course incredibly broad and varied. It ranges from the quietly reflective work emerging from Falmouth's MA Illustration: Authorial Practice to the frivolous and colourful entrepreneurial projects that were on display at the annual graphic arts fair *Pick Me Up* at Somerset House that ran from 2010-2017. Despite the many different kinds of practitioners promoting their self-directed work, there is some congruence in their penchant for small-scale production and niche-publishing – and perhaps being one of the people 'who are hoping wildly that they might be able to make a living out of doing what they're doing' (Siddall 2015).

It is of course wonderfully enriching to see more of these varied approaches and initiatives that are emerging beyond the constraints of commercial commissioning. However, foregrounding authorial illustration projects spawns its own set of new issues to consider. Does applauding this kind of work tacitly embrace and encourage unsustainable labour practices? Journalist Liv Siddall, quoted above, writing for the online publication *It's Nice That* inadvertently highlights the 'cruel optimism' (Berlant 2011) demanded of many young illustrators in an article ironically written in defence of *Pick Me Up* (Siddal 2015). Sociologist Angela McRobbie has been drawing attention to the flipsides of celebrating and

encouraging individualised entrepreneurship in the creative industries since the early 2000s (2001, 2011). She describes young practitioners who work across different media, systems and platforms, obliged and aspiring to be multi-skilled, hopeful and endlessly optimistic. Working outside the traditional systems of employment, where the social democratic left has spent considerable effort fighting for protections and benefits, is perceived as a brave and romantic victory. These labour practices started to gain increased momentum under New Labour's neoliberal cultural policy, which coincided with illustrators' re-emergence around 2000. This creates a situation where failure, financial and otherwise, is privatised and experienced as a personal shortcoming rather than a structural inevitability. Of course one could argue that illustrators have always worked freelance, and that precarious and individualized working models cannot but be part of an illustrator's working life. But it stands to reason that a rhetoric that emphasizes the entrepreneurial aspect of self-initiated work and celebrates self-reliance as an idealized mode of existence exacerbates an already fraught model.

Another issue that emerges with the promotion of so-called authorial practice is the emphasis on the figure of the author. There is a rich tradition of rejecting authorship as the central hermeneutic principle of literary works. Amongst the best-known examples are Roland Barthes proclaiming the 'Death of the Author' ([1967] 1977) and Michel Foucault asking 'What is an author?' ([1969] 1977). A decade earlier Theodore Adorno had already highlighted the limitations of author-centric criticism by suggesting that in this model '[i]nterpretation then becomes nothing but removing an outer shell to find what the author wanted to say' ([1958] 1991:4). More recently poet Kenneth Goldsmith (2011) and literary scholar Marjorie Perloff (2010) have once more rejected the figure of the author in favour of other forms of textual creation and interpretation. While all these writers differ in the details of their critiques, they all reject the notion of placing the figure of the author at the core of textual interpretation. Instead, they propose readings that lend a greater emphasis to linguistics, the reader, modes of circulation, evaluation, appropriation and control.

Graphic design grappled with the question of authorship during the 1990s, at time when the notion of self-initiated practice was being increasingly discussed in the discipline. In the well-known 1996 essay 'The designer as author' designer-writer Michael Rock critically highlights the fact that ironically designers desire to be authors at a time when literary theory had already moved away from the position. Authorship, he reminds us, relies on the

anachronistic and ultimately limiting idea of the heroic, genius creator[6]. Applied to graphic design, it reinforces the 'designer-as-hero' model, rather than engaging with the more radical idea of the 'decentred text', or an emphasis on collaborative nature of the vast majority of design work. Could we, he asks, imagine a time when we stop engaging with the question of who made a piece of work, asking instead what it does and how it does it (Rock [1996] 2013)[7]?

These questions, already radical for graphic design, sound even more so in the context of illustration. What would an illustration practice look like, that is not built on the notion of an individual, personal voice? A discourse on illustration that does not focus on the illustrator who made the piece? Grove offers a refreshing perspective on these matters. She speculates that the striving for unique self-expression amongst some illustrators is at least partially fuelled by Romantic assumptions of the purity of capital-A-Art practice, that stands in contrast to the presumed vulgarity of commercial work (Grove 2011:292). As an alternative to this unproductive binary, she suggests recalling the position of William Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement who celebrated the dignity of art-in-service.

I agree with Grove that it is valuable for illustrators to recall Morris' celebration of the 'use-value of art in communal enterprises' (ibid.), and I use this as one of my vital touchstones in the development of my definition of illustration later in this chapter. An emphasis on individualised authorship and self-expression are after all not the only alternative to the

---

6 Graphic designer and writer Ellen Lupton raises similar concerns in her piece 'Designer as Producer' (1998). Drawing on Walter Benjamin's 1934 essay 'The author as producer' she proposes that graphic designers 'seize control of the means of production' and 'share that control with the reading public' (1998:162). The continuation of this debate regarding expanded and more emancipated roles for graphic designers can be seen in Steven McCarthy's book *The Designer as…: Author, Producer, Activist, Entrepreneur, Curator, and Collaborator* (2013).

7 Rock's proposal that we pose questions regarding the affordances of a piece of graphic design (or illustration), i.e. what it does, rather than asking about its creator, could of course be taken up in many ways. One could for example proceed through the application of semiotics – interpretive methods that are often brought to bear on images. However prominent art historian W. J. T. Mitchell claims that semiotics presents something of a dead-end for the interpretation of visual material, arguing that 'no "neutral" or "scientific" vocabulary [such as semiotics] can transcend or master the field of representation' (1994:417). Nevertheless, this path has been pursued by many theorists. Examples include the multiple editions of *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (1996, 2006 & 2020) by linguists Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, or, more specifically related to illustration, *Visible Signs: An Introduction to Semiotics in the Visual Arts* (2003, 2010, 2018 & 2022) by graphic designer and academic David Crow, which contains a detailed semiotic analysis of many illustrations. By mapping semiotic theory on to designed images and other visual matter, illustrations, dismantled into their various visual components, are connected to a network of signs and symbols, a catalogue of visual conventions and codes. In addition to its limitations as an interpretive practice as highlighted by Mitchell, I also remain unsure regarding how this approach might support practitioners (see also 'hermeneutics of suspicion pp.79-80).

constraints and limitations of commercially commissioned practice. Besides commercial operations there are many other forms of enterprise an illustrator can ally herself to. As is clear from the descriptions of my projects, aims and objectives in the introduction, this thesis reflects on illustration practice that associates itself with a variety of causes, groups and movements.

Political illustration / Political images

In this thesis I intertwine illustration practice with political philosophy in order to demonstrate how collaborative illustration projects have the capacity to record and reflect on the social relations that occur in everyday experiences of community. Before going into greater depth with this line of argumentation in the following three chapters, I will briefly highlight here how 'the political' and 'illustration' are commonly brought together and will explain how and why my approach is distinct.

Satirical commentary & seeking social justice

There is a long, established lineage of illustrators creating images that comment on and draw attention to political and social issues of the day. Illustrators working in this tradition tend to communicate their opinion through the images they produce, thereby positioning themselves as an author and authority on the subject. I am not discussing these traditions in any depth here, as this would go beyond the confines of this PhD, but I will provide a snapshot that gives a brief outline of some of the main strategies that this work employs to invoke the political, in order to differentiate my understanding and method from this type of work.

Two commonly used rhetorical strategies used by illustrators working in this way are to use satire and ridicule to create a humorous commentary on political events of the moment or to create illustrations that depict a pressing concern in an emotionally impactful, often shocking manner as a way to mould opinion and ultimately provoke action in the viewer. This type of work is often what people have in mind when referring to 'political illustration'.

Political cartooning has a long and detailed history (see Kunzle 1962). The type of satirical caricature popular in Britain in the 18th century is a particularly good case in point. Illustrations by James Gillray, George Cruikshank and George Townshend ridiculed high society, politicians and royalty and were distributed to a large audience via cheap prints (Lovejoy 2018:171-178). This strategy of humorous, mocking visual commentary remains popular in news publishing today. Illustrators Martin Rowson and Steve Bell in the UK and Edel Rodriguez and Barry Blitt in the US continue this tradition with barbed, satirical illustrations that comment on political events of the day. This kind of work tends to reference of-the-moment events and people, exaggerate the features of those depicted, and use props

and settings that carry symbolic meaning. For the viewer to fully appreciate the illustration requires pre-existing knowledge of the issue at hand. Social media has added a further platform for the production and distribution of illustrations that ridicule those in power, see for example Cold War Steve's work on Twitter and Instagram[8].

Other illustrators who use their work to draw attention to deep-seated political or social issues can strike a more sombre or accusatory tone, implicitly or explicitly denouncing those in charge. The basic strategy here is to use illustration to reveal or draw attention to an injustice in the hope to mobilise public opinion (and in some occasions behaviour) and attempt to change things for the better. See for example Sue Coe (illustration) and Holly Metz' publication *How to Commit Suicide in South Africa* (1983) or David Foldvari's work for Save the Children (2016). Often, as in the example of Sue Coe, illustrators producing this kind of work are motivated by a strong personal concern for the issue in questions and take it upon themselves to produce and publish this work. However, this can also happen through commission, as in the case of David Foldvari's images of child refugees.

Other forms of rhetoric are of course possible. Shepard Fairey for example creates iconic, optimistic images freely shared online in support of (rather than in opposition to) an issue or cause, see for example *Hope* (2008) or *We the People* (2017).

I am of course supportive of illustrators using their practice to publicise their political convictions. However, I also agree with graphic designer and critic Jan van Toorn who argues that '[...] the choice of a political subject or a critical position does not in itself make the message political' (2016). This kind of work may have a political subject matter or agenda, but it operates in broadly conventional ways. There is, generally speaking, no attempt to question the overall method of image creation or distribution with reference to political thought or consciousness. While the work itself may be witty, revelatory even, and

---

8 There are of course also other forms of illustrated satire emerging on social media, that do not work within the authorial model. Here image-text composites can be creatively re-formatted by multiple users. Examples include the 'How it started/ How it's going' meme, that humorously juxtaposes two images to suggest a usually unfavourable development of a project. The 'Distracted Boyfriend' meme and the 'For the better, right?' meme work by using the same single image or same sequence of images and combine this with a humorous caption to comment on current affairs. Illustrator and academic Catrin Morgan proposes we think of these nodal or nomadic images that are repeatedly reposted and creatively re-used, as an 'illustrative strategy' (Morgan 2016:26). In light of this one could probably argue that social media has democratised satirical political illustration and expanded it beyond the authorial practice model, but all of this, while deeply fascinating, is beyond the remit of this research.

hopefully impactful, the way it operates as an overall project often remains relatively one-dimensional: a single illustrator communicates a specific point via a rhetorically declarative image through established channels.

Ideological unmasking

I have so far considered the common understanding of political illustration from the point of view of the illustrator who uses their work to promote and publicise their principles. Another way in which visual culture is commonly politicised is through interpretation and critical re-appraisal of existing images that were not intended to be perceived as political.

Serious scholarship on vernacular and mass media imagery of the 20th century is an area historically marginalised by art historians, although there are some exceptions, such as David Kunzle's work on popular graphic arts which he started publishing in the 1970s. This kind of scholarship became more widespread in the new field of visual studies from the 1990s onwards[9]. In this context the idea of the 'Pictorial Turn' – a phrase coined by Mitchell (1994) and, incidentally, referenced by Grove when advancing the idea of the 'Theoretical Turn' in illustration (2018) – suggested that the humanities have become increasingly interested in studying visual representation. Prior to that, scholars associated with critical theory and other Marxist traditions such as Adorno and Henri Lefebvre had occasionally written on mass media imagery, disparagingly so, calling it a form of 'mass deception' (Adorno [1944] 1997:120) or a propagator of 'receptive passivity' (Lefebvre [1961] 2002:76).

The general approach within visual studies and associated critical traditions is to take a seemingly innocuous image (or text) and through a close reading reveal and thereby at least partially dismantle the political and ideological biases that have shaped it. Scholarship on images depicting a picturesque, English rustic idyll presents a good example of this type of inquiry. This pictorial trope emerged in the so-called 'golden age' of English landscape painting around 1800. In *Landscape and Ideology* (1986) art historian Ann Bermingham gives a broadly Marxist reappraisal of this development: In the context of both the agrarian

9 Visual studies is a field of study that gained increasing traction in the 1990s. It initially aimed to supplement art history with an interest in other types of images that had previously been ignored by scholarship, using a blend of concerns and methods mainly from British cultural studies and poststructural theory. The field has since diversified, drawing on multiple strands of scholarship. See James Elkins (2013:3-15) for a detailed discussion of the development of this field.

and industrial revolution and a steady increase of British global, imperial power, the idea of the 'green and pleasant land' characterised thus by William Blake in his 1804 poem *Jerusalem* and reflected in numerous pictorial renditions of bucolic bliss, was born out of the contrast with the turmoil of the newly industrialized urban centres and a renewed interest in the representation of home-landscapes as the imperial heartland. Idealised images of rural England, for example by John Constable or Samuel Palmer, were offered up as the homely, the stable, the ahistorical.

The essays published in *Landscape and Power* (Mitchell (Ed.) 2002) collectively advance the notion of the political and ideological nature of visual representation of space and place with a broader range of images. They discuss specific examples from various traditions of landscape painting, drawing and photography and delineate their entanglement with the dominant worldviews and ideals held by the societies they emerged from.

I selected these examples as they resonated with my interest in studying visual representations of place and their concomitant social significance. I found however that this interpretive tradition, as riveting as it is to ponder its piercing insights, not particularly conducive for developing my applied projects. Here images were treated predominantly as symptoms, or even sly undercover agents of ideology. If images are cast as deceptive manipulators, there is a strong impulse to make the task of unmasking their 'true' identity your primary activity. This attitude is often referred to as the 'hermeneutics of suspicion', a phrase originally coined by French philosopher Paul Ricoeur to describe the work of Sigmund Freud (1977:33,35). The basic premise of this approach is that the surface presentation of a cultural phenomenon is deceptive and cannot be taken at face value. Mitchell and James Elkins, two prominent academics in the field of visual studies, consider the paradox of a discipline being rather hostile to its own subject (Mitchell 2005:28-56, Elkins 2013a:25-31) with Mitchell especially pointing out how tiresome such ideological unmasking can become (2005:32-33). Elkins (2013a:31-60, 2013b) does work hard to develop an alternative approach of working *with* images, affording them more nuanced relationships with scholarship and linguistic texts; an exciting project that would benefit from a collaboration with graphic designers or illustrators.

As an illustrator I am interested in the relationship images may have with political concerns, and how they might be symptomatic, possibly supportive or perhaps critical of dominant

views of social order. Like Elkins however, I reject the iconoclasm that can underpin some of the discussions I have very briefly sketched out here. I too am keen to work *with* images, rather than against them. As a practitioner I found the 'hermeneutics of suspicion' not particularly helpful. It can be hard to know what do, once an image has been dismantled.

What other possibilities might there be for conceiving of models of political illustration, beyond the declarative rhetoric discussed earlier and the practices of ideological unmasking mentioned above? Beyond political subject matter or a politicised hermeneutics? In my following discussions I move away from the illustrator as a single individual, in favour of an emphasis on collaborative and participatory working models that embody ideas of 'the political' via their social configurations.

Alternative manoeuvres

Communal enterprise

Above I cited Grove as she invited contemporary illustrators to recall William Morris' idea of 'art-in-service' (Grove 2011:292). In what way is the political be embedded in this type of work? Towards the end of his life Morris' founded Kelmscott Press (1891-1898), a publishing house that produced books where layout, typography, border-design, illustration and print technology worked in harmony to create a unified whole. While Morris did not consider illustrations to be essential to book design (Ashbrook & Syme 2018:236), many of the books did include them, often produced by his friend and collaborator, the painter Edward Burne-Jones. Looking at these book illustrations, for example for *The Complete Works of Chaucer* (published 1896), it is not the rather archaic images themselves that are of interest in this context, but the working process that led to the overall production of the book. Morris was committed to the idea of individual craftspeople and artists working together in small non-hierarchical groups where everybody's contribution was to be valued equally. In the context of book illustration this meant that the illustrator needed to create work that harmonised both with the typographic design and the affordances of the print technology and work collaboratively with the engraver to achieve an outcome where individual elements worked together to create a unified whole. It is well known that Morris was involved in socialist politics of his time, but what is of interest to me here is how in this instance the political is situated in the working process, not in the declarative content of the images, or in subsequent interpretive manoeuvres. The way Kelmscott Press produced their books serves as a model of production in Morris' overall political vision of medieval, craft-based communities living and working together and producing art and design for the elevation of everyday life.

Similar to Morris' operation there are a number of other well-known creative collectives, who incorporate illustration into their shared outputs. Groups such as Push Pin Studios (founded in New York in the 1950s) or Peepshow (founded in London in 2000) joined forces for increased commercial clout, shared business infrastructure and general camaraderie. However only some of these groups produce illustrations that have been worked on by more than one member and are credited to the group rather than an individual. For example the French group Grapus, which emerged as part of the Parisian student movement of 1968, always simply attributed their activist graphic posters to 'Grapus' (McQuiston 1995:56).

Similarly, the Dutch group Wild Plakken, active in Amsterdam at a similar time, did not credit individual members for their politically motivated visual poster designs (Bruinsma 2018:214). Other examples of illustration collectives working on images collaboratively include the early outputs of the partnership Vault49 (now morphed into a brand experience and packaging design agency), UK-US collaborating illustrators Craig & Karl, as well as my own partnership Container, active from 2003 - 2012. The British illustration collective NousVous, who produce collaborative illustrations as well as working individually, actively investigated the tensions of creating images as a group during a residency at the House of Illustration, London. They built a 'three-person drawing machine', that allowed for three pairs of hands to simultaneously control a pen, which meant that the creation of a drawing depended on constant, careful negotiation (Sinclair 2017).

Participatory practice models, where a professional works with a group of non-professional contributors have been developed in fine art, architecture, product and service design (see Chapter 2) but remain rare and undertheorised in illustration. The small number of illustrators who have developed participatory working practices include Mitch Miller, whose so-called 'dialectograms' draw on ethnographic methods to create a polyvocal, collaborative illustrations (discussed in greater detail below) and Rebecca Davies' practice (Vormittag 2017a), multi-disciplinary but rooted in illustration, which features a life-size (!), illustrated social club that acts as a platform to inspire and host a range of community-led activities. Her work combines illustration, performance, speculative thinking and the participation of a heterogeneous chorus of community voices. Professor Nina Sabnani's collaborative illustration and animation projects, which sees her working with communities in Rajasthan and Gujarat in India are also a vital and inspirational contribution to this area. The work is rooted in traditional art and craft techniques that are mobilised to tell stories that are of cultural and social significance to the participating communities, which are then broadcast to new audiences (Junoon 2019).

In my own practice as an illustrator I have continually sought to develop projects where the output is derived from or enables an engagement with other voices and perspectives. Examples include the *Haunted House* (2006, 2007), *Throw Caution to the Wind* (2011), *The Most Powerful Cabinet in Whitechapel* (2012) and *Rumour Legend Tradition Fact* (2014) where I sought to activate and amplify community voices in a semi-fictionalised reimaging of a town's past (Vormittag 2015).







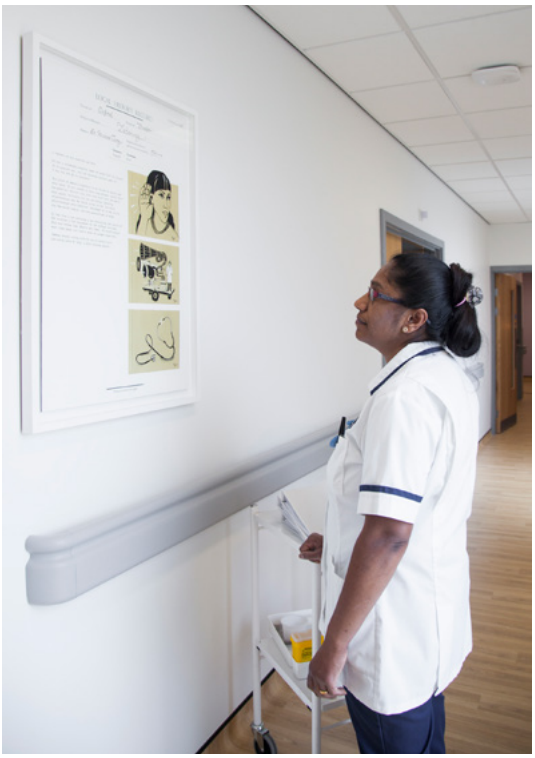



Figs. 56, 57 (top): *Haunted House* (2006, 2007) Hamburg & London, by my own design and illustration collective Container in collaboration with product and UX designer Simon Husslein. *Haunted House* was a labyrinthine installation which invited the audience to crawl and climb through and dwell in a number of small and dimly light spaces. People could follow a lose narrative of the 'Evil Twins', which was presented via a series of black and white illustrations affixed to the walls and small object-based installations. We periodically staged events and performances inside the installation, which relied on audience participation. We valued and encouraged dialogue between strangers and found that this unusual setting brought about unexpected conversations and encounters**.**

Figs. 58, 59 (middle): *Throw Caution to the Wind* (2011) by Container, comissioned by Vital Arts. The work takes the form of a booklet containing narratives of orthopedic and cancer patients from Barts and The Royal London hospital. We engaged patients in individual, one-off, semi-structured conversations gently probing for adventurous stories. Narratives were then transcribed, edited and illustrated in our studio. The resulting publication was distributed via the hospital tea trolley.

Figs. 60, 61 (bottom): *The Most Powerful Cabinet in Whitechapel* (2012) by Container, commissioned by Vital Arts. The cabinet contains symbolic manifestations of hospital patients' 'superpowers'. It was taken to various waiting areas of The Royal London hospital on a trolley, where we then set up our mini studio. We invited patients to discuss their special talents and work with us to create the most appropriate representation of these powers out of the materials to hand. The cabinet is now on permanent display at the hospital.







Figs. 62, 63, 64: *Rumour, Legend, Tradition, Fact* (2014), commissioned by Willis Newson for Balfour Beatty / Bicester Community Hospital

Figs. 62, 63 (left column): Two (of a total of twelve) panels I produced for Bicester Community Hospital, Oxfordshire, A1 size. I based the design on the local history record sheets I studied at the Oxfordshire History Center. These sheets included tickboxes to categorise the type of knowledge that was being recorded: rumour, legend, tradition, fact.

Fig 64 (above): A member of staff at Bicester Community Hospital, Oxfordshire, looks at one of my panels. Photograph by Manuela Barczewski (2014).

It is of course not at all obvious how illustrators might include others in their working process in a meaningful way. One of the objectives of this PhD was to address this question by analysing and review existing participatory creative practice in illustration and closely related disciplines (such as design), to consider other people's practice, the results of which are summarised below. (The full interview transcripts can be seen in the Appendix pp.239-329.)

Assembling a public

I conducted a number of interviews to gain a greater understanding of how other practitioners handled projects that combine illustration and participatory working methods with people who are not professional illustrators or designers. I spoke at length with Welsh designer Hefin Jones, Scottish illustrator Mitch Miller and writer and curator Gavin Wade, director of the artist-run gallery Eastside Projects in Birmingham. I also interviewed several people who collaborated with Jones on his project *Cosmic Colliery* (2015) in the Rhymney Valley in Wales. I selected these case studies because their work has overlaps with mine: an image-led creative practice that gathers up individuals in an attempt at collective sense-making in response to a place, its inhabitants and histories.

Illustrators tend to consider other people primarily in their role as spectators. In my article 'Making (the) Subject Matter' (Vormittag 2014) I suggest that illustrators seek out encounters with others who can become or supply the subject matter for the work by narrating aspects of their worldview or life-story.

A sophisticated version of this kind of interaction has been developed by illustrator Mitch Miller. He has established a form of illustration he calls the 'dialectogram' (Miller 2016) in which he blends ethnographic research methods with architectural and comic-book drawing conventions to create dense, large-scale illustrations of marginal urban sites facing erasure. His work visualises otherwise invisible social relations, perceptions and habitual uses of a place resulting in a graphic palimpsest of spatially grounded stories. The illustrations demonstrate the richness and complexity of marginal spaces, thereby challenging the myth of terra nullius, often employed when these sites are earmarked for redevelopment.

In Miller's multi-phased process a self-selecting group of participants repeatedly negotiates the nature of a given site with him and each other. An empty framework in the form of a roughly drawn architectural blueprint is gradually populated with Miller's drawings of collectively and personally held views, stories and experiences relating to the location that are shared by the participants. What is included and how things are represented is repeatedly debated during meetings where participants gather around the gradually emerging illustration. The participants' simultaneous and embodied presence around the large-scale half-finished drawing creates a situation where they are brought in direct relation

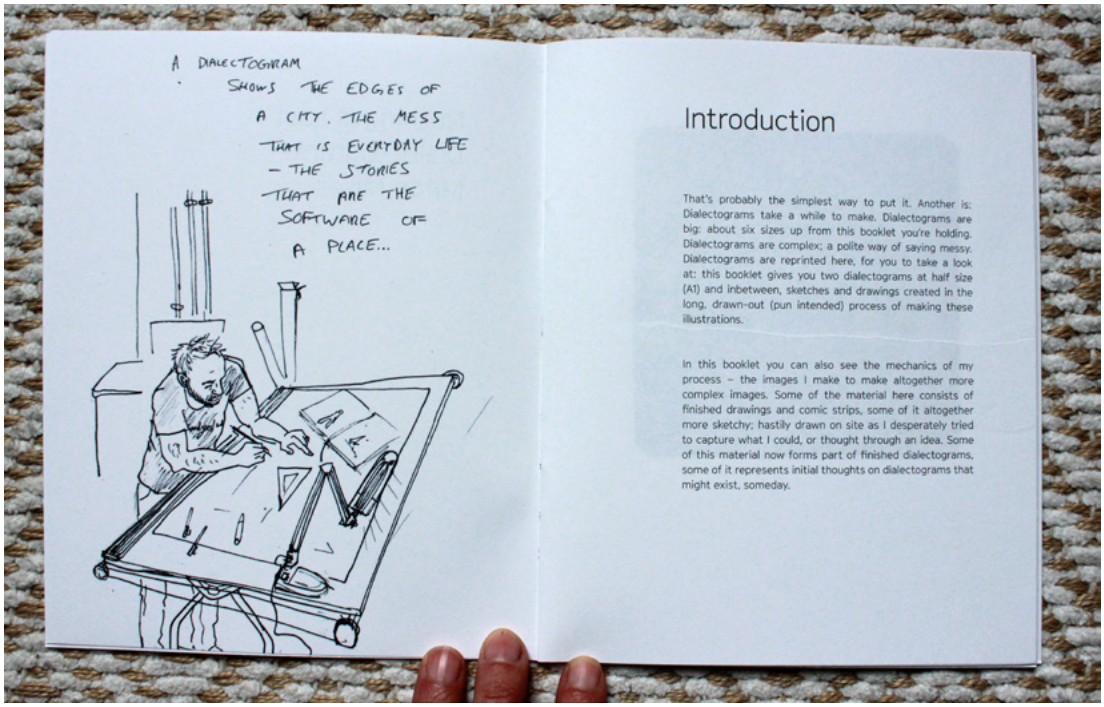


Fig. 65: *Nothing is lost – Dialectograms* (2015?), Mitch Miller. Booklet that introduces the idea of the 'dialecrogram' and charts the process of their creation in reference to *A Showman's Yard* and *Baltic Street Adventure Playground*, two pieces that Miller produced in the context of Glaswegian regeneration projects that threatened the continued existance of these sites.

to one another. The project necessitates negotiation and it has the potential to alter the relationships of those involved while also subtly altering the view participants have of the place under discussion. In this case the participants' contributions are linguistic in nature, and oriented towards the past and/or present: oral narratives of personal memories and individual as well as communal histories are shared with Miller, who then uses his skills as an illustrator to add them to the piece.

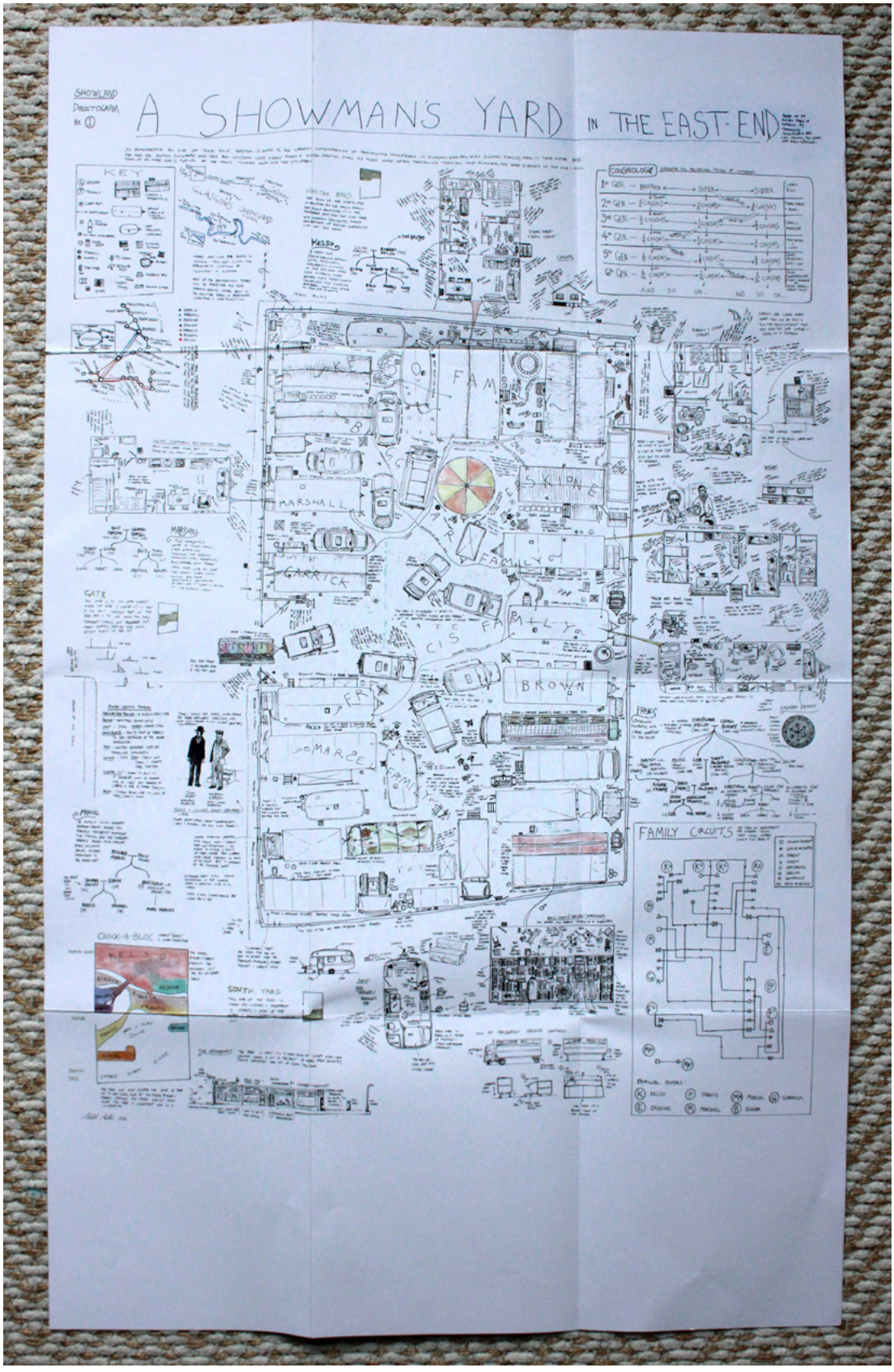


Fig. 66: Printed reproduction of *A Showman's Yard* (2015?), Mitch Miller. A1 foldout that accompanies Miller's *Nothing is Lost* publication. The original dialectogram is approximately double the size.

Another method of inviting participants into a creative project structure is to provide a framework that encourages them to develop and project new visions and ideas. An example for this is Jones' project *Cosmic Colliery* (2015), a work which mainly consisted of immaterial elements. Ideas and propositions were circulated, expanded upon, and transformed via a web of social situations and relations involving a range of local individuals and groups. The project saw Jones publicise a proposal to repurpose a dilapidated colliery in the South Wales Valleys as an international astronaut training facility – a fantasy built on the insight that some of the structural properties of the disused mines would readily lend themselves to be adapted for this use. Participants were invited to creatively engage with this fictional suggestion, drawing on their existing skills to augment and transform the original proposal. The project was intended as a catalyst to positively reassess the region's identity as an ex-mining community; an identity that people have often struggled to engage with in a productive and positive light. The majority of participants appreciated the fictional nature of the proposal as a creative prompt to reenergise their thinking about the area, alter perceptions and introduce a sense of optimism and possibility.

Fig. 67: Hefin Jones *Cosmic Colliery* (2015): Manifesto writing workshop with members of the Ystrad Mynach Boys and Girls Club. Photographer unknown. © Hefin Jones





Figs. 68, 69, 70, 71: Hefin Jones *Cosmic Colliery* (2015), film stills take from documentary film by Hefin Jones and Liboni Munnings. © Hefin Jones and Liboni Munnigs

Fig. 68 (top left): A local hairdresser performs a 'zero gravity haicut' on Jones.
Fig. 69 (top right): Coloured tape and pens are used by participants to remodel the existing plans for flats to an astronaut training facility on the site of the inoperative Penalta colliery.
Fig 70 (bottom left): The inoperative colliery head
Fig 71 (bottom right): A local male choir practicing a theme tune for the documentary film *Cosmic Colliery*.

In contrast to the previous example the contributions here were not purely linguistic. People were encouraged to reimagine and creatively apply their existing skillsets in light of the altered vision of the place: a hydrogeologist was called upon to plan a decompression pool for trainee astronauts, the local hairdresser was inspired to offer 'zero gravity haircuts'. This openness resulted in a set of intriguing events and unusual encounters, but the project lacked the focal point of a clearly defined output that might have also provided a sense of closure for participants.

Nevertheless the work was experienced as positive and energising by the majority of people I spoke to: they forged new relationships and gained a renewed sense of their town, each other and themselves. However there remains a risk in framing participatory projects around fictive future scenarios: In this case staff and children at the local youth centre remained unclear about the intentions of the project and were left somewhat disappointed and confused by the ending, which they experienced as sudden and unexplained. Even in the case of less fantastical versions of future oriented creative participation the risk remains:

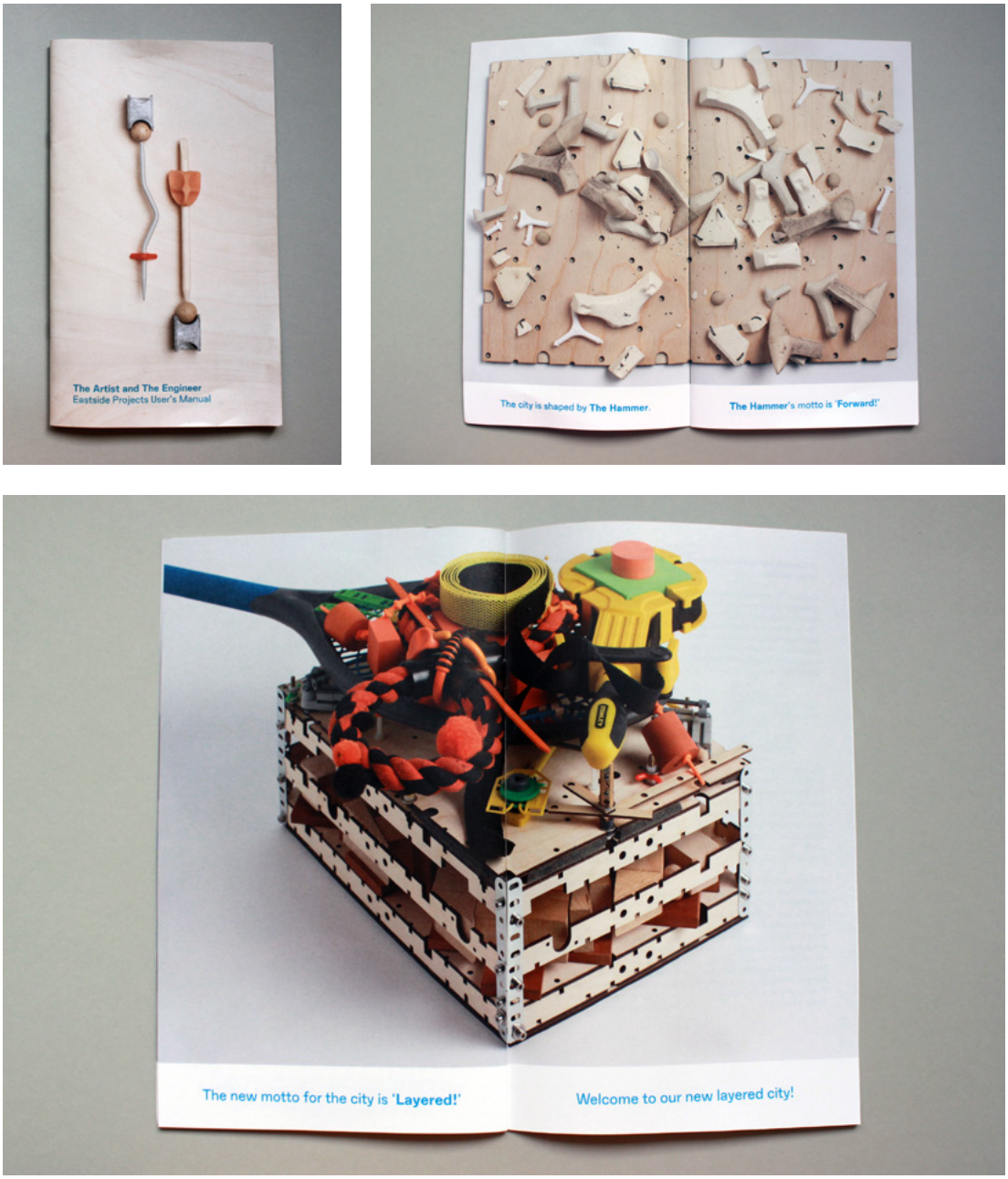
when asking people for ideas for the future of their neighbourhood without the possibility of realising a majority of them, the potential for disappointment is ever-present.

Both Miller's and Jones' projects implicitly model a society of increased civic engagement, where citizens are included in processes of surveying, archiving (Miller) and proposing (Jones) that in actual fact have become the reserve of professionals and bureaucrats. Another vital aspect of Miller's and Jones' projects is the public dialogue or debate that takes place in response to such place-based surveys or proposals.

Eastside Projects in Birmingham is both the name of a gallery space and a group of practitioners who since 2008 work at the intersection of art, architecture and graphic design. One of their general guiding principles is that an environment should preserve a record of its past action. When it was revealed that an old local library building was going to be knocked down in preparation for the erection of a new one, this planned erasure of an existing site acted as a catalyst for the production of *The Artist and the Engineer* (2013), an illustrated booklet which proposes to put this principle of additive layering at the core of a new urban planning policy for Birmingham. In the simple language of a children's book it tells the story of a dispute between the figures that appear on the coat of arms of the City of Birmingham: the artist, the engineer and an anthropomorphised hammer. At the end of the story these three characters agree to change the motto of the city from 'Forward!' to 'Layered!'. Illustrator Peter Nencini created visually striking models to illustrate the booklet. Photographs of these models are placed alongside the text. In Nencini's images urban development does not erase its past but uses the principles of accumulation and layering to build up a 'legible' environment.

Eastside Projects' ambition for this booklet was for it to be distributed widely amongst both children and adults in an attempt to stimulate debate on urban renewal and sow the seeds for a different mode of regenerating Birmingham. However, this ambition proved to be too resource intensive for the group and the booklet was mainly distributed through their established art world networks with only a small number of outreach initiatives.

In terms of the production process this project operated in the traditional closed studio method, without any non-professional participants being included. Other voices were meant to be brought into the project via a form of facilitated distribution, where the illustrated artefact acts as a catalyst for conversation and debate with the ambition to reach geographically and



Figs. 72, 73, 74: Eastside Projects with Peter Nencini *The Artist and the Engineer* (2014). A booklet that proposes an alternative urban planning philosophy to the city of Birmingham via an illustrated story.

temporally dispersed groups and individuals. French philosopher Bruno Latour ascribes great potential to the inscription and subsequent circulation of visual or written documents (1986), crediting them with the power to mobilise, align, and win over allies, and to 'force dissenters into believing new facts and behaving in new ways' (1986:6), an argument based on historian Elizabeth Eisenstein's book *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (1980). The key is for these documents to be mobile, materially fixed, presentable and readable – all attributes of *The Artist and the Engineer* specifically, and many illustrated outputs more generally.

As Eastside Projects' example shows, gathering up and engaging a public by distributing an illustrated output requires significant resource and planning, which on this occasion could not be mobilised. This strategy also brings up questions around the exact nature of these facilitated conversations, how they might be captured and passed on. However, despite the challenges to realise this ambition, I do believe that the principle holds: collective sense-making can be triggered through facilitating encounters around an illustrated document that suggests a different perspective on an issue of concern.

These initial considerations on different methods for including other people in illustration projects, during the research, production and distribution phase, played a role in the planning stages for my own PhD projects. Both Miller and Jones worked with groups of people who were already connected to a place or a neighbourhood. I took over the idea of working with people who had a pre-existing affiliation although in the case of *Write Women into History* the geographical connection was less prominent than a shared history. Miller's work was instructive in terms of his set up that had people gathering around large sheets of paper, which I took over for *Walking the Elephant*. His use of concepts and methods borrowed from anthropology (as opposed to participatory art practice) also augmented my awareness of the types of theory that might be useful to draw upon in the PhD. Jones' project prompted the idea of the 'project-as-framework' (see pp.105-110), which allows participants to inscribe themselves and their abilities within the work, although my frameworks were never quite as loosely conceived as Jones'. His work also highlighted the potential difficulties arising from a project in the form of a future-oriented proposal (as opposed to a project centred on present or past experiences) and dissuaded me from attempting anything similar. Eastside Projects' project ended up being the least significant case study for my research. Again, it acted to highlight a potential challenge more than anything else, namely that it can be difficult to assemble a public around a completed publication, without a specific aim or urgent goal. As a result I was strengthened in my conviction to focus on the participatory making processes.

Perhaps equally as important as the direct insights I took from these case studies, was the sense of companionship I gained from spending time with these practitioners in the early stages of my research. The long, sometimes meandering conversations I led with them confirmed to me that the kinds of questions I was asking were indeed of value and that there was a network of practitioners who were driven by similar ambitions and grappling with similar challenges as I was.

Sketching definitions

Given my review of the relevant developments in the literature pertaining to illustration and the development of new practice models in our discipline, how do I define illustration for the purposes of my PhD? How do I characterise my version of illustration, a version that combines Morris' idea of 'art-in-service' with a participatory, polyvocal practice model? My introduction to the thesis opened with the characterisation of illustration as 'collective, negotiated enterprise' and as 'collectively generated material culture' (Bogart 2018). Penned by an art historian, this is not usually the way that illustration is defined. More common definitions, written by illustrators themselves, focus to a greater extent on how illustration is often produced in response to a commission or a text. Illustration therefore is described as a 'contextualised problematic surrounded by a string of narratives' (Male 2019:1) – a somewhat clunky description of answering a brief, or, more elegantly, '[an] artwork […] in service of an idea [that] seeks to communicate *something particular*, usually to a specific audience' (Doyle et al. 2018:xvii, emphasis in original). Although I find these descriptions to be accurate for a large amount of illustration in circulation today, they are not particularly useful for my purposes. They express the intentions and hopes an illustrator has for the images they produce, leaving the larger social field in which these illustrations appear and operate outside of their scope. They also assume a working model where the creation of an illustration is undertaken with a particular intent and outcome in mind. While this is undoubtedly the way many illustrators work, illustration can also be an exploratory process of discovery involving greater amounts uncertainty: see for example Stephanie Black's discussion of illustration as an inductive, constructivist form of research (Black 2014b) or Chloe Regan's proposition of illustrators acting as detectives in a process of visual discovery (Regan 2016).

For some writers it can be difficult to withstand the temptation of performing the etymological pirouette towards the Latin 'lux' (light) at the root of 'illustration' – and thus cast our discipline as one that 'shines a light', professedly illuminating a pre-existing text[10] (see for example Hardie in Zeegen 2012:7, Brazell & Davies 2013:6, Doyle et al. 2018:xvii). Seen this way,

10 An interesting counterpoint to the pervasive metaphoric mobilisation of light as 'understanding' is presented by artist and academic Barbara Bolt. Finding herself blinded by the intense sunshine of the Australian desert she questions the supposed straightforward relationship between light and knowledge: 'Light does not always shed light on the matter. Under the harsh glare of the Australian sun, light fractured form rather than revealed it' (Bolt 2007:32). An even more detailed and – dare I say 'illuminating' – discussion of this can be found in Chapter 4 of her monograph *Art Beyond Representation* (2006:121-148).

illustration is an auxiliary to understanding something else. While this might indeed be historically and procedurally accurate for some illustration work (for example commercial editorial illustration), these types of descriptions, perhaps unwittingly, appoint illustration the role of a secondary, somewhat submissive partner in a binary relationship.

It is of course legitimate to emphasise illustration's relationship to text – many illustrations respond to and sit alongside pieces of writing. Submissiveness, however, is not a prerequisite for this partnership to function. Quite the contrary – there are a huge number of possible relationships an image might have to its textual partner: Illustrator and academic Steve Braund for example proposes that illustration can act as an expansion, counterpoint or redirection of text (2011). Morgan takes this further, demonstrating that illustrations can also actively undermine or destabilise a piece of writing (2014a:19). Her book *Phantom Settlements* (2011) as well as the work of prominent art-director, writer and illustrator Leanne Shapton (see for instance her work *Guestbook* 2019) are intriguing examples of the creative potential arising from the multitude of potentially complex relationships between crafted, found and re-appropriated images and texts (on Shapton see Vormittag 2021).

Also focusing on the nexus of text and image is Miller's phrase 'social text illustration' (2016: Booklet 4, 7-16), which he uses to characterise his 'dialectograms'. It is a clever way to describe his practice: Using the term 'social text', drawn from the field of ethnography where sociality is often conceived as a text to be read (see for example Clifford 1986:11), this description opens new territory for illustration, while still connecting to its more conventional definition of an image alongside a piece of writing.

In the course of the projects I have undertaken and studied for this thesis, illustration has revealed itself to be a process of relational image-making, where I work to provide a framework for groups of people to jointly, visually articulate a shared world. In my work illustrations are crafted images rather than found ones, so in this regard they conform to the general held idea of illustration as crafted image[11]. However, I prefer to use the verb 'inscribe'

11 Even though illustration in my work is hand-drawn, I wholeheartedly agree with Morgan, who argues that the crafted nature of images is not a necessary precondition for something to be considered an illustration (Morgan 2014b). She argues that the nature of illustration stems from its relational character, not its mode of production. Illustration tends to get defined as a crafted image (see for example Doyle et al. 2018:xvii), however the fact that an illustration is assumed to come into existence through the creation of a *new* image, rather than through a reconfiguration of a set of relationships surrounding an *existing* visual artefact, is so widely accepted it barely receives mention.

rather than ‘illustrate’ to characterise how participants contribute to my projects. In a quote ascribed to a 1991 essay by the sociologist Michel Callon an inscription is defined as ‘the result of the translation of one’s interest into material form’[12]. Callon’s (supposed) definition effectively bridges the discursive and the material dimensions of my work, both of which are important to my projects. The discursive dimension of my projects is the collection of inscribed signs that participants and I commit to paper: the lines, drawings, stickers, rubbings, notes and adhesives that carry some form of semiotic meaning. They point to something beyond themselves. The material dimension is paper. Paper plays a significant role in my projects: people gather around it, it is delivered, collected, scanned, reproduced and scattered, passed along from one to the next, and, in one case, multiple large sheets are carefully folded and inserted into an official local archive for safekeeping. Paper assumes a ‘vital materiality’ (Bennet 2010) that acquires its own force in the context of these projects, produces effects, alters the course of events. I am not particularly interested in illustrations as semiotic artifacts, and neither am I focusing on the touch and feel of paper grains. Instead, I am interested in the combination of the two, the relational materiality of inscribed paper.

This idea of the relational materiality of inscribed paper is exemplified in the genre of the document. Media historian Lisa Gitelman describes documents typically as ‘a thing made of paper and bearing semiotic traces’ (Gitelman 2014:3). Similarly, philosopher Maurizio Ferraris characterises documents as inscriptions or registrations on some kind of support, that carry social relevance, accessible to at least two people (2013:178). I will go into much greater detail on this material in Chapter 4. Here I merely want to briefly note that I interpret the outputs of my projects as ‘documents’ that register and attest to the social processes that led to their creation.

Therefor it can be said that this thesis focuses on illustration in the form of co-produced, visual documents. These illustrations, as I will argue over the course of this thesis, these ‘material inscriptions’, can function as the catalyst, focal point and trace of communal encounters. I am interested in the effect that that the material presence of illustration can have on communities and publics it emerges in, how it has the potential to warp and reconfigure the social fields in which it appears. As I explained in the introduction the themes

12 I have come across this quote in a number of articles (e.g.Islam, Mäntymäki & Turunen 2019:3, Sele 2020:10) but when I followed the reference back to Callon’s original text, I was unable to locate it.

of my projects are clustered around the experiences of a group of people in a specific geographical place at a particular moment in time. The illustration work produced then, contributes to and subtly redefines the participants' relationships to these places and times, and to each other. Thinking of the illustrated outputs as documents, casts them as evidence of geographical, historiographical and relational (re)configurations.

Earlier on I wrote that synthesised descriptions of a representative sample of illustration work were not necessarily a productive way to proceed for the practitioner-researcher hopefully, perhaps gingerly, attempting to plant a flag in new, disciplinary territory. To find new ground for a practice, this new ground needs to be meaningfully connected to the territory of its departure. Miller demonstrates this perfectly with his term 'social text illustration' (Miller 2016: Booklet 4, 7-16), which is rooted in illustration's historic association with writing, while branching out into ethnographic atmospheres. For me Bogart's description of a 'collectively negotiated enterprise', where scholarship on illustration doesn't emerge from the discussion of individual images, but the social networks and processes that led to their production, creates a meaningful anchor-point, that connects me to a disciplinary history, while creating possibilities for drawing out. While I agree with Bogart that analysing individual illustrations is not particularly meaningful, I maintain that individual, material pictures, my visual documents, hold the clues, the evidence, for the social processes that produced them, and in turn have the power to affect the social formations that led to their creation. That is, in essence, the argument that I shall be making over the coming chapters. The illustrative documents that result from my projects foreground the multiplicity of perspectives that created them. In the following chapters I shall interrogate the collective ways of working and notions of community that led to and arise from them.

Chapter 2 | Working with others

This chapter examines my three practice projects in detail and positions them in relation to relevant literature from other disciplines as well as creative projects, that have meaningful overlaps with mine. It is clear from Chapter 1 that the literature that concerns itself directly with illustration and visual images more generally does not offer suitable theoretically grounded context for positioning my work. The literature in this chapter is drawn from a broad range of disciplines and it has helped me both develop and articulate the range of situated methods in my projects as well as contribute to the crystallisation of my theoretical concerns in this PhD.

As indicated in the introduction I undertook three discrete illustration projects that, taken together, form the practice element of this PhD. *Walking the Elephant* (2017-2019), *Write Women into History* (2020-21) and *Cracks in the Pavement* (2020-21) might differ from one another in many details, but they overlap in their thematic focus (a particular geographic place in London at a distinct moment in time) and in their process of inviting a number of individuals to come together to co-produce illustrative documents that speak of these places and times. It is my hypothesis that the social coming-together occasioned by participatory illustration in these projects can create the conditions for individuals to encounter one another in expressions of community – and I will argue this, the main claim of my PhD, in detail in the next chapter (Chapter 3). This chapter's aim is to draw out a detailed analysis of the various facets of my projects through a sequence of reflective spaces, as they emerge in relation to cognate literature and practice.

The four sections of this chapter correspond roughly with the successive stages of the process of carrying out my projects: designing strategies for the inclusion of participants; the challenges of inviting participants to pick up a pen and create visual inscriptions on paper; my role as facilitator, interpreter and assembler of these inscriptions, and the reflexive sensibility and expertise required to carry this out; and lastly reflections on the finished work, by my participants and myself.

Each section of this chapter draws on a different area of literature and practice, corresponding to the questions raised by that stage of the projects. In the first section I review literature discussing participatory art and design practices. One of the major themes in these practices and the corresponding literature is to test out and reflect on strategies for the inclusion of groups of people, who are usually excluded from these creative processes. Throughout the 20th century there have been a range of artists and designers who pursued various strategies of inclusion, participation and consultation as a politicised working practice. I review these with reference to the (occasionally challenging) practicalities of involving participants, and how managing these practicalities plays out conceptually in the creation of an artwork.

The second section of this chapter is concerned with acts of inscription and associated questions of drawing, skill and expertise. In all my three projects I invited participants to come together to draw on, annotate and mark up a number of shared documents. How do anxieties about drawing, that many adults experience, play themselves out in this kind of task? I discuss this in reference to literature on drawing, including anthropologist Tim Ingold and artist and writer John Berger. I also describe the practical steps I took to overcome the occasional resistance I encountered, and how the use of established visual formats such as ‘the map’ and ‘the portrait’ helped to provide a sense stability during this phase.

In the third section I discuss the various roles I took on in my projects. During the workshops themselves I am a facilitator, but what do I do with the material afterwards? The participants’ contributions arrived on my desk in a great variety of formats – as representational drawings, sketches, diagrams, other visual markings, digital and printed photographs, and as written text in emails or on paper, or even spoken text in audio-files. In the process of drawing all this heterogeneous material together I acted as translator and interpreter, assembling, altering and re-constituting the outputs that were produced during the workshops. I reflect on this in relation to literature from critical translation studies. Situating this practice more broadly, I also consider discussions that emerged in ethnographic and anthropological literature in the 1980s (and continue today): the reflexive sensibility required of the researcher grappling with the thorny question as to how one might produce a representation of social groups and cultures that are distinct from one’s own.

The chapter ends with a discussion of the results of my projects. The title of my PhD refers to 'collective world-making'. Philosopher Edmund Husserl, a key figure in the development of phenomenology, advanced the concept of *Lebenswelt* (life-world) during the 1920s and -30s, to describe the everyday world of subjective experience (Moran 2012:181). I trace how this concept is taken up and adapted by thinkers such as Martin Heidegger, Alfred Schütz and Jean-Luc Nancy. Nancy, for whom sense-making and 'worldhood' are central themes, relates this concept to images, which he views as an 'announcement of the existence of a world' (Janus 2016:3). In Nancy's view images don't represent reality – they create a world. I consider these ideas in relation to my three projects and relate this to the feedback my participants gave after the projects' completion.

Participatory art and design as politicised practice – processes of inclusion

In Chapter 1 I briefly mentioned several well-known historical and contemporary illustration collectives. I explained that these groups tend to collaborate in their professional capacities for several reasons: often to galvanise creative reach and output through the combination of skill sets and artistic vision, for shared business structures, or for the pleasure of companionship. In contrast, I am interested in illustrators working with groups of non-illustrators, who join the project not in their professional capacity, but because of a shared interest or concern.

While there is not a very large number of illustrators who produce this kind of work, there is a rich and diverse lineage of artists and designers (amongst those mainly architects, environmental planners, product and service designers) who grapple with the idea of participation as a politicised working process. These practitioners were generally driven by a progressive impulse towards greater inclusiveness and democratisation in their work. For example during the 1960s and -70s so-called 'New Genre' public art in the US and the communities arts movement in the UK saw artists worked with and often championing marginalised community groups, depicting them affirmatively and campaigned for their interests. There are of course many other strands of participatory and socially engaged art practices that continue to flourish and develop in many places today, however a detailed review of these developments is beyond the scope of this PhD.

Architects and designers broached questions regarding more democratic working processes as they sought to involve future users, often from marginalised backgrounds, in the design process to give them the opportunity to contribute to the shaping of their tools, services and environments. In this section I will examine some key characteristics and tensions of these art and design movements and discuss how participatory illustration projects offer a different take on some of the dilemmas that can arise in this work.

Critical assessment of politicised participatory art was initially largely celebratory. For example, Suzanne Lacy's book *Mapping the Terrain* (1995), a key text for the recognition of this kind of practice in the US, enthusiastically endorses artists who practice at the nexus of activism and aesthetics. The book draws on the previous 30 years of artistic practice in

the United States. Impressive pieces such as Judith Baca's *The Great Wall of Los Angeles* (1978), Lacy's own *The Crystal Quilt* (1985-87), and Sheila Levrant de Bretteville's *Biddy Mason – Time and Place* (1989) are introduced and discussed as powerful examples of artistic projects, where the effective communication of a community's concerns, social impact and explicit references to the broader context of social and political life played a vital role.

More recently the British community artist François Matarasso charts and promotes similar practices in his publication *A Restless Art: how participation won and why it matters* (2019) with a stronger emphasis on artists in the UK and Europe. He distinguishes between 'participatory art' and 'community art'. He defines the former as a general term to describe the collaboration of professional and non-professional artists in the creation of artwork, the latter, which he holds in higher regard, is predicated on a more specific understanding of collaborative arts practice. For Matarasso community art has flat, non-hierarchical structures that necessitate continuous negotiation amongst all parties, rather than a predetermined set of aims, objectives, standards and processes. He sees this working method as an exemplar of a more progressive, democratic and inclusive practice model. Conceptually this approach is aligned with urbanist Sherry Arnstein's 'Ladder of Citizen Participation' (1969), a suggested metric for assessing the relative success of participatory consultation models in urban planning. The ladder's rungs range from 'manipulation' (lowest rung), via 'consultation' and 'partnership' to 'citizen control' (highest rung) – the most desirable state of affairs in this model.

The architecture and design literature of the 60s and 70s paints a similar picture of laudatory endorsement of these kinds of ideas and approaches. For example, architect Giancarlo de Carlo's 1970 influential essay 'Architecture's Public' presents a critique of the modern architect's 'distance from the real context of society and its most concrete environmental needs' (De Carlo [1970] 2005:7), concluding that 'architecture is too important to be left to architects' (ibid: 13). He calls for the abolishment of barriers between the multiple stakeholders involved in an architectural project and a process of collective participation that works with, rather than for, future users. A fantastic example of this attitude is provided by architect Walter Segal's project in Lewisham, London (1978) with self-builders on the local housing list. Under the guidance of Segal and funded by the council, people were supported to come together and build their own homes (see Blundell Jones 2005:130-132).

Designer Nigel Cross' *Design Participation* (1972) is an edited collection with manifold contributions that collectively advance similar ideas in the areas of engineering and industrial design. They speak of a desire to eradicate hierarchies that place the designer at a remove from future users and to question notions of exclusive professional expertise, which are viewed as dubious and imbued with unnecessary secrecy and mystique. Practitioners described how they were trying to create a design process that allowed for a more equal exchange between designers and end-users. There is both a pragmatic and a political impulse here: The desire to learn from the situated knowledge of future users in order to design a better product, service, townscape or building can be a sensible way to manage a process of innovation and progress. Politically speaking, these developments stem from emancipatory impulses also seen in the other movements discussed here – to foreground often marginalised voices and ensure they have an opportunity to shape their own futures.

However, this initially progressive impulse in architecture and design was soon institutionalised. Architect and academic Jeremy Till laments that today participatory components have themselves become part of the bureaucratic process they initially intended to disrupt (Till 2005, 2006). As mainstream architectural practice has now integrated participation as an often-unsatisfying part of its bureaucratic processes, a vocal set of architect-academics are critiquing this situation with publications titled *The Violence of Participation* (2007) and *The Nightmare of Participation* (2011) (both edited by Markus Miessen). Some of the contributions to *Architecture and Participation* (2005), edited by Peter Blundell Jones, Doina Petrescu and Till, also provide a critical assessment of hollowed out participatory mechanisms acting as a legitimising tool for dubious urban developments and call for a renewed recognition of the conflictual and disruptive possibilities of participatory practice.

My own experience of interacting with just those bureaucratic processes in architecture through an illustration commission I completed in 2014, corroborates Till's analysis. I have already cited this project in the introduction to this thesis and credit the experience of working on it as the impetus which prompted me to pursue this PhD. Entitled by the commissioners as *Our Heritage* (I later retitled the project *Rumour Legend Tradition Fact*), I was asked to produce permanent artwork for a new community hospital and to work with members of the local community in the process. After I learned that the construction of the hospital was being financed using private, foreign investment and that the facility would then be rented back to the NHS for profit, I felt increasingly uncomfortable in my role. I wondered if I had been at

least partly hired to smooth over the obvious discrepancy between the budgetary structures of the project and the proclaimed narrative of a ‘community’ hospital. This kind of scenario was pointedly described by architectural critic Eyal Weizman as an agency ‘outsource[ing] its ethical self-consciousness’ (Weizman in Miessen 2011:10) to an external body, a troublesome function for an illustrator.

Participatory art practice also has its critics. Art historian Claire Bishop conducted an exacting analysis of this type of work in her humorously titled book *Artificial Hells* (2012). She catalogues a plethora of sharply observed insights, problems and contradictions through her forensic attention to the often-unspoken assumptions, values and worldviews that are implicit in the work. Fellow art critics Miwon Kwon and Hal Foster have also published thoughtful and critical analysis on this topic (Foster 1996, Kwon 2002). Putting these accounts in relation to participatory illustration practice throws into relief some of the differences between art practitioners broadly working in the tradition of community arts, and contemporary illustrators (and desginers). It is my contention that some of the problems accurately highlighted by Bishop can be addressed more easily by illustrators than artists. Studying her work and that of Kwon and Foster in some detail before undertaking my projects for this PhD helped me understand and avoid some of the pitfalls they point out.

Climbing frames

Bishop highlights how gestures of *authorial renunciation* tend to be a key characteristic in these movements (2012:22). Ideas of originality, authenticity and identity, formerly attributed to the artist, are now ascribed to a participating community, their expressive powers, culture and legacy. Kwon (2002) identifies similar developments in the realms of site-specific public art: Previously, large-scale public sculptures by famous artists rarely had any relationship to the site. In a reversal of attributions more recent public art foregrounds local heritage and community participation. Meaning is now posited as a quality of the site and the population inhabiting it. Under this new paradigm the task of the artist is thus transformed: instead of producing work reflecting her personal and aesthetic concerns, she now sets out to reveal something about the participating community and their environment.

This impulse towards gestures of authorial renunciation is perfectly illustrated in Matarasso’s championing of the type of practice he calls ‘community art’, with its emphasis on

democratising every decision in the creative process; or Arnstein's 'ladder of participation' stipulating that participatory work (she is writing about urban design) should aim for 'full citizen control'. The goal here is not necessarily an outstanding result (see Bishop 2012:23-25), but the most democratic process possible, which will then determine all aspects of the work. It appears that these convictions are partly based on a simplistic understanding of democracy, as there is no universally agreed upon strategy for democratic decision making. In practice, democratic decision making in community art projects can often take the form of prolonged discussions, which far from being fair, privilege those who are most articulate and demonstrate the greatest oratorical stamina and persuasive delivery[13].

Attempts at authorial renunciation in disciplines where single practitioners are customarily credited with the creation of often large or complex works (such as fine art) stand in opposition to illustrators' and graphic designers' bids for increased authorial recognition: these are after all disciplines in which practitioners often feel overlooked, and where the desire for so-called authorial illustration practice can be (erroneously!) seen as the only alternative to commercial practice, additionally imbued with hope for greater prestige and recognition (O'Reilly 2013:14-15). Essentially both approaches lack nuance: the privileged practitioners' guilt-ridden impulse to rid herself of her authority and expertise, and the anxious clamouring for recognition by those who feel undervalued.

In the projects I undertook for this PhD there is no example of 'full citizen control', nor was this ever desired. This is also reflected in the terminology I use to describe the people I worked with in my projects. I call them 'participants' rather than 'collaborators', as that most closely reflects their type of involvement. (However, while they 'participate' in my projects, they 'collaborate' with each other while doing so.) A similar orientation also holds true for Miller and Jones whom I interviewed for this PhD (pp.239-292). In order to include others, we design responsive frameworks, that participants can use as climbing frames, to scale up and find themselves in novel configurations, perhaps with newly found abilities, and a different outlook. The metaphor of the climbing frame is apt. A climbing frame allows people to pull themselves up and use their (climbing) skills and individual strengths to elevate themselves. They can

13 A notable exception is Loraine Leeson and Peter Dunn's working process on the Dockland Community Poster Project during the 1980s in London. The two artists worked with graphic designers, activists and multiple community groups in a well organised structure that allowed everyone to work to their strengths and skills, with channels for feedback and a steering group with decision-making powers (see Leeson 2019). The impressive results speak for themselves.

decide where and how to position themselves within it, they can rely on it as sturdy and supportive, they can cooperate, as well as regard each other from new perspectives as they climb. It gives participants a new view of their territory, their companions and themselves[14].

Perhaps the somewhat unreflective mobilisation of the spectre of the author is at least partly to blame for the various contortions artists and illustrators find themselves in? On the one hand the emphasis on illustrators' authorship, in 'authorial illustration', and on the other hand gestures of authorial renunciation, as for example in Matarasso celebration of community art, present us with a false binary. Instead, the notion of authorship can be modified, as exemplified in the work of Miller and Jones and in my own projects for this PhD. Rather than authorship being exclusively associated with the expressive and original realisation of an artists' vision and identity, authorship can also manifest in other forms, for example in the responsive construction of frameworks that offer creative opportunities for others.

In *Illustration Research Methods* Fauchon and Gannon list several principles of illustration practice including qualities such as communicativeness, responsiveness and empathy (2021:16). Imbued with these characteristics I believe illustrators are particularly well suited to construct responsive climbing frames, that offer guidance, support and vision. As my own projects and the case studies I studied through interview show, these structures are not necessarily ready-built at the start of a project. In some cases they emerge or are modified during the project in response to participants contributions.

For *Write Women into History*, for example, the anticipated outcome – a booklet – was determined by the volunteer organisation who obtained the funding and initiated the project. After attending a few meetings of the writing group, I then set the theme of the cover illustration (protest march) and the method by which this would be achieved (participants draw each other's portraits and design placards, I do the rest). None of these decisions were negotiated, however they were not arbitrary either: I made the decisions regarding the cover artwork after spending considerable time listening to the group's conversation, gauging their interests, skills and predispositions. Within those decisions there was plenty of room for the

14 This analysis holds true for actual climbing frames on playgrounds too. Psychologists Withagen & Caljouw who study movement and interaction on playgrounds describe how swings and slides dictate a child's movements, while the open climbing structures by radical playground designer Aldo von Eyck offer many more creative possibilities for play (2017).

participants to contribute something of their own, to insert and to surprise themselves and each other with their contributions. If this had been a democratic decision-making process there would have never been an illustrated book cover. One woman said during a debrief session after the project had come to a close that 'if she'd known that she would have to do art, she would have never joined the group' (see Appendix p.339). In fact, many of the group members told me quite emphatically that they 'can't draw', but the way the project was designed allowed them to contribute artwork and co-illustrate a cover, which appears professional, visually coherent and impactful. When I presented the finished cover artwork to them the group expressed their delight at how it had all come together and were pleased to recognise their contribution within the overall design.

It is perhaps no coincidence that the formal device I used to unify all the contributions for the cover artwork comes in the form of a graphic framework. The grid design, that offers each character a place to be, binds the crowd together successfully. My initial attempt at designing a more amorphous crowd shape, proved visually incoherent and made the differences in how each figure was rendered appear jarringly incongruous. With the support of the grid structure the diversity of the visual material emerges as a strength, rather than an obstacle to a coherent image. Similarly, Mitch Miller's dialectograms also present a graphic framework, in the form of the empty architectural floorplan, that is gradually filled (by Miller himself) with a rich array of participants' stories.



Fig. 75: An early attempt at a layout for *Write Women into History* without the grid. This was not going to work!

But supporting frameworks for participatory illustration projects obviously don't need to be reflected in an actual grid design. They can take many forms. In *Cracks in the Pavement* participants walked within the confines of the map they were given, and their visual contributions were framed within the graphic elements of the pack and the website. Perhaps more importantly the project protocol, which contributes significantly to the way this work acquires its meaning, was designed by me. The 'rules' of the project facilitated multiple participants to 'walk together across intervals of time' (as the accompanying explanation stated), giving each participant a window of time during which they were invited to go on the walk and annotate the shared map. Thus the specific unit of time, that each participant had to complete their contribution, could also be seen as a form of gridded structure, as it was marked by delivery and collection arrangements, and embedded in an overall logic of social relay and accumulation.



HOW TO TAKE PART

Unfold this paper and take a look at the map. Unless you are the first walker, you will see a route suggested by your walking companions who went before you. Stick to this route, more or less. You can add a little loop here or there if you wish. If you are the first walker keep in mind that the route probably shouldn't "officially" start at your front door (unless you want all subsequent walkers to start their walk there too). Choose a good starting spot in a public place.

Take a walk – tracing the steps of those who went before you, or, if you are the first walker, laying down a route for others to follow. What are your companions telling you about the neighbourhood? What do you want to tell them? What are they telling you about themselves? What is it like walking with companions across intervals of time?

Add your own thoughts, discoveries and observations! You can respond to what is already there as well as adding your own material. What would you like to share with your companions? What do you know about the area? What are you thinking about? What do you see? What's in the cracks?

HOW TO ADD TO THE MAP:

1
Please mark your route with a pen or with tape. It can be any colour and style you like.

2
Add your thoughts and observations along the route. There are two methods to do so: Do it yourself or ask me to do it for you. You can also mix these two methods.

Doing it yourself
Draw, scribble, write, stick, collage in whichever way suits you! Please respect the contributions of others, and leave a little space for those who come after you. You can use the materials and stickers in the pack, or use your own. It's entirely up to you!

Asking me to do it
Send me photos, notes, audio-files (if you want to walk & talk) and I will draw and annotate on your behalf. Make sure to add location data – something that helps me understand where to add your material.

3
Please complete the Walkers' Register overleaf so we have a record of who you are. This record will be published, so please decide whether you want to share your real name, use a pseudonym or stay anonymous.

AFTER YOUR WALK:

1
When you are done, please put the map and any materials you are returning in the plastic sleeve, making a note of time and date.

2
Contact me to collect the map.
I will ensure it stays in quarantine for 72 hours. I will then add any material you might have sent me and do an interim scan, which will be published on the website cracksinthepavement.net. If the map has become too fragile or overloaded I will print a new map from the scan. I will then put the map in quarantine for another 72 hours before handing it to the next walker.

3
I ask each participant to nominate the next walker.
Please suggest somebody in the local area who would be able to do the walk in the next 7-10 days. Please check with them before sharing their contact details with me. If you are unable to nominate anybody let me know. We'll work something out!

Fig. 76: Page with instructions to participants in *Cracks in the Pavement*

In Jones' *Cosmic Colliery* (2015) the framework came in the form of his striking vision of an astronaut training facility in a small, Welsh ex-mining village. People were encouraged to reimagine and creatively apply their existing skillsets in light of this new mental image of the place: besides the hydrogeologist and hairdresser mentioned previously, the local choir rehearsed a new repertoire, a scuba diving instructor gave a class in a pool to local children and explained how this is used in the training programme for astronauts, and a local historian found herself reassessing the region's past in light of this new perspective.

Synthesis of divergent needs

Another point that Bishop highlights in her assessment of participatory art is how the *evaluation* of the work often emphasises ethical criteria and social usefulness. She argues that the ameliorative and therapeutic inclination at the heart of this kind of work can result in simplistic consensual collaboration at the cost of other possible artistic values that have been central to Western art practice throughout the 20th and 21st century: disruption, uncomfortable exposure of inconvenient realities, artistic mastery or contextual and affective complexity. Bishop laments how ethical evaluative criteria are foregrounded when discussing the work, rather than aesthetic quality (2012:190).

A related point that Bishop draws out is the unquestioned presumption in much of this work that the participating community group will somehow benefit from the exchange, however the exact nature of this payoff is rarely stated. Often it is assumed that they will be sufficiently rewarded by the act of participation itself – perhaps, as Kwon pointedly suggests, by seeing themselves affirmatively represented in the work or by experiencing the joys of supposedly unalienated artistic labour (Kwon 2002:95-97). These concerns have previously been stated even more forcefully by Foster in his influential essay 'The Artist as Ethnographer' (Foster 1996). He describes how collaborating communities can unwittingly be cast as 'anthropological exhibits' in an act of sociological condescension. The work, which purports to be a collaboration, morphs into to an artist's self-presentation, where the artist, resplendent with 'fresh' cultural imports from an exoticized other, turns out to be the only beneficiary of the partnership (1996:196-198). This conundrum in artistic practice is accurately foreshadowed by the influential political theorist Carole Pateman who points out that not all systems of participatory democracy necessarily benefit the participating individual (1970): In some models, participation acts as a palliative to ensure the preservation of

the overall system, at the cost of developmental opportunities for a significant part of the population. Foster's scenario may sound like an extreme example, but the question of the nature of reward for the participating community is clearly a key ethical consideration in this type of work.

Ameliorative inclinations (and working towards a range of quite different evaluative criteria) are not as alien to illustrators as they might be to cultural critics steeped in the avant-garde's decree of perpetual disruption and provocation. Illustrators are accustomed to putting their work in the service of others and catering to their needs while simultaneously maintaining a recognisable artistic vision of their own. While I agree that some projects, that lean heavily towards affirmative and therapeutic gesturing *can* end up lacking vitality and vim, my case study projects demonstrate that catering to the needs and abilities of non-professional participants and working with them in a way that takes their needs, interests and abilities into account, does not *necessarily* result in unambitious project structures or in formally underwhelming outputs. Quite the contrary! Bishop laments that ethical evaluative criteria are held in higher regard than aesthetic ones, but this seems more of a problem for a critic, whose task is to evaluate, than, say, for an illustrator, who is accustomed to using a whole variety of criteria to assess their work. Illustrators are used to evaluating a project both in terms of effectiveness ('How well does this piece of work achieve its stated aims?') and aesthetics ('How elegantly does it do this?').

It is precisely the ability to integrate the needs of others into your own creative practice, that puts illustrators into a strong position to address this point raised by Bishop. The demands of commercial work are precisely this: to respond to your clients' needs with your own creative vision and flair. Illustrators are thus able to conceive projects that are focused on the needs of the community group, while simultaneously maintaining their own creative vision.

For example – in my first meeting with Latin Elephant, when we were discussing a potential collaboration that eventually became *Walking the Elephant*, I asked them specifically what kind of visual outputs would be of value to them. What were their concerns at this moment in time? They explained that anything that could highlight the importance of the small businesses to the local community would be helpful to support their argument for greater support for their continued existence. The project developed from an overlap of their and my aims and objectives, rather than being set by one side, as for example would more likely

be the case in a traditional client commission, or the other, as for example by an artist who surprises an unsuspecting community with their ready-made idea. (A good example of this latter case is Swiss artist Thomas Hirschorn's monument series (*Spinoza Monument* (1999), *Deleuze Monument* (2000), *Bataille Monument* (2002) and *Gramsci Monument* (2013)), where he staged festivals celebrating the philosophers in socioeconomically deprived urban areas.)

What becomes clear through this discussion, is how Bishop's points of critique can be addressed effectively by drawing on qualities typically associated with illustration. An empathetic appreciation of others' needs, concerns and interests can be integrated into a personalised creative practice, as is the case in many commercial commissions. This 'ameliorative inclination' does not have to come at the cost of lacklustre results.

Communicative outputs as shared goal

The final point of Bishop's it is useful to mention here is how the demands of participation and subsequent spectatorship often appear to be mutually exclusive: Bishop describes how in many art projects the experience of the participating group tends to be valued above the formal resolution of a project and its exhibition or presentation to a secondary audience. As a particularly resonant example she describes the experience of spectators to the Chicago-based exhibition 'Culture in Action' (1991), which encompassed eight geographically and socially situated projects in different parts of the city. Viewers had to either negotiate their own journeys to disparate neighbourhoods, or join a weekly bus tour, only to find themselves stuck in traffic, straining to spot the work, or awkwardly trying to engage with an artwork consisting mainly of a set of finely tuned social relationships (Bishop 2012:203-205). The accompanying catalogue, which could have presented an opportunity to synthesize the disparate nature of the show, also failed to create a more resolved viewing experience, with underwhelming photographs embedded in bewildering layout and other confusing editorial decisions (2012:206).

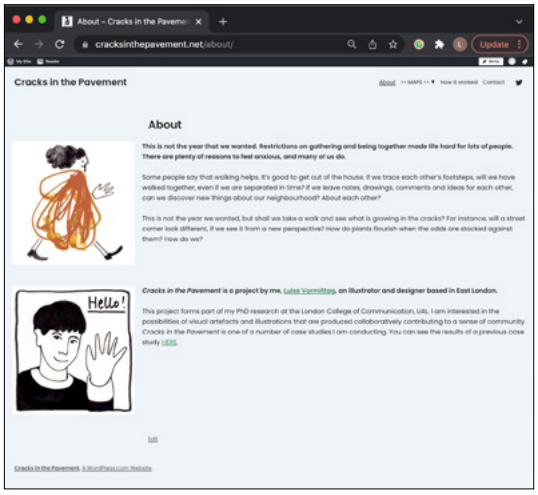
Writing specifically about catering to secondary audiences, illustration scholar Stephanie Black suggests that illustrators, who generally are much more focused on communication with a public, are more likely to take audience needs into consideration in their work and present a carefully crafted object that generously opens itself up to the viewer, even if

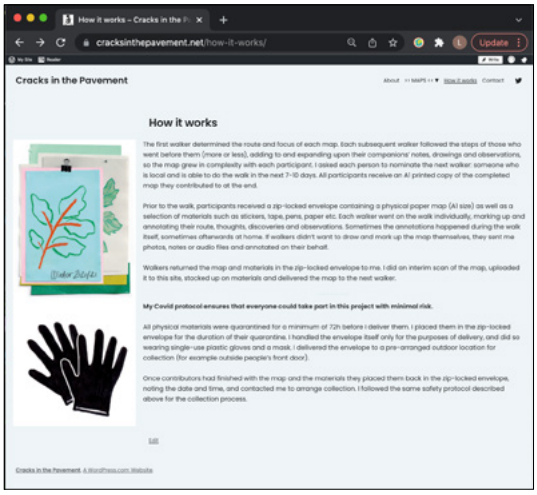
the piece's primary function is to document a prior event (2012:56-57). Miller presents a related argument in his PhD thesis: The production of a formally resolved piece of work can be an important focus of the participatory process itself, rather than simply a secondary documentation of it (2016: Booklet 4:4-5) – a suggestion which he realises in his own illustration practice.

This orientation towards a shared goal is generally much more present in participatory design, where designers are working with future users towards a service, tool, or environment. While the participatory phase of design is understood as a research and development phase, for many participatory art projects the interactions with others constitutes the piece itself. I have argued previously that for illustration the engagement with others can take on a hybrid status (Vormittag 2014). The encounters with others are not purely pragmatically oriented towards generating knowledge or insights for a predetermined future design goal. But neither are the social moments of participation and interaction framed as the 'work itself'. In my projects, this orientation towards a future goal in the form of a formally resolved output that articulates the group's shared concerns, bridges the schism between the needs of the participating group and that of subsequent audiences. In fact, the projects are designed around this communicative act. The collective task for the group is to produce an output that will effectively communicate their concerns to other audiences. This is what binds them as a group, while simultaneously creating bridges to future audiences and publics.

In the course of working on the collaborative building project in Lewisham architect Walter Segal noted how facilitating a group towards a collective goal can produce a sense of community (Blundell Jones 2005:131). This observation was borne out in my projects too.

In *Write Women into History* the prospect of achieving a formally resolved, printed output gave the concluding group meetings a strong focus and sense of forward-propulsion. Once the booklet had been printed it functioned both as an item to return to the participating community (every member of the writing group was sent a free copy, with most of them opting to buy additional copies at a reduced rate) and also as a communicative device for secondary audiences. In the case of *Cracks in the Pavement* I sent each participant a thank-you pack of materials once the project was complete. They received a 1:1 digital print of the map they contributed to, alongside a riso-printed leaflet that described and reflected on the project, which also contained smaller-scale reproduction of the other maps (see Figs.





Figs. 77, 78: Screenshots of project website for *Cracks in the Pavement* that explain the project to potential participants and to the general public.

53, 54, 55 on p. 60). The specially designed project website, www.cracksinthepavement.net (online throughout the duration of the project), had multiple functions: to attract new walkers and explain the project, to archive the results, but also – importantly – to communicate the project to other audiences, who were not planning to take part. The insertion of the resulting five maps into the local city council's archive, Hackney Archives, includes explanatory texts that furnish future secondary audiences, who wish to access the material, with the necessary context to view the work.

The aim of working towards a collective output, for example the completion of one of Miller's 'dialectograms', or the production of the booklet for the Hackney HOWLers Writing Group, can act as a focal point that galvanises action, and, with the supportive framework of a well-designed project structure, can result in a formally resolved output that can be returned to the participating community as well as communicating with secondary audiences. The reconciliation of the dematerialised, social encounter with a formal resolution is not only possible, but can, as I have demonstrated, lead to extremely satisfying results.

As a matter of fact, it is the lack of a clearly defined aim and output, that presents the major weak point in Jones' *Cosmic Colliery*. Jones' work is different from the other projects discussed here, as it is oriented towards an unlikely future scenario, rather than a group's lived experience of a place or time period. Jones' improbable vision of an astronaut training facility in Ystrad Mynach acquired a significant part of its thrill by never explicitly declaring itself a fantasy. Jones presented his idea as a proposal, and then pushed it along, to see

how far he could take it. I sympathise with Jones' dilemma here: the project's goal within his fiction, was the realisation of an actual facility. Supplementing this for any other stated aim would have undermined the project's framing.

Jones' project was presented in a display at the Design Museum London in 2015, however the project's ending in Ystrad Mynach itself was not clearly defined. There is a 30-minute documentary film about the project that Jones produced with filmmaker Liboni Munnings, and, when I spoke with Jones in 2016 there was talk of a plan to move the display from the Design Museum to a local Welsh museum, and possible organise a screening of the film. I do not know whether this came to fruition. Overall, these somewhat scattered displays and outputs certainly did not have the culminating effect of, say, a completed 'dialectogram' or the *Write Women into History* booklet. The outputs do not represent a realised project; they are documentary evidence and relics of a process of collective make-believe. While the participants I spoke to largely appreciated the fictitious framework as a refreshing change of perspective on their history and potential futures and could appreciate that a more concrete output would be difficult to conceive of in a project like this, there was still some dissatisfaction amongst some of Jones' collaborators.

These three ideas – the construction of responsive climbing frames, the synthesising of divergent needs while maintaining a creative vision, and the establishment of communicative outputs as shared goals – became key operational principles in the three projects I worked on for this PhD. They helped me integrate participants into my projects while working towards shared, illustrative outputs. The first principle – the construction of supportive climbing frames – is not particular to illustration practice. It is a metaphor more generally applicable to pedagogical practice, and my use of it grows partly out of my years of experience in workshop and curriculum design. The other two principles are more closely related to illustration as a discipline. Fauchon and Gannon describe how illustrators tend to produce work that 'actively seeks to engage and be understood', they use 'methods [that] are responsive and adaptable, […] tailored to the task at hand, the environment, people and situations the illustrator is engaged with' and work empathetically, 'engaging through emotion' in the realisation of their projects (2021:16). As illustrators we are used to integrating many differing demands into their work while maintaining our creative outlook and direction.

Lest my methods fossilise: staying with the particular

While it is helpful to reflect on and highlight the operational principles as I do in the preceding paragraphs, I want to quickly intervene at this point to prevent this list from fossilizing into an overall method, toolbox, or checklist. While in participatory art problems tend to arise from artists struggling to consolidating a variety of seemingly opposing demands – social usefulness *and* aesthetic value; clear communication *and* nuanced complexity; creatively orchestrated, unusual encounters for the participating group *and* coherent experiences for subsequent audiences – participatory design suffered another kind problem: it became formulaic.

One of the difficulties in participatory design presents itself in questions regarding exactly *how* to involve the future users in the design process. They might well have the expertise regarding the tools, services or environments that resonate with their needs and desires, but they generally do not have any design expertise. One way the design community has tried to address this is via an attempt to de-mystify the design process, to make it more open and transparent, and therefore more accessible to non-designers. Nigel Cross' influential journal article 'Designerly Ways of Knowing' (1982), one of the key texts of the so-called design methods movement was intent on accurately articulating the practical methods and intellectual processes particular to design. This drive eventually morphed into increasingly generalised methods such as 'design thinking' and 'human-centred design'. Today the global design and innovation firm IDEO, founded in the early 90s in California, is one of the most prominent examples of a company focused on social innovation through design, driven by the progressive impulse towards greater social inclusion, participation and the involvement of otherwise marginalised voices in the design process.

While IDEO undoubtedly manages many successful projects, there are some obvious limitations. One of their videos explaining their approach (see https://www.designkit.org) proposes that innovative solutions to complex problems can easily be achieved by following a few simple steps. The presentation is accompanied by cheerily upbeat music: the sound of an acoustic, strumming guitar tune and whistling, which supposedly aims to conjure a breezy, effortless scenario. Their publications, including the *HCD Toolkit* (2009) (HCD stands for 'human centred design'), followed by *The Field Guide to Human Centred Design* (2015), reveal a similar attitude. Other universalist depictions of the design process such as the Design Council's Double Diamond might allow for, or even encourage, a greater degree of

individual variation and adaptation, and I recognise that these structures can support the inclusion of people into a process that otherwise might appear nebulous and intimidating. However, I maintain that in many cases the solutionist universalism embedded in these formulas threatens to erase the specificities and nuances of highly complex situations.

Design academic Lucy Kimbell highlights the limitations of these formulaic toolkit approaches in her carefully researched and meticulously argued articles 'Rethinking Design Thinking: Part 1 and 2' (2011, 2012). She highlights the rich diversity of practices, cognitive styles and cultures that fall under the all-embracing term 'design' and questions whether any generalised pronouncements about a shared knowledge practice are actually plausible (2011:299). She suggests that rather than succumbing to the universalism inherent in this approach, we instead focus on design as a 'situated, embodied material practice' (ibid:300). She also points out how designers working with the kinds of methods promoted by IDEO, can slip into the role of interpreting future users' input in the design process using ethnographically inspired techniques, without however demonstrating any of the self-reflexivity which is now routine in that discipline[15]. In contrast to ethnographers, human centred designers are not trained to question the political, social or cultural biases they bring to a project (ibid:295) – a line of thought I will take up again in a later section of this chapter.

Designer and researcher Danah Abdulla employs a more forthright rhetorical strategy to make a similar point to Kimbell. Her recently published (note-)book *Designerly ways of knowing* (2022) appears to be a direct reference to Cross' 1982 essay. While the main body of the book provides an idiosyncratic inventory of 'things a designer should know', mixing practical, theoretical, political, historical and general knowledge, the introduction makes Abdulla's opinion clear – that design thinking has shackled designers to generic tools and methods (2022:3).

Early on in this research, when I was more focused on urban regeneration as a site for creative intervention, it was suggested that I could design a 'toolkit' that helped developers, architects and potential future users communicate about their future visions for the site. While this might well be a laudable ambition, I decided that this was not the kind of work I was interested to pursue. Instead, I decided to use my practice as a site to reconsider,

15 Art critic Hal Foster makes a similar point regarding artists working in the ethnographic tradition without observing any of the accompanying ethical principles (Foster 1996:196-197).

record and reflect on the nature of community itself. The result of this PhD research is not a new toolkit, a how-to set of instructions for illustrators to work in participatory ways with community. Instead I built on Kimbell's idea of design as a 'situated, embodied material practice' (2011:300) and developed my methods in response to the environments and situations I found myself in. This positions practice is a form of listening, an empirical encounter with the world. However, this form of this 'listening', the kind of knowledge gained through my practice-led research, is different to other forms of more traditionally empirical methods: Rather than trying to observe things with the least intervention possible, the practice-led researcher, here the illustrator – me, actively intervenes in the worlds they encounter and even orchestrates new situations. Rather than trying to be invisible, I acted as an influencer, bringing about novel scenarios, employing illustration in the process of doing so. Illustration practice here was a way of drawing people into new social constellations while simultaneously recording and preserving the worlds they collectively engendered in this process.

None of my projects are easily generalisable in terms of the methods they enacted, the steps that were taken. Each of the projects would have produced quite different results if another illustrator had conceived of them and carried them out. This was thrown into sharp relief when the Hackney HOWLers Writing Group, after completing the publication with me, decided to run a one-day training event for other women who were interested in setting up a writing group of their own, and replicate what had been achieved through our project. I was invited to talk about the collaborative creation of the cover artwork, and the overall design and production process.

It quickly became clear that there was a fundamental contradiction with what I was being asked to do. Our project had been successful precisely because it hadn't followed a particular predetermined, replicable schema. The publication that resulted from my engagement with the women in the writing group was an outcome that grew out of the confluence of a specific set of circumstances and people. There was no formula I could share that would enable others to achieve the same result. This is not to say that I or the women in the writing group had extraordinary or outstanding talents, that placed us above other women who were keen to start a similar project of their own. While we are not special, we are specific and situated. The particular set of skills that I brought to this project – empathetic listening, workshop design, illustration, some graphic design skills, a





Fig. 79 (left): On my bike distributing art materials to members of the Hackney HOWLers Writing Group
Fig. 80 (right): My Letraset collection, obtained when a relative took over an old stationary shop

general capacity to organise processes and the capacity to ride a bike (cycling around the neighbourhood became crucial for distribution and collection of materials to members of the group during the Covid-19 pandemic) – interacted with other resources: my large collection of Letraset dry-transfer lettering, my ability to work without pay on this project as part of my PhD research. Additionally, the fact of the pandemic itself meant that members of the group brought a particular kind of attention to the project, with fewer other things to do. The Zoom platform we used enabled the focused break-out rooms that supported the portrait-drawing task. All of this was specific to us as a particular collection of people, at a particular moment in time and in a particular place.

In the end my presentation for the one-day event took the form of a narrative account of what we did, with a few generalised suggestions about arts facilitation, but it felt awkward delivering this to an audience, who were expecting to learn how to do it for themselves. If I had been given more time, I could have shared my thoughts about the principles I elaborated in this section, how an illustrator-facilitator can provide metaphorical climbing frames, can synthesise divergent needs while maintaining an overall creative vision, can establish the creation of a communicative output as a shared goal. However, beyond these principles the work remains improvisatory, responsive and emergent.

I undertook a significant part of this review of the literature and practice relating to participatory art and design early on in my PhD. It was helpful for me to gain an understanding of these movements with their focus on inclusion, democratisation and the promotion of marginalised voices. A common aspiration of this large and diverse group of

practitioners and thinkers is the (at least partial) eradication of power structures inscribed in the art world and in design processes. I share the progressive impulse towards greater inclusivity, and an opening up of practice. However, the tensions between the generally laudable, politicised aims of these practices and their practical realisation has also been instructive. Reading the detailed and sometimes stinging critiques that trail these movements – the book titles alone can be rather expressive – *Artificial Hells* (Bishop 2012), *The Nightmare of Participation* (Miessen 2011) – left me thinking that illustrators might actually be better suited than artists or designers to designing participatory scenarios for creative work, scenarios that could be less fraught than the ones described in this literature. Illustration practice with its light-footedness (generally materials are cheap and the work can be completed relatively quickly), its (comparatively) problem-free relationship with aesthetics (visual appeal is generally appreciated amongst illustrators, in contrast to the more fraught relationship that fine arts has to visual pleasure), its communicative, responsive and empathetic qualities (Fauchon & Gannon 2021) is able to address many of the points of criticism raised.

Despite the principles I have drawn out in this section many questions remain about how participatory illustration projects might play themselves out. I turn next to questions of skill and expertise.

‘But I can’t draw!’ – processes of inscription

Participants tend to bring vital knowledge and expertise to creative projects. Often this comes in the form of insights about the issue or concern at hand, however generally speaking, participants do not bring design or illustration expertise. This creates challenges as to *how* participants might contribute to these projects. How does their knowledge and experience of the shared concern become visually encoded and materialised? Through which processes can they record their insights, thoughts and observations?

Participants were involved in a number of different activities in my three projects including the range of practical, organisational activities that enabled their participation in the first place (such as arranging to meet, speaking on the phone, responding to emails etc), but the core act of contributing to the projects was to draw – or, more broadly – create a range of marks and inscriptions on paper. This seemingly simple task often prompted an anxious response. For example, one of the women leading the Hackney HOWLers Writing Group told me quite emphatically that she (and many of the other women) could *not* draw, when I was first introduced to the group as an ‘arts facilitator’. In the case of *Cracks in the Pavement*, I noticed during conversations prior to dropping of the packs, that while the walkers were generally excited about the prospect of observing and noticing things while they were out, many of them voiced concerns about their ability to capture them. Observing is clearly distinct from recording. This anxiety, occasionally cloaked in defensiveness, presumably stems from a perceived lack of skill and the shame attached to this sense of deficiency. Tim Ingold reflects on how Western education tends to disregard drawing at an early stage and notes how ‘those who have been educated into its values are happy to admit […] that they “can’t draw”’ (2011:177).

This defensive rejection of drawing is further exacerbated by a misconception of its nature and purpose. Ingold goes on to describe a generalised misunderstanding of the processes of drawing in contemporary Western culture. We erroneously assume the mind projects an already finalised image onto the paper, that is then traced by the draughtsperson. In this fantasy the image slides like a transfer from mind to page (ibid.). Practitioners know this not to be the case. Ingold proposes that ‘drawing has little or nothing to do with the projection of images and everything to do with *wayfaring* – with breaking a path through a terrain and leaving a trace, at once in the imagination and the ground, in a manner very similar to what

happens as one walks along in a world of earth and sky' (2011:178). Similarly, John Berger in *Berger on Drawing* (2007) writes about the exploratory and emergent nature of drawing. In his essay on life-drawing he says that '…drawing is discovery. […] a line, an area of tone, is not really important because it records what you have seen, but because of what it will lead you on to see' (2007:3)[16].

However resonant these reflections on drawing's exploratory and emergent characteristics may be, they generally were not known or shared by my participants. It is also doubtful had they been known, how reassuring they would have actually been. Discovery and exploration are predicated on uncertainty and giving oneself over to these processes requires a certain measure of confidence as well as trust in the value of open-ended practice, neither of which can be conferred upon another person in a limited time frame. So rather than pontificate on the exploratory nature of drawing, which in all likelihood would have just had an alienating effect on participants, I was mindful to devise activities and prompts that were designed to assuage anxieties; metaphorical rungs, bars and steps of the climbing frames I described in the previous section of this chapter.

For *Walking the Elephant* I decided to use a large, lightly sketched map as the base-layer for the participants' contributions to the project. While many people are intimidated by the idea of drawing per se, the prompt to draw a route sounds far less daunting. Echoing Ingold's association of drawing with wayfaring, but limiting its vertiginous openness, I invited participants to chart their habitual movements on the shared piece of paper. A route is 'just' a line after all, and it is almost impossible to draw a route 'badly'. And yet, despite its simplicity, it opens up a rich vein of reflection: Walking bodies draw lines through space as they move

16 Even though 'drawing' and 'illustration' are sometimes used interchangeably, the two terms are distinct. Grove has called illustration 'designed images' (Grove 2011:288) – a pithy description that clarifies its difference from the exploratory and processual nature of drawing. However, drawing is often used as part of the process of producing an illustration, and conversely illustration can also be used in an exploratory manner. See Chapter 1 – Sketching definitions, p.93.

around the neighbourhood[17]. Subsequently the hand mirrors the path of the body on the terrain with a pen on the shared document – a transposition that required a change in scale but was a manageable task for most participants. For those who still felt reluctant to hold a pen I offered coloured tape to mark their movements.

The map is a commonly used genre of visual representation and therefore reassured participants because of its familiarity. Even though a rudimentary engagement with ideas in contemporary geography or critical cartography quickly reveals maps as much less reliable and trustworthy objects than they are generally assumed to be (see for example Harley (1989) on the map as a manifestation of power or Kitchin & Dodge (2007) on the transitory and fleeting nature of maps), in my project the format functioned as a stabilising device. My research is not particularly concerned with cartography and mapping – the choice to work with maps was largely influenced by the seeming simplicity of drawing a route as a way to get people involved in marking a piece of paper. My pencil outlines of familiar streets and buildings made it easier for participants to know how to position themselves on the shared document and chart their movements around the neighbourhood and each other.

Cracks in the Pavement prompted two distinct tasks of annotation. Like in *Walking the Elephant*, I encouraged walkers to draw a line on the map that indicated their route (although not all of them followed this instruction). The difference was that this time it was not a generalised 'habitual' route, as in the previous project, but the route of the specific walk they had just been on, when taking part in the project. The second task was to 'annotate their thoughts, ideas and observations' stemming from that walk – a prompt that allows for plenty of freedom and variation. By using the word 'annotate' I wanted to encourage any kind of mark making – may that be drawing lines, hand-writing notes, or affixing items such

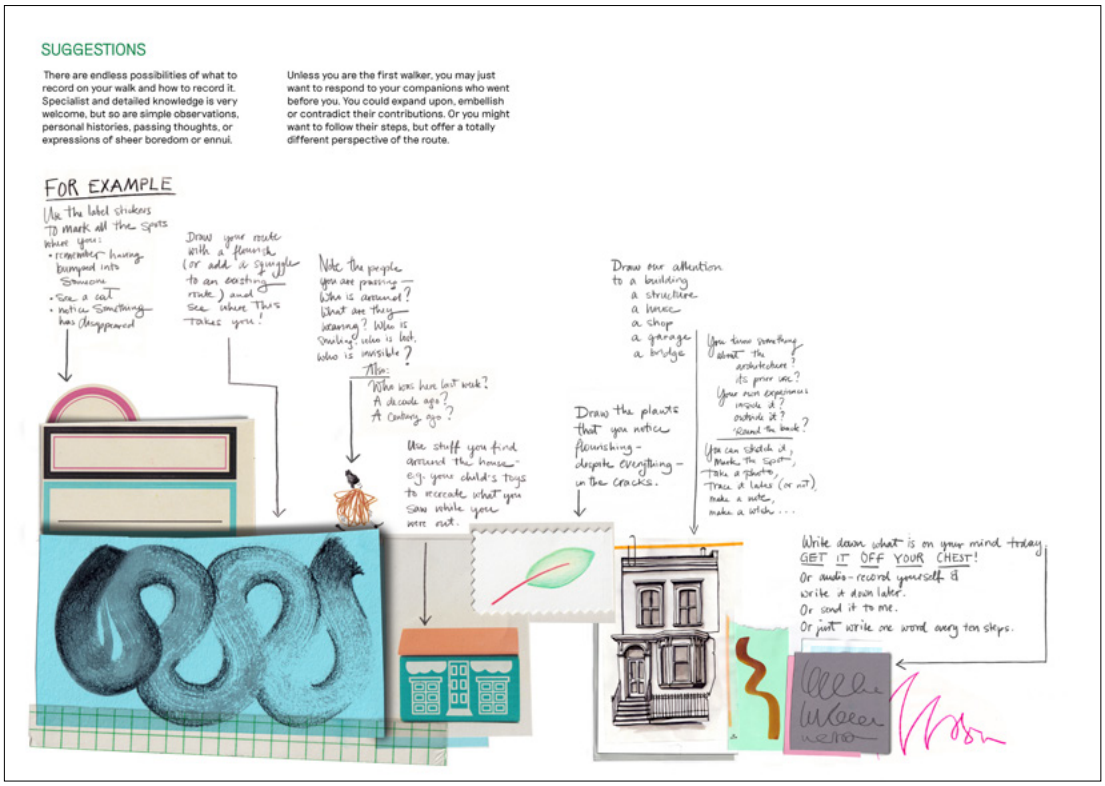
17 It is clear that two of my projects, *Walking the Elephant* and *Cracks in the Pavement*, overlap in some of their methods and concerns with artistic and creative practices associated with the combination of walking and observation, such as psychogeography and so-called walking art. One of the walkers who contributed to *Cracks* actually remarked in a reflective conversation after it had come to an end and lockdown restrictions had been lifted, how they thought that the project had resonated with many people because 'during Covid-19 we were all briefly flâneurs', thereby referring to Baudelaire's term which became a key idea in psychogeography. The contemporary Walking Artists Network and the AHRC-funded Walking Publics/Walking Arts (both UK-based) have been sharing and publishing resources that encourage a wide set of concerns and reflections on walking as creative practice. I have not explored these areas in any depth, as walking, just like cartography, were incidental to my projects. My concerns in this PhD – how illustration can become a space for a reflection on the nature of community, and the illustrators' roles and responsibilities in these scenarios – did not meaningfully overlap with the themes of these practices.

as stickers or cut out pieces of paper. It was a word I chose to encompass the broadest possible range of gestures, that would lead to the material surface of the map being worked on and altered.

Despite the relative straightforwardness of these prompts, in their actual implementation questions abounded. Do I take the map with me on the walk and draw while I am out? The map is large (A1), and perhaps the weather is bad, and maybe I am concerned about damaging it. If I were to take it, what surfaces would I work on? I might not be comfortable getting down to pavement level. Will I remember the correct route if I don't take the map? If I decide to draw at home, do I even have a table big enough? How will I remember what I've seen? How do I attach things to the map that I've collected, seen, thought about?

I did not give any guidance on these practical issues. Almost every walker had a different set of solutions to these problems. Some drew while they were on site directly on to the map, some drew on smaller paper and sketchbooks and attached this later, some made notes and took photos and worked on the map at home. Others wrote onto the map, inscribing by hand their thoughts, or added markers with stickers, introducing various numbered systems, codes

Fig. 81: Page from *Cracks in the Pavement.* Although I did not give any guidance regarding the practicalities of working on the map, I did offer some suggestions on picking a theme or focus for participants' contributions.



and legends. Others sent me digital material – photos, audio notes, typed up thoughts and asked me to add them to the map, an option that I had offered to participants if they felt they did not want to or were unable to add to the map themselves (one walker for example had very poor eyesight). When I was asked to act as a scribe, each walker had their own system of relaying the information to me, both in terms of the format in which it was sent, and the instructions regarding its placement on the map.

The prompts I developed for *Cracks in the Pavement* built on the instructions I had given for *Walking the Elephant* previously. However, they differ in their appeal to habitualness (*Elephant*) versus specificity (*Cracks*). In the earlier project I had invited participants to annotate habitual routes and stopping off points, which resulted in a large number of intersecting lines, as every person had their own individual route to contribute, rather than being instructed to follow each other's footsteps, as was the case in the later project. The stopping off places in Elephant and Castle were recorded as notes, drawings, or symbols on the map. The emphasis here was on marking the existence of something from memory, rather than experiencing something afresh. The results were therefore less sensorially oriented, compared to *Cracks in the Pavement*, with many factual statements such as: 'I come here for the delicious Columbian food [restaurant].' or 'This is where I go to play and hang out with my friends. I have been coming here for years [bowling alley].'

The resulting inscriptions, marks and drawings in both projects can be described as an undulating flow of visual and textual languages, signs and symbols, overlapping and colliding with each other. An alternative approach with more rigorous instructions and predetermined graphic systems would have clearly led to another kind of result. For example, the well-known US-American urban planner Kevin Lynch and his colleagues chose a radically different method for making spatial perception visible. In *The Image of the City* (1960) Lynch introduces the notion of a spatially grounded mental image that individual residents carry in their minds to orient themselves in urban environments. In an effort to extract this mental image from people's heads, he conducted interviews with residents, that were transcribed and encoded into simplified graphics. The process of translating residents' spatial perception into a legible graphic representation was achieved through an act of radical reductionism and streamlining: interviewee's accounts were parsed into five predetermined categories and their corresponding graphic representations: paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks. Lynch's method is akin to a positivist social-science approach, reminiscent of surveys

and statistical data, useful for producing generalisable truths based on a larger unit of population[18].

In contrast my methods do not aim at generalisations. I did not try to extract knowledge about populations, but about particular, individual truths at a specific moment in time. The process of translating spatial perception into illustrative and graphic languages is anything but straightforward. By choosing to reject streamlined categories and universalising simplifications, a different kind of sense emerges on these maps. Where Lynch's method translated perceptual complexity into a small number of simple graphic categories, my projects left the actual process of transcription wide open: 'Draw, scribble, write, stick, collage in whichever way suits you,' as the instructions to *Cracks in the Pavement* suggested.

The so-called arts-session for *Write Women into History* was also structured around two distinct prompts. Similarly to my other two projects I was mindful to create activities that were accessible, fun and rewarding to the broadest possible range of abilities amongst participants. In an effort to generate an atmosphere conducive to creative experimentation, I had distributed packs of art materials including paper, inks, pens and Letraset dry-transfer lettering to all group members in advance of the session, which were received with great appreciation and delight. 'I felt really thrilled,' said one woman, 'like it was my birthday or something!' After some warming up exercises the group was split into break-out rooms that contained two women each and were asked to draw portraits of each other. I emphasised that achieving likeness was not important and suggested that the women create several experimental drawings, rather than labouring over one 'perfect' portrait. I introduced exercises that were designed to undermine any attempts (both conscious and unconscious) to produce a 'good' drawing: Draw with your non-dominant hand! Draw without looking at the paper (look only at your subject)! Draw within an unknown timeframe (subject may say 'stop!' at any moment)! As was the case with the maps in the other two projects, the genre of 'portrait' also appeals by way of its familiarity. Although portraits are clearly more difficult to render than routes, use of this visual convention meant that there was at least a clear understanding of the task at hand.

As was to be expected the results were incredibly varied (see Fig. 21 on p.44). Some women produced highly skilled portraits of their counterpart that had been worked on with great care

18 It is interesting to note that even though his method is designed for arriving at generalisations derived from scale, Lynch only interviewed a surprisingly small number of participants to generate his graphics (see Lynch 1960:15).

and detail. (In two cases this very involved drawing had not allowed any time for the reverse portraits to be produced. These were then created after the session using photographs as a reference.) Others produced more expressive drawings and sketches that bore little or no likeness to their subjects but had other qualities. These portraits brought a different, irreverent tone through spirited linework.

The second prompt was to create placards. For this task I had distributed multiple sheets of Letraset dry-transfer lettering to the women. The Letraset had two functions: firstly, to conjure up memories of working on pamphlets and posters during the 60s, 70s and early 80s[19] and secondly, to once again undermine attempts at 'good' drawing, in this case hand-lettering.

My catalogue of supportive strategies to get participants who are not accustomed to drawing to inscribe and mark up pieces of paper overlap with those of other practitioners. Architect and geographer George Jaramillo, who often uses drawing in his participatory site-research on experiences of landscapes listed a very similar catalogue of prompts he uses in his work (Jaramillo 2021). Korean illustrator Yeni Kim uses a slightly different method: Referring to a project in which she captured the disappearing cultural heritage of Jeju Island, she describes how she initially cast herself in the role of the illustrator-scribe in interview situations with subjects who were describing cultural objects and practices. But during the course of the conversation, she intentionally started to make mistakes in the drawing, which would prompt her interlocutors to pick up a pen in an impulse to correct the otherwise faulty record (Kim 2022).

All this tricking and coaxing does of course beg the question: What is the point in persuading people to take part in activities they claim not to enjoy? What do the processes of drawing and inscribing bring to projects, that could not be achieved through other, ostensibly more straight-forward means such as sharing knowledges, observations and experiences through simply talking about them? Why force people to draw? What is achieved through the inscriptive work of hands on paper?

Geographer Dennis Cosgrove describes the act of mapping as 'creative, sometimes anxious, moments in coming to knowledge of the world' (Cosgrove 1999:2). It is this gradual

19 One woman exclaimed loudly that this exercise reminded her how much she had always hated Letraset, much to the bemusement of everyone.

coming to knowledge through the process of drawing, that I wanted my participants to experience. Even though I determined that the total processual openness of 'drawing as discovery' (Berger 2007:3) would be too destabilising for participants who strongly identify as unqualified regarding their creative capacities, the supported activities that I prepared still allowed for some elements of that experience to manifest. Cosgrove, Berger and Ingold all reflect on the fact that drawing does not simply mirror a pre-existing reality; in the process of inscription a new reality is realised. Ingold goes on to compare the act of drawing to '*gathering* […], binding lines of becoming into the texture of the world' (Ingold 2011:178).

Furthermore, acts of drawing and inscribing are intimately connected to the body and our life stories: a drawn line is a trace of a gestural movement of a hand, and even the application of tape or stickers to a surface speaks of the hand that placed them there. Comics scholar Hillary Chute discusses how handwriting carries 'a trace of autobiography in the mark of its maker' (2010:10). She thereby highlights the embodied moment of creation, experienced by the participants in my projects, which produces a stronger connection to the work, than a conversational contribution would. The work bears traces of all of the participants embodied engagement with the piece.

The routes drawn on the maps demonstrate quite literally where passages intersect, converge or run in tandem. The entangled lines and overlapping observations and annotations in *Cracks in the Pavement* and *Walking the Elephant* speak directly of our involvement with each other and of our capacity to create a shared world. In *Write Women into History* the drawn lines emerge from the women's intense gazing at each other's faces and are a record of time spent bearing witness to each other's being. In my projects the participants' acts of drawing become spatialised, material inscriptions that puts segments of their own biography, however briefly, in direct, physical relation to others.

Many of the themes I have introduced in this section will be picked up in later parts of the thesis: the ideas of collective world-making hinted at here, are taken up again in the final section of this chapter. The way in which these collective acts of inscription enable us to encounter one another, in – as I will argue comprehensively – expressions of community, is the central thesis of this PhD and will receive ample attention in Chapter 3. Reflections on the materiality of inscriptions and their importance as traces of past encounters will be taken up in Chapter 4, which is dedicated to discussions on the 'afterlives' of these projects.

Drawing things together – processes of assembly and consolidation

Just like observing and recording are distinct challenges, so are recording and presenting. The shared pieces of paper (in *Walking the Elephant* and *Cracks in the Pavement*) or shared workshop time (in *Write Women into History*) are not the only plane on which encounters happen, lines intersect and get entangled with each other. It was my ambition that subsequently these documents eloquently speak of the joint concerns they delineated and the encounters they occasioned, both to the participating group itself and other audiences and publics (see my reflections on communicative outputs as a shared goal in the previous section of this chapter) and thereby give rise to further encounters. When working with groups of people towards a collaborative illustrative document, how might legibility and eloquence be possible? Even though the dispersed ideas and visions of participating individuals are clustered around shared concerns, their material-visual rendering often remains mercilessly heterogeneous and visually incoherent. This section reflects on the tasks that I performed during my three projects in gathering up, collating and arranging the participants' contributions. In some cases my interventions were more substantive: I altered, manipulated and re-worked the drawings and source materials that resulted from the workshops or walks.

In the previous section of this chapter I described how the prompt to manually inscribe or draw their observations induced anxiety in some of the participants. The following stage of the process – translating a rich jumble of criss-crossing lines, or a stack of coloured papers containing a variety of sketches, drawings and typographic designs into something visually more accessible – induced anxious feelings in me. What exactly was my role in drawing together the scattered contributions in participatory illustration projects? How might I do this without suffocating the rich vitality of this 'undulating flow of systems, overlapping and crashing into each other'? Wherein precisely lies my role and expertise as an illustrator and how can I harness it in the service of the project at hand?

In his essay on the nature of illustration expertise illustrator David Blaiklock suggests that this can be defined as the fusion of technical skill with 'vision' – a term which he laments as being somewhat elusive (but also fails to clearly define himself) (2019:185-195). Nevertheless, 'vision' does suggest an ability to pre-imagine and subsequently realise images in order to

achieve a particular effect, a skill that is distinct from the exploratory 'wayfaring' practice of drawing. The notion of 'vision' as a central quality of illustration expertise does resonate with me. During my time working as a commercial illustrator my creative partner and I would, while discussing our plans for responding to a brief, frequently ask each other 'Do you have a vision for it yet?', referring to an overall visual idea to respond to our clients' request. However, vision alone was not going to be sufficient for the kind of work I was undertaking for this PhD, because it lacked the qualities of care towards the participants and their concerns as well as the necessary self-reflexivity required to work on these types of projects.

In order to reflect on the acts of consolidating the various and heterogeneous materials produced by participants into what I call illustrated, visual documents I therefore draw on two other areas of scholarship – translation studies and critical ethnography. These two disciplines both emerge from the examination of and reflection on distinctive and rich creative writing practices that share a concern with transposing complex systems of signification from one cultural context to another. Prominent translation scholar Susan Bassnett refers to translation as an 'intercultural transfer' (Bassnett 1998:132). Ethnographers Anand Pandian and Stuart McLean describe ethnographic writing by conjuring up the metaphor of a crumpled paper boat, a fragile vessel, that precariously carries stories of one place to another (Pandian & McLean, 2017:1-2).

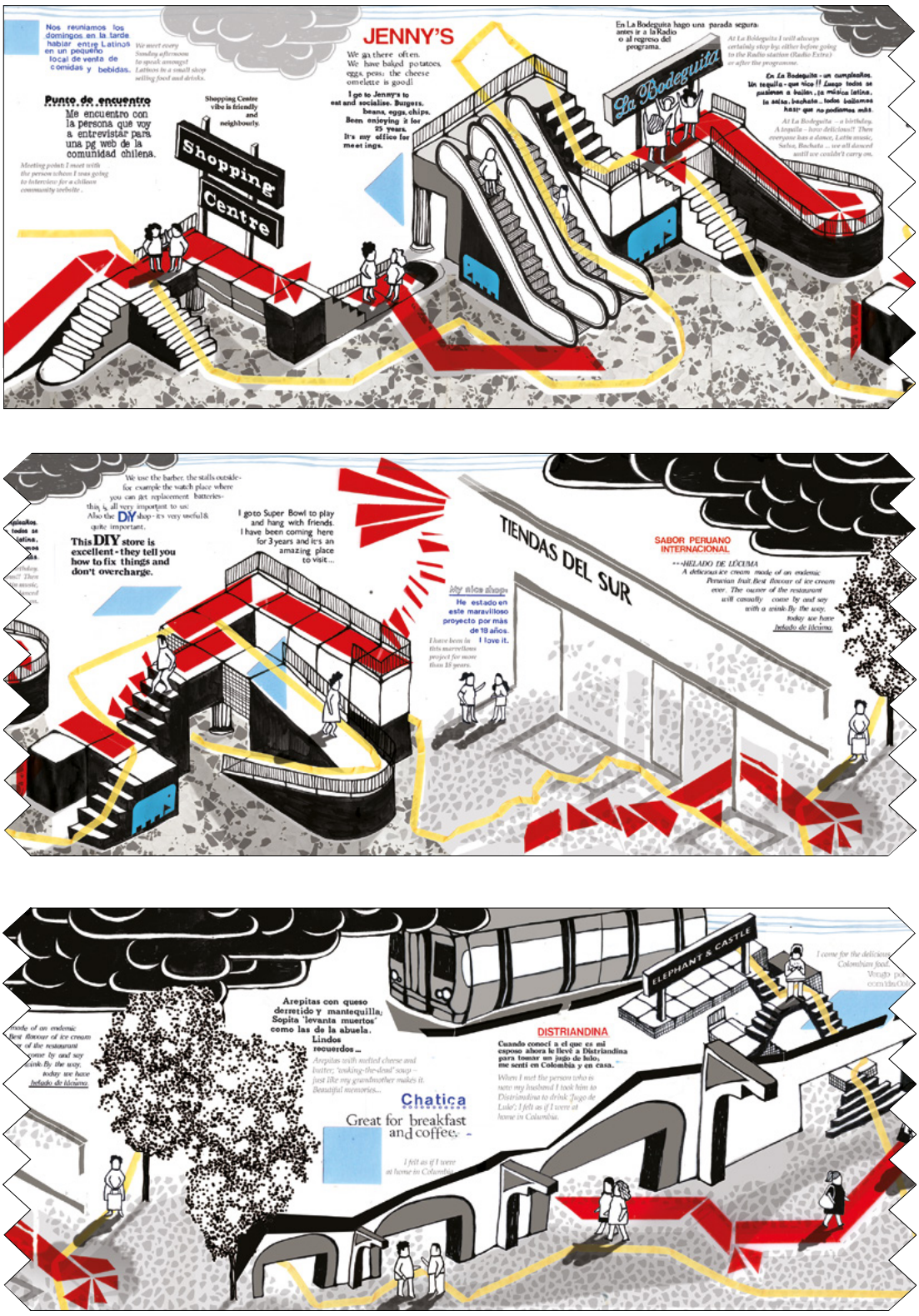
Harnessing vitality

In their introduction to *Constructing Cultures: Essays in Literary Translation* (1998) Bassnett and her colleague André Lefevere describe how translation studies gradually emerged as a distinct academic discipline during the 1970s and 1980s. Previously the key evaluative concepts for translation were limited to questions of equivalence, faithfulness and fidelity to the original text. As the field matured, translation studies gradually positioned itself as an independent discipline adjacent to linguistics, comparative literature and anthropology. Its focus expanded: previously concerned with the education and training of translation practitioners and the formal evaluation of translated texts, it became concerned with 'analysing the process through which international understanding comes into being' (Bassnett & Lefevere 1998:7). The so-called 'cultural turn' in translation studies introduced complex notions of originality, authenticity, power and ownership, with scholars focusing on questions of power relations and manipulative processes involved in textual production (Bassnett 1998:135).

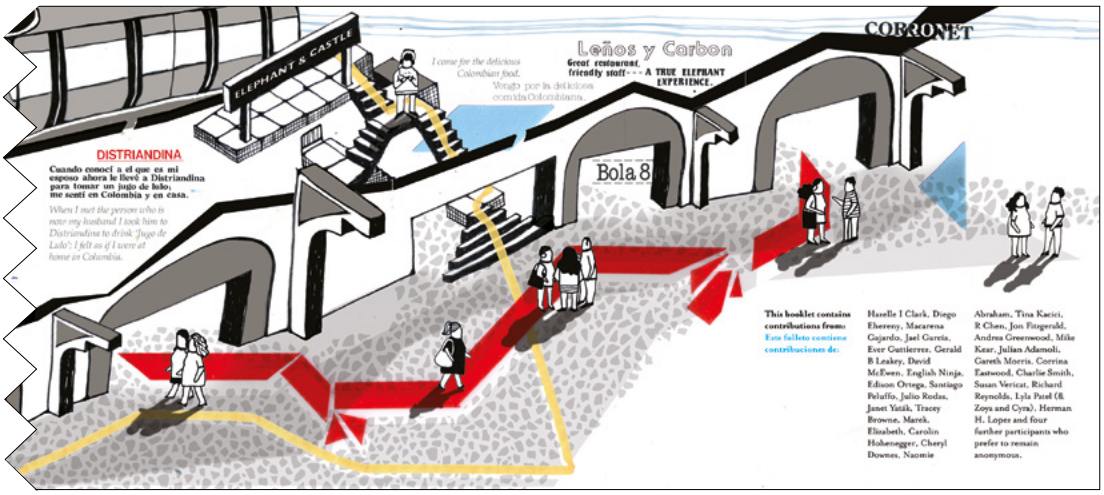
Today the field contains a multitude of specialisms, alongside great methodological variation, theories and approaches. Amongst this heterogeneity, nodes of continuous inquiry crystallise around questions regarding the level of autonomy of the translated text, its relationship to notions of equivalence (which continues as a key category in the field) and a translated text's potential functions, such as communicating information or eliciting a range of responses in its receiving culture (Venuti 2021:1-10). All these three concepts – autonomy, equivalence, function – played a key role in the dilemmas I faced and the choices I made when assembling, consolidating and (re)drawing the participants' contributions in the production of more finished illustrated documents in my three projects.

During *Walking the Elephant* in particular, I found myself struggling to identify principles that would guide my decision-making as I adapted the workshop outputs into what I hoped would be more legible illustrated outputs. The four workshops had resulted in four large-scale maps, that were covered in drawn lines and coloured sticking tape representing people's habitual routes, alongside a multitude of post-it notes, stickers, drawings and other markings and notes in both English and Spanish (see Fig.7 on p.35). Initially I transcribed the participants' notes and identified the most frequently named places. As part of my initial analysis, I produced an interim output in the form of an A2 poster that visually highlights some of these (see Fig.10 on p.37).

Beyond this simple analysis I was unsure how to translate this information into a coherent illustration that did justice to the multiplicity of contributions. Due to the fragmented nature of the project (no continuous group of participants, disruptions due to my parental leave, the tensions and anxieties on the ground resulting from the ever-increasing likelihood of the site's erasure) I did not find myself able to return to the group for a meaningful conversation about the illustration's resolution. In the end I opted to produce a concertina-folded long strip of an illustration, that strung together, in a fictionalised route across the site, the most frequently mentioned places from the maps. The backdrop was comprised of architectural elements found at Elephant and Castle such as steps, ramps, platforms and arches, with the route suggested by two in turn overlapping and diverging lines of coloured tape. The places (such as cafes, bars and shops) were represented through their names, with quotes transcribed from the original maps scattered around them.



Figs. 82 a, b, c: My synthesised illustration for *Enter/Entrar*, part of *Walking the Elephant*. These elements connect together to form a long strip that unfolds as the concertina booklet is opened up. (See also Fig. 82 d.)





Figs. 82 d (above): Final part for synthesised illustration for *Enter/Entrar*.

Fig. 14 (left, repeat from p.39): Reminder of appearance of finished leaflet for *Enter/Entrar*

The seemingly opposite demands of preserving the vitality and heterogeneity of the contributions, that speak of the same qualities in the group of people who made them, and producing an illustration that 'made sense' and would be able to communicate with a range of audiences and publics, became a key tension, that also manifested itself later in my other two projects, albeit in a less torturous and more interesting and productive guise. Another problem was the question of how to represent humans in the illustration. Initially I wanted to avoid drawing figures altogether. It felt crude to do so. Their bodily features and sartorial characteristics as well as the connotations of whatever drawing style I used were at odds with my developing ideas around community. Ultimately, I found myself unable to resolve the illustration without the use of figures, as the piece looked lifeless without them. I settled on simplified characters without facial features, but I remained unsatisfied with this solution and the cartoonish (and face-less!) sensibility they brought to the work.

Because of my discomfort with the synthesising re-interpretation of participants' contributions in this illustration that I produced as a pamphlet named *Enter/Entrar*, I decided to accompany

this output with two further leaflets that showed the liveliness of the original workshop outputs and encounters. In *The Maps/Los Mapas 1* I combined and reproduced the original maps that were created in the first and second workshop which were both held inside the shopping centre, and *The Maps/Los Mapas 2* contained the combined results from the third and fourth workshop, held at two separate summer fairs in the immediate surroundings. Both of these two leaflets also contained photos documenting the workshops (see Figs.16, 17 on p.40).

Due to the ongoing development of factors beyond my control – the fraught situation regarding the increasing certainty of the impending demolition of the Shopping Centre, and the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK – these material outputs did not have much reach or impact, beyond being a thank-you mail-out to all participants. Instead, they were submitted to yet another process of translation by a design studio called 'See, Also' who adapted the material into a webpage, that sits as a tab on the website of Latin Elephant. It contains my *Enter/Entrar* illustration in the form of a subtly animated, scrolling, strip alongside explanatory texts, images of the original maps and photographs documenting the workshops (see Figs.18, 19 on p.41).

What to make of my discomfort in adapting the workshop outputs into a synthesising reinterpretation? One strand of thinking in translation studies suggests that there was no need for such qualms. Bassnett claims that translators are effectively writers (Bassnett & Bush 2006). Through a detailed analysis of a number of examples she dissolves the concept on translation itself (1998:25-40) and instead positions it as a textual practice of re-writing, that draws into question outdated notions of singular authorship and originality. Quoting Barthes' famous 1977 essay *The Death of the Author* she proposes that all texts are but a 'tissue of quotations' and that therefore the binary opposite of 'original' and 'translation' no longer holds. She also argues against the notion that translations or 're-writings' are in any way inferior or subservient to previous versions of the text. These ideas resonate with a range of others, in such as Walter Benjamin's claim in *The Translator's Task* ([1923] 2021) that the translation can function as the 'after-life' of its source text in a process of transformation and renewal (2021:91-92), Maurice Blanchot's notion of translations living out 'the solemn drift and derivation [dérive] of literary works' (Blanchot quoted in Venuti 1995:307) or Homi Bhabha's understanding of translations as a sign of cultural renegotiation (Bhabha quoted in Bassnett 1998:137).

This invocation of free textuality is certainly liberating. However, it also highlights the difference between textual rewriting, where the source material is generally an already formally resolved piece of professional, published work and the visual re-working I did in my *Enter/Entrar* illustration, where the source material was polyvocal and jumbled, and intimately bound up with the workshop participants' lives. In other words – my starting point was not a disembodied 'text' but the trace of an embodied, situated set of encounters.

Another prominent translation scholar, Lawrence Venuti, puts forward a different proposition. In his seminal book *The Translators Invisibility* he speaks of the 'ethnocentric violence of translation' (1995:18). He takes issue with the privileging of fluency in an attempt at creating the illusion of transparency in translated literary works. He accuses translators of complicity with hierarchies of domination and the obliteration of the particularities of source cultures, particularly in the Anglo-American world of translations into English. Instead, he proposes to recall German philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher's 1813 appeal to 'foreignise' translated texts, in order to highlight their linguistic and cultural differences (1995:20). Venuti calls for greater visibility of the translator, not only in furtherance of greater respect and appreciation for their work, but also so that they might take responsibility for the various forms of reduction and exclusion they inflict on the text and to practice creative forms of resisting the dominant values in the (mostly English) target language. Quoting Schleiermacher he stipulates that there are basically two methods for making a translation: Either the author is left in peace and the reader is moved towards him [sic] (the foreignising method favoured by Schleiermacher) or the reader is left in peace, which results in an ethnocentric reduction of foreign texts (1995:19).

While Venuti's choice of words ('ethnocentric violence of translation') feels somewhat extreme and punishing, I agree with basic principle of an ethics of responsibility when handling other people's creative artifacts. It captures my desire to having done greater justice to the participants' contributions in *Walking the Elephant*, by integrating them more fully into a final output, rather than reducing them and submitting them to the dominant values of the 'target language' (in this case 'communicative illustration' is the target language). This desire for a greater visibility of the 'foreign' contributions, in conjunction with the aforementioned tension between the lively heterogeneity of diverse inputs on the one hand and a desire for communicability and formal resolution in the prospective outcomes on the other, led me to consider alternative ways of proceeding in my subsequent two projects. I resolved to

redesign the ‘climbing frames’ of future projects in a way that would enable me to ‘leave the authors in peace’ to a greater degree.

In *Write Women into History* I used the original drawn portraits of the participants and drew around them, adding bodies and hands. When participants submitted more than one portrait, I selected the one I felt worked best. On some of the drawings I thickened lines, removed smudges, added some hair (when it had been cropped or covered), or filled out an area with a block colour to add more weight to an otherwise lightly drawn image. I proceeded in a similar way with the placard designs the women submitted, only altering them subtly, and only when it was necessary to bring out their strengths. The cover illustration gained its coherence through my use of a unified colour scheme and the introduction of a grid structure that ‘housed’ the individual figures. I shared draft versions with the group and sought feedback along the way, thereby extending their participation in the creation of the illustration beyond the initial drawing phase. Their review comments concerned details – a request to not alter a figure’s hair too dramatically, to exchange one placard for another, and to change the design of a shirt of another figure. The result is probably the most visually coherent illustration of this PhD research. It most closely resembles a commercial commission in that it communicates clearly in a visually impactful way, however it simultaneously speaks of and showcases the heterogeneity of the group.

In *Cracks in the Pavement* I took an even more hands-off approach of ‘leaving the authors in peace’. In this project the vast majority of the drawings, markings and inscriptions were produced by the participants themselves and were left untouched by me. I only added to the maps if asked to do so by the walkers. In the instructions to the project, I had included the option to send me material, if walkers for whatever reason were hesitant or unable to add directly to the map and some participants did make use of this option. A number of them sent me photos, one person emailed me their thoughts they had along the way, another messaged me with audio-files that they had recorded while on the walk, and yet another handed me a stack of pencil rubbings of manhole covers they had passed on the route. I made quick, pragmatic decisions about how to add these materials to the map: From the photos of Walthamstow Marshes I picked out graphically interesting motifs and drew them onto small bits of brown card, that, when attached to the map, stood in (to my eyes) harmonious contrast to the watercolour illustration by the previous walker. From the audio memos that meticulously specified a walker’s position and corresponding sensory impressions, I selected



Fig. 83 (above): Photo of sluice house by Laurie Elks, supplied to me in lieu of inscribing *Map 1: Walthamstow Wetlands*, part of *Cracks in the Pavement*.

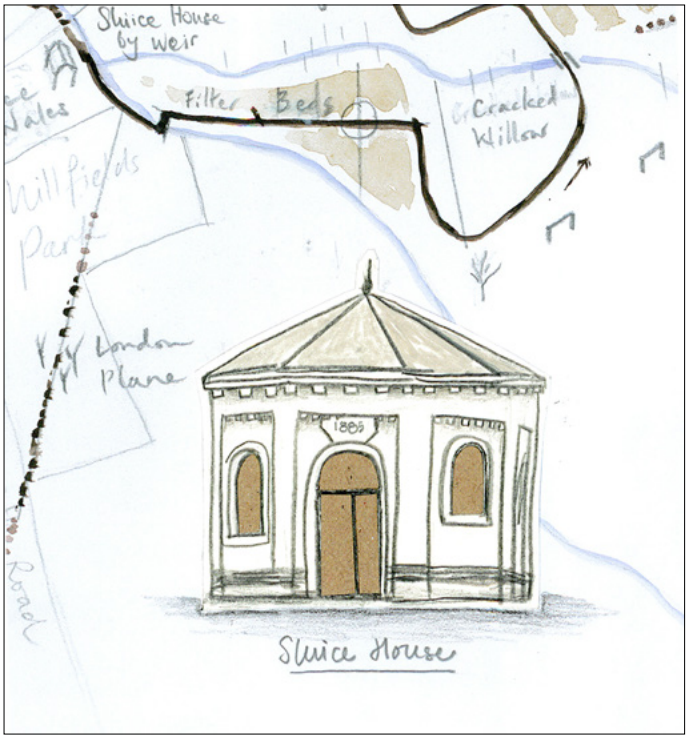


Fig. 84 (top right): My illustration of Elk's photo for the map.

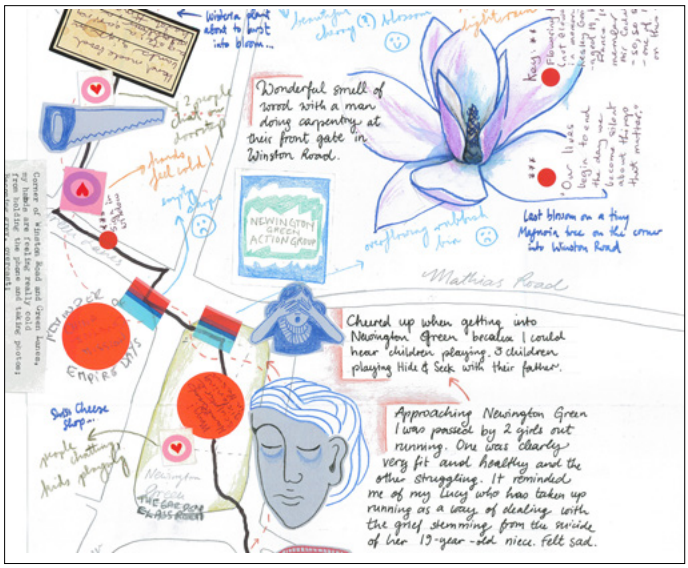


Fig. 85 (bottom right): Excerpt of *Map 5: Butterfield Green – Newington Green*, that shows my translations of participants' contributions, alongside walkers' own inscriptions. I created the little quote (on an old typewriter) from an audio file supplied by a walker (left edge), the handwritten transcripts of another walkers' internal monologue supplied to me via email (black handwriting with red frame) and the accompanying illustrative vignettes (character with blue wavey hair, child covering eyes, blue saw).

those locations for which I could find space on the map. Because they felt to me like missives from 'the field' in an unspecified, old-fashioned way, I typed them on my manual typewriter. The emailed thoughts were lightly edited, transferred in my handwriting and accompanied by small, illustrated vignettes. The rubbings were scanned and printed in a reduced size so they would fit onto the map. In other words: I worked swiftly with what was at hand, driven by whatever 'vision' my professional experience and instinct suggested.

The decisions I made in how to translate and integrate these materials supplied by the walkers were dominated by pragmatism (Will it fit? What craft materials do I have to hand right now?) and my instincts about what would work best visually on the map. Even though they represent a similar level of total re-interpretation of participants' contributions as in the *Enter/Entrar* illustration in *Walking the Elephant*, this process involved none of the torturous discomfort and paralysing indecision. This is because it was done in response to the expressed wishes of the participants, who trusted and, in a way, commissioned me to undertake this process of transcription on their behalf. Because of this trust and actual assignment coming from the walkers, I had no qualms to draw on my illustration expertise and 'vision', in the same way I would have done in a commercial commission.

My three projects arrange themselves neatly along a sliding scale of decreasing levels of interference, with *Enter/Entrar* in *Walking the Elephant* being the most 'interventionist' piece, the cover of *Write Women into History* occupying a good middle ground, and the maps of *Cracks in the Pavement* being the most hands-off project in this regard. However, I am reluctant to posit this as a measure of advancement or success. Firstly, I want to note that in the case of *Cracks in the Pavement* the illustrated maps form part of a larger collection of designed outputs. The project had its own website while it was live, a set of instructions illustrated with assemblages of eclectic collaged imagery, and finally, a riso-printed publication that wrapped around the finished maps as I sent them out to the walkers once the project had finished. Even though my intervention into the visuality of the maps was minimal, I exercised my design skills to house them in a designed, graphic world of word-and-image. It was the overall impression derived from this graphic world presented via the various documents and outputs, that took on some of the communication work. Securely anchored to the supportive structures of the communicative graphic outputs, the maps can proudly display their unruly congress of criss-crossing lines[20].

20 Incidentally, in the case of *Walking the Elephant* my visual reinterpretation in *Enter/Entrar*, originally intended as the final output, was also housed in a graphic framework alongside other elements including descriptive and reflective writing on the process, and a record of the (less legible, but livelier) workshop outputs and documentation, both in printed materials and the webpage. In this case this framing was necessary to retrospectively include elements of the process, as the intended final output felt inadequate on its own. In this regard it is an inversion of *Cracks in the Pavement*, which was designed as a framework that would be able to support the heterogeneity of participants' contributions from the start.

Secondly, to suggest that the degree of 'leaving the author in peace' directly equates with the 'better' project is simplistic and not in the spirit of Venuti's argument. For example, in his 'dialectograms' Mitch Miller wholly takes over the task of transcribing and illustrating his participants story into visual form, and they are definitively none the worse for him having done so. Instead, Venuti's suggestion for continuous self-monitoring (1995:308) invites us to harness our expertise in a self-reflexive way, with an awareness of the often unequal power relations and the hierarchies of dominance and marginality at play. This reflexive position is a more nuanced response to the inequalities an illustrator or artist might encounter in participatory creative projects compared to gestures of authorial renunciation discussed in the first section of this chapter. While reflecting on the finished cover artwork for *Write Women into History* one of the group members commented: 'These are pictures of us […] and they are *by* us. And you have [used] your skills as an artist, you know, to put them into these blocks, to put the colour, to do the bodies […]. What I would say is, that's an example of someone using her skills as an artist to empower us all. You empowered us, […] to be able to represent ourselves and express ourselves and create something visual, which we couldn't have done on our own. So, you know, what a triumph!' (Appendix p.340).

I started this section with Blaiklock's 'vision' (2019) as one facet of the expertise I brought to processes of assembling the illustrative documents in my three projects. In the descriptions of how I proceeded and made decisions when assembling the illustrated documents I have repeatedly noted how I made quick, pragmatic and intuitive decisions about what would 'work visually'. These instinctual choices are how illustrative 'vision' was at play in these projects, drawn from my experience working as a commercial image maker in the creative industries. Undoubtedly my decisions were influenced by my Western European background and education, which has imbued me with a familiarity of a particular kind of visual language, which I put to use in this work, while simultaneously maintaining an awareness of the limits of my knowledge and experience. Vision alone is clearly not the only quality required here. It needs to be supplemented with an awareness of one's own positionality, a sensitivity to the experiences of others, and a respect for and celebration of the vitality and 'foreignness' of their contributions, as one works to interpret, edit, and perhaps gently rearticulate these. A member of the Hackney HOWLers Writing Group noted this. She said: 'What I want to say […], is that you were very respectful of us. I must admit, I was anxious about that issue, whether somebody who wasn't of our experience and generation would get it. I thought you were extremely sensitive to the mood and the atmosphere and the content of our book,

and of us as women. I think that's a real achievement because you were not there. It could have been disastrous, if we had had to argue with you [about the illustration and the overall design]. But we didn't have to argue with you. That's a great credit to you.'

Representation and invention

There remains however a vital distinction between the task of a translator and the kind of interpretive work I was performing. My source material was never a formally resolved piece of professional, published work but the polyvocal and jumbled traces of an embodied set of encounters. I did not start with written texts, but groups of people. Ethnographic scholarship offered itself as a productive point of reference. Both disciplines (translation scholarship and ethnography) concern themselves with writing practices, but the difference is, ironically, that the translator is engaged in much less dramatic acts of translation than the ethnographer. The translator's source material is already in the same format as that of the desired output: written language. The ethnographer, in contrast, grapples with the fraught business of finding adequate ways to represent in writing aspects of the lived experiences of others. Even though this also does not precisely correlate with the task I was performing at this stage of my projects – to work with people's illustrative accounts and records of aspects of their lived experience and find methods to consolidate these into a coherent form – I found the debates in this discipline helpful for further reflection on some of the questions that were presenting themselves to me. How might I conceive of a generative constellation of relationships between researcher (or in my case researcher-illustrator), participant, place and time? And – undoubtedly a more fractious set of challenges – what are the adequate means of encoding other people's experiences and concerns into representational formats?

In the first section of this chapter I discussed how artists, designers and associated theorists were wrestling with methods and ideas to include a greater range of perspectives into their work from the 1960s onwards. During this time anthropologists and ethnographers were asking probing questions of their own research practices. For these scholars working with people from a different cultural context was clearly not an innovative addition to their practice, it constitutes the core orientation of their discipline as such. Historically the persistently stark asymmetries of power between the researcher and the people and cultures they were investigating is not surprising, given this discipline emerged in a context of imperial relations, often marked by racism, condescension and economic exploitation. It is precisely

because of this distressing history, that anthropologists are particularly well positioned, one might say obligated, to reflect on the highly problematic roots of their practices in order to arrive at more reflective ways of dealing with unequal power relations that were also so uncomfortably experienced by some of the artists and designers discussed earlier. Their approach however is distinct from (perhaps occasionally simplistic?) ideas of inclusion and flattened hierarchies.

Even though some of the early, influential anthropologists such as Franz Boas and Margaret Mead working in the first half of the 20th century were progressive in outlook (Boas argued against the widely prevalent notions of 'scientific' racism, Mead developed non-traditional views on gender roles) it was not until the second half of the 20th century that the discipline of anthropology itself went through a rigorous period of self-examination. Hitherto the classic formula for the ethnographic method – 'fieldwork', consisting largely of participant-observation, followed by the 'writing up' of texts, had not been seriously scrutinised. By the 1980s the 'ideology claiming transparency of representation and immediacy of experience' (Clifford 1986) was definitively exposed as such – an ideology, rather than an authoritative, scientific account as previously assumed.

The publication of James Clifford's and George E. Marcus' edited volume *Writing Culture* in 1986 marked a watershed moment in anthropological thought (James, Hockey & Dawson 1997:1). *Writing Culture* can be seen as the culmination of various debates in anthropology regarding objectivity, colonialism, reflexivity and regimes of representation. In the introduction, appropriately entitled 'Partial Truths', Clifford argues for a comprehensive acknowledgement of the unsurpassable partiality of ethnographic accounts and an acceptance that 'ethnography is always caught up in the invention, not representation of cultures' (ibid:2). The practice of ethnography was reconsidered. It was no longer assumed to be simply a scientific description of peoples, cultures, their customs and habits, but reconceived as a reflexive process concerned with the production of text. This focus on textual production brought about an awareness of the contingent processes of decoding cultural phenomena by the researcher, and their subsequent re-encoding in the form of writing. Written accounts that hitherto had been regarded as neutral were now framed as a literary construction, shaped by conventions of rhetoric and genre, thus bringing into focus the 'constructed and artificial nature of cultural accounts' (Clifford 1986:2).

This reflexive attention on the textual practices of representation, and concomitant questions as to anthropology's subject matter, methods, medium and intention generated a debate in the discipline, that is lively, productive and ongoing[21]. Some critics have argued that dwelling on the qualities of written texts risks a withdrawal from the empirical phenomena they are actually intended to convey by suggesting that 'literary anthropologists know little, not because they have shown that little is knowable, but because they have chosen, without reason, not to know' (Reyna 1994:576). However overall, this self-reflexive reorientation has had an invigorating impact on the discipline, that apart from the debates mentioned above, has also given rise to a plethora of experimental writing practices that underscore how language, writing and regimes of representation, despite their biases and partialities, can be creatively mobilised to generate and deepen our knowledge of the world.

Like these anthropologists, I have found myself unsatisfied with the simplistic binaries of fact and fiction. When Clifford suggests that the aim is to generate 'coherent ethnographic fictions' (1986:6), the word fiction has lost its connotation of falsehood, and has become an acknowledgement of the partiality of truths. However, the insight that plain factual signification is impossible, should not give licence for listlessly slumping towards the banal claim that 'all truths are constructed' (Clifford 1986:6) and therefore of equal quality. Recent ethnographic publications, such as the edited volume *Crumpled Paper Boat* (Eds. Pandian & McLean 2017) or Sienna R. Craig's *The Ends of Kinship* (2020) keep the tensions arising from methodological question as to what might be the appropriate means to convey an ethnographic encounter with other people's experiences and concerns sharp, oscillating, lively and vibrant. Reflexive ethnography is aware of and continuously reflecting on power dynamics, acknowledges partiality and takes into account the subjectivity of the ethnographer herself. This way of working foregrounds the fact that knowledge (or indeed illustrations) can be an intersubjective production, a mythopoetic invention, that arises from the interplay of researcher (or illustrator), participants and place.

What might the illustrative equivalent be of 'coherent ethnographic fictions' (Clifford 1986:6)? Amongst the projects up for discussion here, Jones' *Cosmic Colliery* offers itself

21 There is seemingly no escape from the epistemological dilemmas caused by research practices that seek to describe groups of people, their everyday practices and cultures: *Writing Culture* (1986) was succeeded by two further edited volumes that continue the myriad of richly detailed, but ultimately somewhat circular deliberations that arose from Clifford and Marcus' original set of claims – see Allison James, Jenny Hockey and Andrew Dawson's *After Writing Culture* (1997) and Olaf Zenker and Karsten Kumoll's *Beyond Writing Culture* (2013).

up most readily as a ‘mythopoetic invention’. Jones’ project intertwines local histories, physical characteristics of the landscape (the abandoned mining shafts), Jones’ ideas and participants’ interactions with them. However, this project in its speculative nature is also fundamentally different from my three projects I carried out, and it employs the idea of the fictional in a way that is probably beyond Clifford’s invocation of ‘coherent ethnographic fictions’. In Jones’ case the fictitious element was present in the framing of the project as a whole, while Clifford was concerned with the possibilities (and limitations) of representation. In my three projects, as well as Miller’s ‘dialectograms’ the attempt at representing an empirical encounter, creating a documentary record of people’s place-based experiences and memories, prompts a different set of considerations.

Fauchon and Gannon submit that ‘creative interpretation’ is a common strategy for illustrators (2021:16). Most illustration work, in its mode as obviously crafted and fabricated images, never was perceived as an indubitable record of the ‘real’ material world, in the way that photography was. However simply stating that illustration is a creative, interpretive re-presentation of another reality ‘out there’, closes off the debate around representation and invention a little too quickly.

Above (under Harnessing Vitality pp.130-139) I have already discussed the tensions I experienced while working on *Enter/Entrar* as part of *Walking the Elephant*. My attempts to produce a synthesising illustration obscured the very liveliness it sought to portray – through an attempt at re-presentation. The maps that resulted directly from the workshops communicated their vitality directly through overlapping lines and a multiplicity of notes, while *Enter/Entrar* is an attempt at subsequent re-presentation, an effort to visualise a complex enactment of routes and routines, a nimble set of relations and kinship after it had taken place, with me – an outsider – trying to retrospectively create coherence and fill the gaps. Looking at the maps resulting from the workshop I saw the possibilities for a different strategy: rather than pursuing adequate means for representing community – an approach which assumes community to be something pre-existing with at least some degree of consistency, perhaps collaborative illustration projects could achieve something else: create the conditions for people to meet and make something new together.

While reflecting on questions regarding the adequate means of representing community in general and figures in particular in the illustration, it became apparent that the notion of

representation itself might be the problem. Illustration is often casually assumed to be a representational practice, where 'something out there' is represented, i.e. shown again, in visual form. The 're-' in 'representation' suggests that something exists prior to its pictorial rendering. In his essay 'The Age of the World Picture' Heidegger highlights the presumptions that underpin a representationalist world view, where 'the world is set out before oneself and set forth in relation to oneself' where man [sic] becomes the masterful subject standing apart from the world he is endeavouring to know. (Heidegger [1950] 1977:132–33).

Translation studies and ethnography go part of the way of addressing this dilemma. The much greater levels of self-reflexivity that both of these disciplines demand of their practitioners have (at least partially) dismantled the idea of a subject being able to separate themselves from the world they want to know. Ethnography's sense of 'writing about, against and among cultures' (Clifford 1986:3) has obvious overlaps with my work, where I illustrate about, among and with people, rather than from a detatched point of observation. The discipline's acknowledgement of its ability to bring forth but 'partial truths' (ibid) and its subsequent experiments with more self-conscious forms of writing that blurs the lines between representation and invention while keeping alive reflections regarding the ethnographer's responsibilities towards their informants (Pandian & McLean 2017:22) has been helpful for thinking towards the kinds of documents I was producing in my projects. But I realised that instead of 'coherent ethnographic fictions' that are crafted to communicate something about existing cultural practices, I was working with groups of people to self-consciously make something new together, to weave together multiple, singular articulations in an attempt at making novel worlds[22].

22 Ethnographic practice and scholarship have of course continued to evolve, and there are indeed some forms of experimental ethnography that could be described in similar terms to the ones that I use for my projects (see for example Pink (2013) or Pandian & McLean (2017)). While there might be overlaps and the distinction is not entirely rigid, the project and goal-oriented nature of my projects ('Let's make this map/book together!') does make for a different emphasis, compared to ethnography's emphasis on 'experiencing, interpreting and representing experience, culture, society and material and sensory environments' (Pink 2013:34).

‘Lebenswelt’ and ‘mondialisation’ – processes of collective worldmaking

What does it mean to ‘make a world’? In this section I explain my use of the word ‘world’ and how such a thing can be ‘made’ through the creation of an illustration. As my projects are concerned with the participants’ personal memories, knowledges, encounters and accounts of a particular time and/or place, I draw on ideas from phenomenology, an area of philosophy that concerns itself with the subjective world of experience[23].

In reference to the reflective feedback and comments participants shared with me on their experiences of participating in two of my projects (for *Walking the Elephant* I was not able to organise a review session) I argue that contributing to a collaborative illustration project has the potential to bring about a reflective act of attention towards your everyday experience. Once assembled, these individual acts of attention, can go beyond simply bringing awareness to a pre-existing world. In their fragmentary accumulation, I will argue, they offer the possibility of generative acts of world-forming. In the illustrative documents that emerge from my projects we do not find a distilled, agreed translation of what people had imagined previously but an altogether new picture that emerged through the interlocking articulations of many.

Reflective acts of attention

For the group who participated in *Write Women into History* I conducted an online feedback session, which was attended by roughly two-thirds of the women in the group. I focused this on women’s reflections on the process of creating the cover artwork (rather than the whole design and production process that I also led). In the case of *Cracks in the Pavement* I asked walkers to complete a short, online questionnaire after I had delivered the final thank-you packs. Again, I had a response-rate of approximately two-thirds of participants.

---

23 Of course the potential of illustration to ‘make worlds’ could also be theorised differently. Narratology offers a plethora of ideas and concepts that could definitely be useful to illustrators, see for example David Herman’s *Story Logic: Problems and Possibilities of Narrative* (2014) or Alice Bell and Marie-Laure Ryan’s *Possible Worlds Theory and Contemporary Narratology* (2019). But because this area of study is primarily concerned with the creation and structuring of distinctly fictional worlds it is not directly relevant for my work. Paul Jackson’s current PhD research (at LCC, UAL) however, promises to interweave aspects of illustration practice and narratology, and I look forward to reading about the rewards he reaps from this auspicious overlap.

The women from the writing group spoke about how both producing the artwork (in particular engaging with the Letraset and working on the placards) as well as seeing the finished cover artwork conjured up memories of being involved in feminist campaigns during the 60s, 70s and early 80s. Another theme that emerged was how the cover artwork managed to be visually unifying, while also preserving the diversity and individuality of the original contributions. The main theme that came through from the walkers were comments on the mindfulness to their surroundings that the project had prompted. Many reported on discovering new details about their neighbourhood and feeling a greater attachment to their locale.

Cracks in the Pavement in particular prompted participants to give greater attention to subjective experiences and phenomena of everyday life that would usually not receive that level of reflection (going for a walk, residing in a particular neighbourhood). But working on *Write Women into History* also brought experiences to the fore, even though they mostly came in the form of memories: recollections of making feminist leaflets, being part of a magazine, producing placards, but also the actual experience of being part of a supportive group (in the present) with overlapping memories. In European philosophy this subjective world of experience came into focus in the first half of the 20th century as a new branch of enquiry called phenomenology. In contrast to the perceived fragmentation of experience, particularly in the context of modern science and the 'mathematisation' of the world, as well as the onset of industrial capitalism and the corresponding bureaucratic apparatus, phenomenology is concerned with the way the world appears to the person experiencing it (Moran 2000:4). Philosopher Edmund Husserl, a key figure in the advancement of phenomenology, developed the concept of 'Lebenswelt' (life-world) during the late 1910s to describe the everyday world of subjective experience. He describes it as a pre-given 'framework within which […] this life is carried on' (1970:143), a 'realm of subjective phenomena' (1970:111), and the ultimate horizon of all sense (Moran 2012:182).

Although it was Husserl who first coined the term 'Lebenswelt' Martin Heidegger and Alfred Schütz also played a key role in the development of this concept. Heidegger didn't use the term as such, although his philosophical work had many overlapping concerns: in *Being and Time* (originally published in 1927) Heidegger reflects on 'The Worldhood of the World' (1962: Pt One,Chp III). Like Husserl he believes that the world's true mode of existence lies not in the idealised sphere of modern science with its endless space and time and precise

causality. Instead, he argues that the world is something we find ourselves in through our interaction and involvement with it. We come to know the world not through our interpretive tendencies which just get in our way (1962:96) but in its disclosure to us through our practical behaviours and habitual activities within the spatiality of our 'everyday provisions' (1962:140).

Philosopher and social scientist Alfred Schütz took up Husserl's 'Lebenswelt' more directly from the 1940s onwards[24]. His work was concerned with the integration of phenomenological ideas into the social sciences in order to understand how people through their individual, conscious experiences and actions co-constitute the social world. He was focused on the intersubjective relations that occur through an individual's interpretive recognition of another person in the context of a shared understanding of the lifeworld (see Schütz 1972:97-102, Vargas 2020:421).

Husserl, Heidegger and Schütz all comment on the fact that the presence of the 'Lebenswelt' is usually taken for granted and goes unnoticed in day-to-day life. Husserl writes that '[c]onsciously we always live in the life-world, [but] normally there is no reason for making it explicitly thematic for ourselves universally *as* world' (Husserl 1970:379, emphasis in original). Schütz writes that '[i]f I wish to observe one of my own lived experiences, I must perform a reflective act of attention' (1972:102) and dedicates a whole chapter in his *The Phenomenology of the Social World* to these reflective actions to communicate subjective experiences (Husserl, 1972:116-118, Chapter 23). Heidegger comments that a pre-existing world can be 'lit up in certain ways of dealing with our environment' (Heidegger 1962:114).

Many of the walkers' reflective comments on their experience of participating in *Cracks in the Pavement* chime with these statements about the usually unnoticed character of the lifeworld. It seems that the project was a prompt for people to perform a 'reflective act of attention' that 'lit up' the neighbourhood for them. One walker explained: 'It was different to other walks because we tried to be more conscious and observant of our surroundings, knowing that we would later be updating the map based on what we had seen and experienced along the way' (Appendix p.343). Another said: 'It was a very familiar walk,

24 He refines and differentiates Husserl's term, changing it to 'Alltagswelt' (world of everyday life) (Schütz 1945:533-534), and further distinguishing 'Umwelt' (the direct experiences social reality of immediate consociates), 'Mitwelt' (the broader world of contemporaries), 'Vorwelt' (the world of predecessors) and 'Folgewelt' (the world of successors) (Walsh in Schütz 1972:xxiii).

but I looked at things I was seeing with a more searching eye and that was good' (Appendix p.344). A third walker commented: 'On this walk, I recorded thoughts, memories, and associations much more than I usually would, and I suddenly realised how I really feel about my local area. Sort of made me contemplate all the small everyday things that I usually take for granted – usually you've always got other stuff at the forefront of your mind!' (ibid.). And yet another: 'Columbia Road especially was incredibly rich in beautiful details we hadn't noticed before. We had never really stopped to look at each of the mosaic murals properly' (Appendix p.346).

The women from the writing group reflected on how taking part in the 'placard task' during our creative session made past experiences more tangible to them. Several of them commented on how using the Letraset animated memories of making pamphlets and other feminist publications. Others spoke of a resurgence of emotion regarding campaigns they had been involved in: 'It seemed authentic to how they were originally done at the time. The one I did was the National Abortion Campaign one. It was quite an experience to do that really because it was as if I was doing it for that purpose, as they would have, so I felt engaged with it – with the campaign and the mood of the time. It was great really' (Appendix pp.339-340). Making a placard pulled those more distant actions and convictions, that had become somewhat blunted by the passing of time back into sharp focus at the forefront of the mind.

Working on the portraits did not receive so much reflection. Conversations about this were dominated by discussing levels of (drawing) anxiety and skill, when I had anticipated thoughts about seeing and acknowledging one another as part of a collective. However, when contemplating the experience of taking part in the project as a whole (during a different session), women did speak more about the experience of joining the group. 'It has validated my life and all my struggles,' said one (Hackney HOWLers 2021:6). 'It has been a moving experience to participate in a collective writing project with women who were active feminists as I was,' said another (ibid.).

These memories and campaigns had been part of the women's lives all along, but just as the details of one's neighbourhood are taken for granted and fade into the background, they too lose their enlivening presence in the perpetual unfolding of everyday concerns.

Singular spaces, plural worlds

But I would like to go further than simply say that my projects brought into focus a pre-existing world. French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy builds on, but ultimately departs from Husserl and Heidegger to theorise our contemporary being in the world. 'Worldhood' and 'sense of the world' are key concepts that emerge in his wider philosophical work on politics, community and plurality. In *The Sense of the World* (1997) Nancy introduces the idea that contemporary experience of existence (what he calls 'being-in-the-world') has to contest with the 'end of sense' and the 'end of the world'. By that he means that there is no longer any unifying divine or teleological framework and order for our individual experiences. In this fragmented scenario a different kind of sense and world become possible – namely 'world as praxis'. Practices of sense-making in the form of art, writing or philosophy become the basis of a new, pluralised 'world-ing' (Roney 2013:343). He takes up similar themes in his later publication *The Creation of the World* (2007) where he argues that creative, generative acts of 'mondialisation' (world-forming) stand in opposition to the horrors of 'globalisation', which through social disintegration, misery and injustice is leading us towards 'l'im-monde' (the un-world).

Nancy links these creative, generative acts explicitly to images. In his view images don't represent reality – they create (a) reality. He is not interested in thinking of the image through symbolic structures or functionalist semiotics – interpretive theories that are often brought to bear on images. In contrast to this Nancy views images performatively: in their act of existence they create the world they refer to. 'A work of art "says" or "announces": yes, there is a world and here it is' (Nancy (2005) quoted in Janus 2016:3). In Nancy's work the process of creating an artwork is not helping us to pull into focus a pre-existing world that generally remains unnoticed in day-to-day life. Instead, it is the process of creating an artwork that engages us in a process of world-forming. Put simply: worlds are made, not found.

This is a profound move away from the representationalist worldview decried by Heidegger (see p.144) and the tensions between 'fiction' and 'documentary' forms of sense-making. Images are here conceived as a performative form of knowledge creation – generating and presenting a new world, rather than re-presenting something pre-existing. The world that is presented in the illustration is not the thing to which the illustration patently refers to (an area of East London, the writing group, the struggles of second wave feminism). The image is not a system of signs, waiting to be read and decoded. Rather its sense lies in the praxis

of its making. As I will argue in detail in the next chapter, it presents a 'comparution' (co-appearing), a praxis of collective sense-making, a space of human relation and of meaning held in common.

Another key difference between these thinkers – Husserl, Heidegger and Schütz on the one hand, Nancy on the other – is their relationship to the notion of unity and fragmentation. Husserl and Heidegger's projects were both informed by a concern about what they perceived as the fragmentation of experience through modern science (Husserl) and Cartesian philosophy (Heidegger). This is not to say that they sought to return to a lost unity, but that they were interested in investigating what made the experience of the world as world possible, where 'world' is perceived and thereby understood as singular. Although Husserl occasionally speaks of lifeworlds in the plural, he ultimately stresses that there is only one 'world' for which a plural makes no sense (Husserl 1970:143). His philosophy posits the lifeworld as a 'universal horizon' (Husserl 1970:281)[25]. Heidegger speaks of a 'connectedness' of being-there and how the dispersed world has to 'pull itself together' in order to fully come into itself (Heidegger 1962:441-2). Schütz also conceives of a singular world in his conception of the lifeworld as the 'nexus between all people' (Vargas 2020: 420). Nancy in contrast finds in the fragmentation and annihilation of 'meaning of the world' a profound possibility of its renewal through creative acts of sense-making. As has already been made clear, for Nancy there is no pre-given world that we access and share. Instead, we may 'without delay, reopen each possible struggle for a world' (Nancy 2007:54). For him art is one of the primary world-creating activities, the sketching of multiple singular spaces, that result in plural worlds (Roney 2013:345).

How do notions of fragmentation and unity play out in my projects? It was always my instinct that there were plural worlds and that illustration harboured the possibility to draw out some of these. Even though there is no pre-given and singular world, there are meaningful, intersubjective possibilities for temporarily creating a shared world. As discussed in the previous section, when reflecting on my level of intervention in the participants' contributions (p.138) my three projects arrange themselves on a sliding scale towards decreasing levels

25 Husserl's universalism played a role in his exclusion from public life in Germany in 1936. One of the reasons that the National Socialists gave for rejecting Husserl, who was Jewish, was that his universalism implicitly included 'Unmenschen' such as Jews and people of colour (Moran 2000:88).

of direct interference from me. This corresponds also to the degree in which they present unified or fragmentary worlds.

All three of my projects represent various attempts at illustrating a 'nexus between people' – even though it was obviously never *all* people, as in Schütz idea of the shared lifeworld, it was still all the people who had participated in the workshops. The question how to draw together such a nexus visually became a key methodological challenge in my work. The tension between the individual and the community, the singular and the plural played itself out in my struggles to devise the appropriate organisational and illustrative methods to consolidate these complexities. It manifested formally in the seemingly opposed demands of producing a visually unified and coherent illustration versus allowing for the emergence of work that contained heterogeneous elements that potentially visually clashed with one another, or simply were too dispersed and therefore unable to 'pull itself together' and actually constitute a 'world'.

My ambition at the time of working on *Enter/Entrar* for *Walking the Elephant* was to present a 'collective topographical imaginary'. During the workshops I had noted how participants were keen to study previous contributions on the map and often exclaimed in delight over places held in common or add their own opinion or appreciation of a place already named and annotated by others. However, when I set myself the task of creating a unified, visually coherent illustration based on the heterogeneous workshop maps – my idea of a 'collective topographical imaginary' – I found myself uncertain how to proceed. The reason why the resulting illustration does not live up to its potential to present an overlapping, intersubjective world of its participants lies not in the fact that it strives for unity per se. It lies in the way that this synthesis was achieved, namely through the erasure of individual experiences and contributions. In recourse to phenomenology's concern with people's subjective, conscious experience of the phenomena of the world, one might argue that this project's weakness lies in the fact that it didn't properly include people's individual accounts and experiences of Elephant and Castle. However, as previously argued, it would be naïve to suggest that a person's drawing of something corresponds to a person's perception of that same thing. (Too many other factors play a role here, such as drawing skills, other forms of knowledge that come to bear on the exercise, the situation in which the participant is invited to draw, etc.) It would therefore be erroneous to say that including individual, drawn contributions of participants means that I had 'included multiple perceptions of Elephant and Castle' or that I had 'included multiple overlapping Elephant-and-Castle-worlds'.

However, the activity of creating those drawings and inscriptions also constitutes its own experience that registers in people's consciousness. In *Enter/Entrar*, by redrawing all of the data, I took away the possibility of people seeing material evidence of their subjective experience – the memory of creating a drawing – as part of a larger, collective whole. In contrast, the cover artwork for *Write Women into History*, which is also a synthesised and formerly unified illustration, contains the visible traces of individual contributions, thereby allowing participants to see their own drawings, which they remember creating and therefore recognise, as part of a bigger whole. One woman expressed this by saying: 'I feel so proud, that this was my placard, this is my drawing of [name]. And I really like that nobody would know that. I feel proud of it, but I don't feel a need for it to be recognised by anyone that I did these bits. It really feels like a collective thing.' Another woman chimed in: 'Yeah, I find myself like you [thinking] "Uh, yeah! I did that one!"' (Appendix pp.340).

The result is the appearance of a world that has unity but is clearly made up of the multiple traces and fragments of its contributors' creations. *Cracks in the Pavement* with its individual layers of inscription probably comes closest to Nancy's multiple singular spaces that result in a plural world (Roney 2013:345). One of the walkers said: 'I love [the finished map]! Especially the observations of the other walkers. It makes that favourite walk of mine have many more dimensions, observational and emotional' (Appendix p.349). And another participant commented in greater detail: 'When I opened [the finished map] up, I was curious how it had developed, and then studying it in more detail somehow made me really happy, I couldn't stop smiling. It's so lovely seeing other people's thoughts and responses to places we all know so well and share as a neighbourhood. Looking at the other maps – all of which are very familiar routes and part of what I'd describe as 'home' – did instantly fill me with joy, too. I'm not sure why, perhaps the fact that using simple means, people have collaboratively turned these shared (but separate) 'everyday' experiences into interesting, curious, beautiful objects. A small, personal celebration of an area, something that 'belongs' to all of us' (Appendix p.344).

There were similar comments regarding the finished artwork of *Write Women into History*: 'I think the cover is absolutely wonderful.[…] I like the quirkiness of it. All the different faces looking out' (Appendix pp.340-341). Another woman said: 'The diversity – you know – that every drawing is a different style, yet it fits together as a whole. I think you did a fantastic job and I really do think it's amazing that we are there, you know, these are pictures of us, and

this is me by [name], although now I'm not even sure if that was me, but it doesn't matter, you know. It doesn't matter at all…' (Appendix p.340). In both of these projects participants are expressing delight and excitement about recognising how their individual contribution, which feels personal and meaningful, plays a part in making a plural world.

In this chapter I have elaborated in some details on the various questions that emerged while working on my three projects. For the purposes of this analysis I broke the process down into four sections – including others in the work, eliciting inscriptions, assembling the contributions, and reflections on the finished pieces, and drew on cognate literature and practice to elaborate on the respective challenges and insights. The last section, in its beginnings of a philosophical reflection on the results of the work, paves the way for the next chapter, where I deepen my observations on my projects and interweave these with theory pertaining to our sociality and the political in order to present the central hypothesis of this PhD. It is in this following chapter that I will argue that participatory illustration projects offer an opportunity to reveal and record expressions of community.

Chapter 3 | Tracing expressions of community

The main argument of this thesis is that participatory illustration projects have the capacity to assemble community and constitute the political. In this chapter I make my case in detail by bringing conceptions of community, theoretically grounded in the political, into relation with the possibilities of illustration practice. I build my argument in reference to thinking on community that came to the fore in 20th century European philosophy, where philosophers such as Jean-Luc Nancy made the argument that our sociality and multiplicity is fundamental to our being. To be is thus always already to be in the communal world, to be with others, responsive to it and them. In this view others play a necessary role in the constitution of one's own being: we are dependent on each other to institute and maintain the shared world. Put simply: As individuals we don't exist within ourselves, but we become ourselves in our exposure to others. I shall show how through my participatory illustration projects it is possible to reconsider, record and reflect on our exposure to one another through the delineation of shared concerns.

The word 'community' has a powerful affective dimension. In contemporary vernacular the notion of community is used by both the political left and right to conjure a romantic dream. To 'live in community' is projected as a normative ideal, something to be reclaimed in opposition to those forces that have supposedly interrupted what was once the 'natural' way of life. On the left the idea of community is held up as an alternative to the competitive and alienating individualism of capitalist society. On the right the term carries overtones of ethnic identitarianism and is used in opposition to the supposed intrusion of disruptive alien bodies into what is believed to have been a hitherto harmonious unity. On both sides the term is tinged with nostalgia for an unspecified bygone era, when society is believed to have been structured in more 'organic' clusters of small face-to-face groupings. To speak of community is often to express a longing for something that is experienced as lost. Reflecting on the term, Jean-Luc Nancy says that speaking of community 'is like referring back to a lost love' (Nancy 2017:51).

While colloquial use of the word 'community' continues without much reflexivity as a positive, albeit nostalgic term, it has garnered more complex debate amongst philosophers in the past few decades (Devisch 2013:ix). In the aftermath of the Holocaust and the various repressive and murderous totalitarian communist regimes in Eastern Europe, the idea of community – as an essentialist or collectivist 'we' – had certainly taken on an unpalatable dimension. After the fall of communist regimes in Eastern Europe the liberal primacy of the individual, seen as self-sufficient and complete within themself, was certainly on the ascent. However, the spectre of 'community' continues to haunt and entice.

In Chapter 2 I discussed participatory art and design practice, where collaborative practice is perceived to offer an automatic counter-model to the individualistic striving of single authorship (Bishop 2012:12). Art historian Grant Kester explained the surge in participatory and community-oriented art practice by characterising contemporary society as 'an atomised pseudocommunity of consumers, our sensibilities dulled by spectacle and repetition' (Kester 2004:29). Following this line of reasoning, art is then tasked as an arena to counter the neoliberal ascent of the individual. Feminist and political theorist Iris Marion Young highlights the shortcomings of this argument (1990). As already briefly sketched out on p.27 she explains that when setting up terms as an oppositional binary (e.g. individual versus community), where each term is defined by its inverse relation to the other, simply flipping their estimation (ie. valuing 'community' more than 'individual') does not withstand much critical scrutiny. Upon reflection both concepts rely on the same ideal of a unified whole. Those in support of the primacy of the individual, think of people as self-sufficient and fully realised within themselves. Similarly, those advocating for the ideal of community see this as a unifying fusion that draws its members into a harmonious whole. However Young reminds us that by using the term 'community' in a way that mobilises unity as a key quality, it can easily become the basis of an ethnocentric, identitarian ideology.

How might one move beyond this impasse? The participatory art and design practices discussed earlier take the existence of 'community' (or specific communities) as a given. What is missing is a consideration of the more fundamental question as to the nature of 'community' itself. What does it actually mean to think of our existence in terms of multiplicity (rather than singularity)? How can we sidestep the traps laid out by the romantic and nostalgic overtones the word carries without throwing out the term completely? How might a

creative practitioner relate to the idea of community while being conscious of these pitfalls? And more precisely, what role can illustration play in these debates?

In order to answer these questions I draw on 20th century European philosophy. Hannah Arendt and Jean-Luc Nancy sought to think about sociality, multiplicity and co-existence afresh while wrestling with the dark shadow of European history. I am drawing on these philosophers precisely because of their heightened awareness of the distasteful and murderous consequences that appeals to a unified 'we' can have. Nancy in particular was engaged in a detailed and painstaking re-examination of the question of human sociality on the most fundamental level. He is considered an influential philosopher on questions of community, social relations and the possibility of collective sense-making (Devisch 2013, James 2006:1) and his work is instrumental for the central argument of this thesis. His book *The Inoperative Community* (1991) invites us to think community as something without essentialist foundations (a people, a race, etc). He puts the 'inoperative', the fact that we cannot dissolve our individual beings into a unified whole, at the heart of his philosophy on human plurality. It is his detailed work on these issues that I rely on most in this chapter. By intertwining his nuanced thinking on community with collaborative illustration practice I am able to show how my projects can become an arena that reveals, crystallises and documents expressions of community.

Arendt's notion of 'plurality' and Nancy's thinking on community both build on the ground-breaking work of Martin Heidegger. It is of course well known that Heidegger colluded with, and even explicitly supported the Nazi regime in Germany during the 1930s and -40s. However, his radical rejection of the self-contained Cartesian subject in favour of a socially-grounded basis for individual existence remains crucial in 20th century philosophy (Critchley 2020) and creates the basis for Arendt's and Nancy's nuanced political philosophy.

In the opening paragraph of this chapter I referred to 'conceptions of community, theoretically grounded in the political'. A few words on that follow here. In Chapter 1 I discussed what people generally associate with the term 'political illustration', namely illustration that deals with political subject matter. In reference to William Morris' Kelmscott Press, I raised the question whether illustration could be considered political not by virtue of its subject matter, but on account of the way it has been produced. Kelmscott Press operated a flat hierarchical structure for a small group of professional workers (designers, printers, illustrators).

In contrast my projects take in larger and looser groupings of mainly non-professional participants who contribute in their capacity as interested citizens, not as creative professionals. What does it mean to think of this coming-together as political?

Nancy links his detailed thinking on community directly to the idea of the political. He suggests that an inquiry into the fundamental nature of the social body is by its very nature political. The way in which we perceive the relationality of society must be the basis for all other forms of political theory. It is in this regard that I posit that my projects should be considered political. As I will argue in this chapter, they act as an arena for ontological disclosure, where a Nancean understanding of community and the political is tested and revealed.

In the first section of this chapter I explain in greater detail the ideas and principles of the philosophy I build on in the construction of my argument, by introducing relevant ideas from the work of Heidegger and Nancy. The following three sections each provide a detailed discussion that intertwines ideas from Heidegger, Arendt and Nancy with aspects of my three projects. I draw on some of the material from Chapter 2 and deepen those considerations in reference to the new material I am introducing here. Out of these discussions arise three claims which taken together make the central argument of this thesis: that collaborative illustration projects can create the possibility for individuals to encounter one another in an expression of community. These three claims are: In carefully considered participatory project-structures illustrations that refer to joint matters of concern act as catalysts for an encounter; focal points for the duration of the interaction; and as its record thereafter.

Being in relation, being in common

What are the fundamental ideas of the philosophy that I build on in this chapter? How is community theorised by Nancy and Heidegger? Nancy starts from the same place as Young – a discomfort with the nostalgic use of the term 'community' which he traces back to the political writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau in the 18th century (Nancy 1991:9). It is from this time onwards, in tandem with the experience of modern society and statehood, that the idea of community starts to be tinged with a sense of loss and nostalgia, and therefore as something to be regained and reconstituted. Writing in the shadow of totalitarianism and its genocidally destructive manifestations in Europe in the 20th century, Nancy was compelled to reject notions of community conceived as 'organic communion with its own essence' (ibid.). Instead, he proposed to think the question of relationality of the social body at the most fundamental, ontological level afresh.

This rigorous questioning of the nature of our relationality plays a key role in Nancy's philosophy. Together with philosopher Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe he proposed that philosophy, rather than political science or political theory, is needed to establish new ground from which to think future possibilities of human association (Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy 1997:109). They think this is necessary because before reflecting on questions of statehood or power, one needs to think about assumptions surrounding the nature of the human subject and the kinds of human relations that follow from that, which in turn underpin political formations (ibid.:117). They were concerned that despite lacking this essential grounding, the notion of 'the political' was being treated as self-evident. Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe distinguish their investigations into the fundamental questions of our being-in-common and the manner in which society is produced – which they call '*le* politique' (generally translated as 'the political'), from the to-ing and fro-ing in the everyday arena of power-relations – which they call '*la* politique' (generally translated as 'politics') (James 2006:158). Their joint essays are by no means a conventional work of political theory, where philosophical argumentation is generally offered as a precursor and/or justification for political prescriptions. Instead, they present philosophical reflections on historical conceptions of 'the human' and how these ideas have underpinned notions of political community.

Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe's work was criticised for its withdrawal from a more direct engagement with empirical politics and specific struggles. American philosopher Nancy

Fraser for example was noticeably frustrated by their refusal to 'step into politics to which the logic of their own hopes and thought would otherwise drive them' (Fraser 1984:148). British philosopher Simon Critchley notes how they reduce the multiplicity of the empirical field of politics to an undifferentiated, homogenous underlying structure (James 2006:170).

As I am engaging with questions regarding our fundamental relationality through *practice-led* illustration research, I cannot but engage with both 'le politique' *and* 'la politique' in my work: While this PhD argues for the potential of participatory illustration to expose us to the possibilities of 'the political' – the relationality of subjects at a fundamental level – the illustration projects themselves are simultaneously intimately involved in the conflictual arena of everyday politics: the spatial injustice wrought by processes of gentrification in Elephant and Castle (*Walking the Elephant*), the historiography and visibility of second wave feminist activism (*Write Women into History*) and the importance of local connections and attachments in the face of escalating global catastrophes triggered by the climate and ecological emergency (*Cracks in the Pavement*). Illustration practice does not have the capacity to speak in purely abstract or metaphysical terms, it is, on one level of signification, always about something beyond itself. I therefore submit that practice-led research is able to take on Nancy's philosophy while escaping the criticism he received for his detachment from the empirical field of political struggle. My thesis is more heavily weighted towards a discussion of the (more abstract notion of the) political, but my projects themselves step into the 'empirical field of politics'.

As already indicated, Nancy's work on relational subjectivity builds to a large part on his reading of Heidegger's *Being and Time* ([1927] 1962) (Devisch 2013:vii). Heidegger is often credited as being the first contemporary philosopher who put forward the now familiar idea that existence is essentially social and relational in character, thereby breaking with the philosophical tradition of the Cartesian subject, who is encapsulated in their own sphere against an objective, external world (Schatzki 2005:233). These previous philosophical theories of the individual tended to struggle to convincingly account for intersubjectivity: if you are a unified individual how do you connect to another? In contrast Heidegger does not begin with an isolated self who then must extend themselves outwards. Instead, he proposes a radically new characterisation of self-hood: there is no human self in absence of another. 'When Dasein (human existence, literally 'being-there') directs itself towards something and grasps it, it does not somehow first get out of an inner sphere in which it has been proximally

encapsulated, but its primary kind of Being is such that it is always "outside" alongside entities which it encounters and which belong to a world already discovered' (1962:89).

Heidegger proposes that human existence is always already enmeshed and dispersed amongst other people and things in the world and that our relation to others in the world is a primary, ontological condition of being per se. To be is to be in the communal world, to be with others, responsive to it and them. According to Heidegger our fundamental structure of existence is thus twofold: being-in-the-world and being-with ('Mitsein') (Gorner 2006:56-57). 'Dasein is essentially Being-with' (1962:156) he writes; being-with-others is an existential characteristic of our own being. This is still valid even if we are momentarily on our own, because the whole experience of being alone can only take place in the knowledge that others exist.

Nancy picks up on these ideas that Heidegger developed in *Being and Time*, but distances himself from Heidegger's distasteful pronouncements on the heroic futural authenticity of a People in the latter part of the book, that many read as a prelude to his more explicit turn towards Nazism a few years later (Rockmore 1991:47, Devisch 2013:80-83). Rather than rejecting Heidegger altogether Nancy proposes a return and radicalisation of his original ideas on 'Dasein' and 'Mitsein'. Our ontological condition is to be in relation to each other and the world – Nancy calls this being 'singular-plural' (2000).

Nancy's fragmentary writing, characterised by an active grappling with language, can feel vague and esoteric at times. But he offers us a way of handling difficult notions such as community without mythologising them or dismantling them completely in the process of critical deconstruction. Through his complex and occasionally guarded manner of developing his thought he sidesteps the traps of a 'deluded proposal of a "solution"' (which he also calls 'myth') on the one hand and the abyss of nihilism on the other (Librett in Nancy, 1997:xii). As an illustrator and (perhaps even more so as) a designer, the hasty lurch towards a 'deluded solutionism' feels all too familiar. As I have already mentioned in the previous chapter (pp.116-119), this thesis does not aim to establish a new set of tools and methods, a new series of instructions or recommendations of how to 'solve the problem' of working with communities. Rather than advocating for any particular course of action (a kind of prescriptive and closed solutionism, a modus that is also frequently employed in political philosophy) I am using illustration practice in conjunction with theory to expose, outline and

illuminate facets of our co-existence. While I agree with Nancy that our co-existence is a fundamental given, and we are clearly able to express and experience our sociality through a range of different practices, it is my argument that collaborative illustration has the capacity to initiate, frame and record those processes in particularly compelling ways.

Gathering – illustration as a catalyst for community

So how can illustration in specifically initiate these processes of being-with? An initial thought emerges upon closer examination of Heidegger's concept of 'Mitsein' (being-with). His general emphasis on existence as being constituted by one's interaction and involvement in the world extends itself to how one might encounter others. 'Mitsein' does not only manifest itself through face-to-face encounters (although that is indeed one way in which we might bear on each other), it also is present in how we act towards one another in anticipation or in response to another, which can be expressed in our use or perception of objects. When handling a manufactured item, for example, one is indirectly involved with those who have produced it, or when oneself is the creator, with those for whom it is destined (Schatzki 2005:235, Gorner 2006:58-59,61). These considerations reflect in particular the specific sociality that was manifest in *Cracks in the Pavement*. Individual walkers (and I) were not able to meet face-to-face due to pandemic restrictions, but we experienced each other's presence through our acting towards one another, through my preparation and the walkers' receiving of the packs containing the materials that enabled participation in the project. Though this 'acting towards one another' is probably most obvious in the paper map itself, that captured the walkers' inscriptions in response to the prior participant and in anticipation of the next. For example, one of the participants commented: '[…] I hoped that perhaps other people would do a walk that they hadn't done before or would see the things that we pointed out on the map that they wouldn't have noticed otherwise' (Appendix p.346).

However, there are some fundamental limitations to Heidegger's thought, that constrict his thinking on community. Despite his existential structure of existence as co-existence, his philosophy has been characterised as solipsistic (Devisch 2013:79) and monadic – concerned with sociality only insofar it is a feature of an individual life (Schatzki 2005:236). For example, in his description of 'the Others' he writes that 'by "Others" we do not mean everyone else but me – those over against whom the "I" stand out. They are rather those from whom, for the most part, one does not distinguish oneself […]' (Heidegger 1962:154).

Hannah Arendt, in contrast foregrounds plurality and difference in her political philosophy. On the opening pages of *The Human Condition* (originally published in 1958) she writes that '[…] men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world. […] [t]his plurality is specifically *the* condition – not only the *conditio sine qua non* [an essential condition], but the *conditio*

per quam [a required condition]– of all political life' (Arendt 1998:7), adding that '[…]we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives or will live' (ibid:8).

Arendt, like Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe, was interested in political philosophy not as a precursor for drafting prescriptive organisational principles for governance, but to explore the fundamental condition of the political: that it unfolds among plural human beings, each of whom have different perspectives, who can act and start something new, setting of trains of events with unpredictable outcomes (Canovan in Arendt 1998:11). Plurality and a free public realm were key concepts for Arendt. In *The Human Condition* she sets out her thesis that the political is something that arises between us in the space of the common world where humans can appear to one another and experience their plurality (Arendt 1998:52) through the simultaneous presence of innumerable perspectives (ibid:57). The experience of our mutual presence is what gives birth this public-political realm: we see and hear each other and are seen and heard by others. The public realm (which she also calls 'the world itself') gathers us together and yet prevents us from falling over each other (1998:52). This is made possible by a 'world of things [that] is between those who have it [the world] in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it' (ibid).

Arendt's metaphor of the table that gathers us up while preventing us from falling over each other is a powerful one. The table simultaneously performs a number of important functions: it draws us in, in our plurality, while also holding us at an appropriate distance. It sets us in relation to one another and provides a surface, a kind of arena, on which to display, share and elaborate on common concerns. Arendt's repeated use of the word 'things' in this context is intriguing. She writes, for example, of the importance of 'a public realm and the world's […] transformation into a community of things which gathers men together' (1998:55). Latour in his 2005 essay on 'How to make things public' reminds us of the etymology of the word 'Thing': before it came to mean 'object' or 'entity of matter' it stood for a 'certain type of archaic assembly' (2005:12, capitalisation in original), or an 'issue that brings people together' (ibid:13). Rather than focusing on our many political disagreements, opinions and passions, Latour suggests we should concentrate on the 'hidden coherence in what we are attached to' (ibid:5). In an expansion of Arendt's point, Latour's 'Things' appear as complex socio-material assemblies that allow 'matters of concern' to occasion the gathering up of relevant parties. Building on Latour, contemporary Swedish scholars

of participatory design Björgvinsson, Ehn and Hillgren put forward the term 'design Things' which they describe as 'Things that are modifying the space of interactions and performance and that may be explored as socio-material frames for controversies, opening up new ways of thinking and behaving, being ready for unexpected use' (2012:102).

Both the Latourian and the design-oriented expansion of Arendt's 'things' resonate with the three projects I undertook for my PhD. While my work is less concerned with being an arena for controversies, it can be understood as a 'socio-material frame that modifies the space of interactions', a 'Thing' that occasions the gathering up of different parties around a common 'matter of concern'. But Arendt's original metaphor of the table that 'gathers us together and yet prevents us from falling over each other' probably remains the most striking image here. The projects all assembled a group of people with a shared interest or overlapping experiences – the site of the proposed urban transformation at Elephant and Castle (*Walking the Elephant*), the active participation in the Women's Liberation Movement in (East) London (*Write Women into History*), a reorientation towards our hyper-local, shared neighbourhoods due to the isolation of lockdown (*Cracks in the Pavement*). In each case people were gathered up by the emerging manifestation of their shared concern on pieces of paper, but it was equally those pieces of paper, alongside the framework of the project that kept them at an appropriate distance and prevented them from falling over one another. *Walking the Elephant* created the most literal image of a group of individuals being drawn towards a large piece of paper that invited them to contribute their individual perspective to an emergent, polyvocal manifestation of their common world. In *Write Women into History* the pieces of paper were much smaller and the participants dispersed, but despite this dispersal the drawings and inscriptions, taken together, still manifested an arena for the presentation of a world in common, that drew the women together and oriented them towards one another. In *Cracks in the Pavement* the gathering was staggered across intervals of time. The paper map was the 'thing' that enabled the walkers' deferred encounters, the arena 'where humans can appear to one another and experience their plurality' (Arendt 1998:52).

This ability to gather while simultaneously preventing a collision is the first of three key claims I wish to make in support of the overall hypothesis I am arguing in this PhD. Collaborative illustration projects have the potential to transform privately held interests and experiences, scattered amongst individuals, into a common, public 'thing' that assembles these individuals in their plurality and difference. The faint outlines of a common world – a

lightly sketched contour of a shared neighbourhood, the invocation of a protest march – exert a gravitational pull through a common concern and a shared sense of attachment. While it is this pre-existing sense of attachment and concern that initially orients individuals towards one another, it is the emergent rendering of these concerns as collaborative illustrative documents that really draws people in. Encouraged by a thoughtful project design as described in Chapter 2 (pp.105-115), those metaphorical climbing frames could be reconstrued in Arendt's vision as supportive and well-proportioned furniture that offers everyone a seat at the table, and enables participants to get involved in processes of inscription. By drawing themselves into the emerging common world, individuals are gathered up in these embodied moments of creation. Collaborative illustration has thus the capacity to act as a catalyst for a public encounter.

A politics of communication – illustration as an enactment of community

While one of Arendt's main concerns was the importance of a free public space, in which people in their plurality can speak and act, Nancy's work foregrounds our ontological condition of being together and the possibility to rethink the notion of community as such. Building directly on Heidegger's idea of human existence as dispersed in matters of the world and in relation to one another**,** Nancy sees a fundamental directedness towards others as our basic ontological condition. He speaks of 'an inclination or an inclining from one toward the other'(1991:3) and proclaims '[t]hat which exists, whatever this might be, coexists because it exists' (Nancy 2000:29). Heidegger's concepts of 'Dasein' and 'Mitsein' become Nancy's 'being-toward' and 'being-with'.

In *The Inoperative Community* (1991) Nancy suggests that community is not something that has been dislocated because modern subjects have become separated or ripped apart, but that our very separation, this rupture, is precisely the condition that makes community possible in the first place. He thereby rejects the nostalgic idea that 'community' is something that we have lost and must recover and suggests a need to rethink the concept on wholly new terms. Nancy dismantles the idea of community as an organic, unifying fusion of individuals predicated on a shared essence or self-realising identity (what he calls 'immanence') (1991:15). Quite the contrary: Community, according to Nancy, becomes possible in the very moment of our dispersal and rupture. It is only this fracturing and separation which exposes subjects to one another in their singularity and finitude[26]. 'What this community has "lost" – the immanence and the intimacy of a communion – is lost only in the sense that such a "loss" is constitutive of "community" itself. It is not a loss: On the contrary, immanence, if it were to come about, would instantly suppress community, or communication, as such' (1991:12).

26 'Singularity' is Nancy's preferred term, as opposed to 'individual' or 'subject' which implies an atomised absolute (1991:4). 'Finitude' is a key term in Nancy's thinking on community. Heidegger proposes that each individual human 'Dasein' stands in relation to their own death, and Nancy, in reference to Georges Bataille's work on sacrifice, develops this into a crucial cornerstone in his thinking on community. We can only come to understand our own death (and birth) by witnessing this in in others (Nancy 1991:15). Nancy scholar Ian James gives a good summary of this discussion (2006: 179-186) the details of which go beyond the remit of this thesis.

In a move that has some overlaps with Arendt's 'table in the public realm' that enables an encounter while ensuring the necessary separation for this to take place, Nancy proposes to think community as an encounter between singularities who are exposed to one another through their separation: 'The being of community *is* the exposure of singularities' (1991:30) or '[c]ommunity means here the socially exposed particularity, in opposition to the socially imploded generality […]' (ibid: 74). He rejects narratives that are based on any form of unity or totality – may that be the vision of a self-sufficient individual or a totalising community. He sees 'the modern experience of community as neither a work to be produced, nor a lost communion, but rather a space itself, and the spacing of the experience of the outside, of the outside-of-self' (1991:19). In this spaced-out exposure, communication is essential: 'The being-communicating (and not the subject-representing)[27], or if one wants to risk saying it, communication as the predicament of being, as "transcendental", *is* above all *being outside of itself* ' (1991:24). The centrality of communication in Nancy's conception of community (and the political more broadly) remains central in his later works too. In *The Sense of the World* (1997) he writes of a '"seizure of speech" that would include all of the "singular decipherings" that comprise the "wandering labour of sense"' (1997:115) and calls for a 'politics for the incessant tying up of singularities with each other' (1997:113). What specifically is communicated is less important than that there is communication at all. Quoting Giorgio Agamben, Nancy writes that 'each communication is, above all, communication not of something held in *common* but of *communicability*' (1997:114).

This image of singularities exposed to one another, engaged in the 'wandering labour of sense' by 'incessantly tying up [their] singularities with each other' is a fitting description of all three projects of mine. In *Walking the Elephant* and *Cracks in the Pavement* the 'singular decipherings' of particular neighbourhoods became intermingled with each other on the shared piece of paper. During the four drop-in session for *Walking the Elephant* I also noted how spontaneous conversations emerged. When various people were taking part at the same time, they often chatted about their overlapping and divergent views of Elephant and Castle. New arrivals were keen to study how previous participants had marked up the map, and then added their own view in relation to what was already there. In Heideggerian terms this recalls the image of a common world: '[…] the world is always the one that I share with Others'

27 I will discuss this crucial difference between communicating/presenting and re-presenting later in this chapter and also in Chapter 4.

(1962:155). Nancy's more nuanced thinking suggests a more complicated picture: There is no world, bar the sense we make in our collective being-towards something (1997:8).

In *Cracks in the Pavement*, due to pandemic restrictions, individuals communicated with each other across intervals of time. As they were (in principle at least) walking exactly the same routes, it was precisely those intervals that prevented them from falling over one another, accentuating the 'the spacing of the experience of the outside' which, in Nancy's terms, is necessary for the experience of community. The temporal gaps heightened the walkers' appearance as singularities, exposed to one another in their knowledge of travelling on a shared route, as they led each other through their neighbourhoods. The social rupture, which Nancy sees as part of our principal condition (1991:6), was emphasised and exacerbated by the lockdown restrictions; our fundamental inclination towards one another materialised in the shared pieces of paper that were being passed from one walker to the next. But beyond the piece of paper, participants sensed each other in additional ways. They knew that each one of them had others preceding and following them and that the others touched what they were touching now – the hands on the paper, the feet on the shared pavement. The sense of the world, and the sense of one-another, goes beyond the ocular, including touch, but also smell and sound. A walker commented: 'I loved doing the walk and the thought that other people were also going to do the walk. I wondered what other people's responses to the sights, sounds, smells of the walk might be. It was mysterious in a way because we didn't meet each other on the walk' (Appendix p.349).

Nancy's understanding of community as 'the exposure of singularities towards one another' is also captured in *Write Women into History*. Nancy reflects on what community reveals to us when we appear and are exposed to one-another, namely 'my existence outside myself' (1991:26). This brings to mind the portraiture drawing task, which formed a significant part of the 'arts session' I held with the Hackney Howler Writing Group to generate material for the cover for their publication. Participants drew each other in pairs – each according to their style, dexterity and vision. In an essay on portraiture Nancy writes that '[t]o paint or to figure is no longer to reproduce, therefore, not even to reveal, but to produce the exposition of the subject. […] to bring it forth, to draw it out' (2018:14). To create a portrait is an 'articulation of presence' (ibid:28).

One of the characteristics of the portrait is resemblance. The women taking part in this exercise had varying levels of drawing ability and experience, and I had always stressed that achieving likeness was not important in this exercise. Portraits often identify their sitter by naming them in the work's title, but there is also the type of portrait that through its title alludes to general characters – an example might be 'Portrait of an Old Man'. In the case of the Hackney HOWLers two or three drawings bore resemblance to their sitters, but in general the identity of the models and in some cases even the illustrators became forgotten and blurred. When I presented the final design there was much merriment trying to work out who was who. Beyond trying to identify themselves, some group members even struggled to remember which drawing they had submitted[28]. In response to this one woman commented: 'I mean, I know who people are, but I don't think that matters. It doesn't matter whether we look like we think we look. It really doesn't matter. But you can see that it's this *group* of individual women, with individual character and style' (Appendix p.341, my emphasis). The group portrait really became a presentation of the group *as group*, where multiple singular exposures resulted in a plural world.

Nancy's insistence on the centrality of communication for the being of community, the 'seizure of speech', the 'incessant tying up of singularities with each other' is mainly centred on linguistic expression in his writing: 'the cry, the call, and the complaint as much as the theoretical discourse, the poem, and the song, along with the gesture and silence' (1997:115), although he does at one point stretch to include 'the sumptuous graphic singularities and fleeting semantics of graffiti' as a 'crude and desperate mode' of collective sense making (1997:116). Leaving aside this rash characterisation of graffiti, his focus on acts of communication, including graphic communication, as a mode of the tying up of singularities with each other is enacted in my projects.

The discipline of illustration is of course intimately linked to communication. In *The History of Illustration* the authors describe illustration as 'visual communication through pictorial means' (Doyle, Grove & Sherman 2018:xvii) and in *Illustration Research Methods* the desire to communicate is posited as one of several key principles of illustration (Fauchon & Gannon

28 Many women completed several drawings, and all portraits appeared in different colours to the ones in which they had been originally drawn. Additionally, there were some light touch interventions in some of the drawings: I did occasionally remove a hand, complete the shape of someone's head, or emphasise particular lines. All-in-all it is not surprising that some people struggled to identify their own contribution.

2021:16). However, these general definitions are intended to characterise a finished piece of work. The outputs that emerge from my projects indeed have their own communicability. But the point I am currently making regards the communications that take place during the processual emergence of the pieces. It is their various frameworks (climbing frames), as well as their material manifestations on (multiple pieces of) (shared) paper, that occasion the 'incessant tying up of singularities with each other'. On the maps the lines overlap, it becomes clear that 'my' neighbourhood is entangled with 'yours', and that which lies between us appears on the paper that we share. I see and acknowledge your neighbourhood and understand and position my version in relation to yours. The portraiture task communicates first and foremost that we have observed each other and thereby 'made' each other, however imperfectly rendered, a part of a shared world. The (individual) designs of the banners (in *Write Women into History*) speak of a shared past and a shared set of concerns that become meaningful in the act of holding them in common.

So far, I have considered how the participants in my projects exposed their singularities to one another in the process of collective sense-making. However, I too, clearly played a part in these processes, I too was intertwined, albeit in a different set of roles compared to the other participants. While discussing my role in assembling the illustrative documents in Chapter 2 (pp.129-144) I noted how these documents arrange themselves on a sliding scale of increasingly less interference from me. Nevertheless, my involvement is obvious and undeniable in all of the work. The communal acts of sense-making did not only emerge and manifest in the space between participants, but also in the space that appears between them and me. I too revealed who I turned out to be in that moment in time, in my encounter with them.

Given the discussion above, I propose that my projects, but beyond these, collaborative illustration projects in general, have the capacity to manifest and materialise our ontological condition of being towards-one-another. They can highlight our shared social ontology, our fundamental structure of being as described by Nancy. They reveal, crystallise and document a Nancean understanding of community.

Illustration can thus act as form of ontological disclosure. But I believe that my projects can stretch this a little further still: they don't solely expose, but also subtly amplify the conditions and processes of being-towards one another. Nancy also uses the term 'clinamen' to describe our fundamental inclination towards one another (1991:3), a word that is

usually used to describe the unpredictable swerve of atoms**.** My projects demonstrate how illustration projects, through crystallising and materialising our ontological inclination towards one another, can indeed increase or change the swerve of those atoms, or people. Recalling Björgvinsson, Ehn and Hillgren's notion of 'design Things that *modify* the space of interactions' (2012:102, my emphasis) I submit that the material presence of an emergent illustrative document can have a subtle effect on the groups and publics it emerges in. It can act like a magnet, pulling us together, but it also has the potential to reconfigure the social fields in which it appears. By taking part in the projects, illustration materialises and thereby subtly redefines the participants' relationships to each other.

For example, the women in the Hackney HOWLers Writing Group saw themselves *as a group* in the cover artwork, and this would have contributed to their sense of being a part of this group. The illustration presents a registration on a permanent carrier (paper) of a social world. In *Cracks in the Pavement* the swerving of social atoms is at its most pronounced. Prior to the project individual participants might have passed each other on the street in their neighbourhoods, and of course many of the walkers did know the person directly preceding and following them. But through participation in the project they were re-arranged into a string of social connections, permanently inscribed on the layers of a shared map.

These considerations give rise to the second of three key claims I wish to make in support of the overall thesis I am arguing in this PhD. In each of my three projects, the overall project design, as well as their material manifestation in the form of emergent illustrative documents, was not only what gathered people up, it was also an opportunity for participants to draw each other out – to co-appear, and thereby co-constitute each other. Nancy proposes that community is not found in the elimination of difference, the merging of identities and the collapse of distance. Instead, community is enacted through the exposure of singularities to each other through the 'seizure of speech'. Through (graphic) communication community can be drawn-out. By exposing our singularities to each other, taking part in these projects becomes an *enactment of community*.

Collective sense-making – illustration as a trace of community

In the previous sections of this chapter I discussed how my projects occasioned encounters, where singularities manifest their 'comparution' – their co-appearance. I described the centrality of communication to Nancy's conception of community and how these acts of communication can give rise to communal acts of sense-making, what Nancy calls 'the singular-plural becoming of sense'. In this section I will discuss the communal acts of sense-making that take place during these encounters in greater detail and consider how this is manifested in the illustrative documents that emerge from my projects.

As indicated above, Nancy believes that plural sense-making unfolds in its most lucid and unambiguous form through linguistic modes – either different forms of speech acts, or, in what he terms 'literary writing' (1991:64). While expounding this aspect of Nancy's thought, professor of modern French philosophy Ian James repeatedly attempts to mitigate against the feelings of bewilderment that he imagines his readers might experience upon learning that an extended and rigorous reflection on the principles of the political and community results in a celebration of literature (2006:200-201). Somewhat defensively he points out that this is indeed a coherent and compelling conclusion: Literature is, after all, 'where the sharing of human voices and community occurs; it is where the new and the different can be affirmed' (ibid). Or, in Nancy's more fragmentary writing: '[…] being-in-common *is* literary, that is, if we can attempt to say that it has its very being in "literature"[…], then what "literature" will have to designate is this being itself…in itself. […] [I]t makes for a being that *is* only when shared in *common* […]' (1991:64).

To someone involved and invested in the arts, this swerve towards the literary does not require the repeated justification offered by James. It is my contention however, that this praxis of communal sense-making can extend beyond the linguistic modes that are Nancy's focus in *The Inoperative Community*. He does offhandedly suggest an expanded definition of literature that includes writing, but also music, painting, dance and 'the exercise of thought' and finally opens it up to 'communication itself' (1991:64-65), the key point being 'that it puts into play nothing other than being *in* common' (ibid:65). In a later publication he writes of these processes of sense-making more generally as 'praxis' (1997) and suggests an

even broader range of creative possibilities for their expression, including gastronomy and gardening (1997:135).

Literature may indeed be 'the practice of a sharing of voices' (1991:80) and 'the inscription of our infinite resistance' [to simplistic closure] (1991:81), in other words, a form of writing that maintains an openness towards the plurality and heterogeneity of humans, and that as a genre doesn't slump towards oversimplified or mythic culmination, as might well be the case in some politically motivated rhetoric. It is surprising, however, given Nancy's focus on 'co-appearance' and the 'in-between' that he does not consider collaborative or dialogic forms of praxis to a greater extent. My three projects were set up in such a way that they were able to highlight and record a Nancean understanding of community, in what I would argue is a more forthright expression of Nancy's ideas compared to his invocation of literary writing. They manifest and materialise the exposure of singularities to one another, they record the appearance of the in-between, and by doing so they offer the opportunity for new narratives and vistas of the places and times held in common to emerge.

The 'inscription of our infinite resistance' to closure is mirrored in the processual nature of drawing. In Chapter 2 I wrote about how I endeavoured to enable participants in my projects to contribute to the emerging illustrative documents in a generative and open-ended way, while putting structures in place that were intended to mitigate the anxieties around drawing (pp.121-128). I reflected in general terms on the processual nature of drawing, but this thought can be developed further in this point of the discussion. Tim Ingold, quoting prominent art historian Norman Bryson, refers to the anti-totalising nature of drawing, that proceeds with a continuous deferral of closure and resolution. His ideas bear significant resemblance to Nancy's writing on literature. Ingold considers how the lines of drawings, of which there could theoretically always be more, maintain a processual openness, thereby manifesting a continuous history of becoming (2011:221).

Ingold uses these meditations on drawing to ponder the discipline of anthropology. He muses that, like drawing, anthropology ought not to try to 'enframe others, to paint them into a picture, and thereby bring closure to their lives' (2011:221). Quite the contrary – lives are lived not as enframed, but as intertwined. All life is social in this sense, since it is fundamentally multi-stranded, intertwined and emergent. All of these considerations on the open-ended praxis of sense-making, that in turn gives rise to the possibility of co-appearance

and community, is manifested in my three projects. The participants' outputs can be aptly described as a non-totalising, intertwining manifestation of their common concerns, exposed and revealed at the moment of their sharing. They are material manifestations of the 'in-between', a visible record of the 'praxis of sense'.

In the introduction (p.13) I quote Michele Bogart's description of illustration as a 'collective, negotiated enterprise' and 'collectively generated material culture' (2018). Despite the fact that she has a different collectivity in mind – the professionalised contributors to a commercial commissioning and production process – the principle holds: In my projects too, illustration emerges as collectively generated material culture. The difference is of course whether the resulting illustrated documents foreground or conceal the process of their collective manifestation. Bogart's scholarship is concerned with illustrations used in advertising and popular publishing in mid-century North America. These images work hard to create an impression of coherent and singular authorship, and, I would argue, to create pictorial guiding principles for a narrowly conceived, normative, homogenous culture. These illustrations do not speak of open-endedness, quite the opposite. They present a narrow yet self-assured declaration of how things ought to be, with all the surreptitious coercion and constraint typically inscribed in these types of pictorial regimes. They are the illustrated equivalent of mythic narratives that underpin traditional notions of community that base themselves on a shared essence or identity, a community that 'communicate[s] and commune[s] in myth' (Nancy 1991:50). Bogart's scholarship prises open these seemingly innocuous images to reveal a complex enmeshment of forces and intentions.

In contrast to these kinds of images, my projects do not pretend to speak of singular authorship but pull in the opposite direction. They work hard to disclose and emphasise the relational processes of their manifestation, thereby eliciting a sense of our multiple, incongruous existence and a non-totalising form of sense-making. Nancy refers to this as 'myth interrupted' (1991:43), an offering, rather than an imposition. Instead of declarative accounts of what constitutes a group's essence, they suggest 'that community is coming about, or rather that something is happening to us in common' (ibid:69), a tessellation of singular utterances shared in common.

I have discussed the non-totalising aspect of the praxis of sense-making, that Nancy ascribes mainly to literature, and have linked this to my projects. I would like to add a few

more considerations on the other quality that he highlights in his discussion of literature: that it offers us a locus for the affirmation of the new and different (James 2006:201). In Chapter 2 (pp.149-153) I already mentioned that Nancy thinks of images not as re-presentation, but presentation. This seemingly minor difference is crucial. Nancy is generally inimical to semiotic or representationalist conceptions of visual culture. In his view images are neither something that re-frames something pre-existing, nor something that points to something 'real' beyond their 'mere' appearance. Academic Adrienne Janus describes how an image, in Nancy's understanding, is to be thought of as an exposing, dynamic modality of bringing-into-presence (2016:2). He is not occupied with the question of what an image *is*, but what an image *does*: its performativity, its generative act of world-forming, its 'announcement of a world' (ibid.).

Performative knowledge creation is often exemplified with J.L. Austin's notion of performative utterances (1962), speech acts that do not describe reality but create it. His most famous example are sentences spoken during marriage ceremonies ('I do… hereby take you as my lawfully wedded wife.'). Another example of this which has a more direct relation to my projects is geographer Yi-Fu Tuan's assertions that language is crucial in processes of world-making and place-making: 'Words have the general power to bring to light experiences that lie in the shadow or have receded into it, and the specific power to call places into being' (1991:686).

How might illustration be performative? In addition to Nancy's work on images, artist and academic Barbara Bolt's writing provides several detailed responses to this question. In her numerous publications (2004, 2007, 2011, 2013) she proposes that art has the capacity to transcend a representationalist relation to the world, already decried by Heidegger in his essay 'The Age of the World Picture' (see Chapter 2 p.144). She reminds us that for Heidegger understanding and knowledge emerges relationally through being-in-the-world, being involved in it, handling things, and relating to others. The world is never objective – separate, rigid and settled. It cannot be known in advance and we cannot master or take hold of it through representational practices (Bolt 2011:64). Rather than re-presenting, presenting again, a reality that is already out there, that is to say – a copy of or reference to something with prior existence, Bolt suggests that art can be 'the unconcealment of that which has never before been revealed' (2011:68). She argues that art is a performative

practice, a mode of poetic revealing of what-is and reminds us that '[p]erformance produces real or material effects. It produces rather than represents reality' (2004:136).

I wish to extend these pronouncements on art to illustration, and to my projects in particular[29]. In their 'presentation of a world', their performativity, harbours the possibility of the new and the different that Nancy ascribes to literary writing. The neighbourhoods captured on the five maps of *Cracks in the Pavement* do not represent anything pre-existing – they present the 'incessant tying up of singularities with each other' as the lines of the walkers' routes intersect and overlap, the 'wandering [literally!] labour of sense' that took place in-between a specific group of people, in a particular place and at a particular time. The maps don't re-present, they present, both to the walkers and to subsequent audiences, the possibility of a world. Likewise, the cover of *Write Women into History* does not represent the group, it presents the group as group: as singularities coming into sight of each other and 'tak[ing] control of narrating their own history', as the women explain in the postscript of the book. The outputs of *Walking the Elephant* do not display how the neighbourhood *was*, they presents an encounter between numerous local people, me, and the design studio who worked on the webpage, at a particular point in time.

These discussions give rise to the third and final claim I wish to make in reference to the main argument of this thesis. Collaborative illustration projects do not only have the ability to gather up individuals, and to provide opportunities for them to draw each other out – they also enable us to co-constitute each other in a Nancean expression of community. While Nancy himself focuses on co-constitution through linguistic acts of communication, I submit that through the illustrative materialisation of these acts of communal sense-making in my projects a more forthright articulation of a Nancean community is revealed. The projects' outputs present a non-totalising intertwining of singularities – including my own, captured at the moment of their creation. The work can thus act as a *trace of community* in its manifestation as a permanent inscription on paper, a point I will further elaborate in the next chapter.

29 A different inflection of performativity and illustration was articulated during the symposium 'Markings: Festival of Illustration and Performance' that took place at Central Saint Martins, UAL in 2016 and was mainly focused on the performative act of drawing and various possible combination of illustration and performing arts. See John Miers reflections on the event for a full summary (Miers 2017).

Taken as a whole this chapter argues that collaborative illustration has the capacity to assemble, enact and record community, conceived in the spirit of Nancy. Nancy proposes that 'the political' lies not in the conflictual arena of everyday politics, but in considerations regarding the most fundamental questions of our sociality. I have argued in this chapter for collaborative illustration projects as an arena for ontological disclosure, as an arena to reveal our being as 'singular plural'. It is primarily on this account that I propose that my work constitutes the political.

Chapter 4 | The Afterlives

This chapter is concerned with the afterlives of my projects. I reflect on the nature of the illustrated outputs that emerge from my projects, their transfer out of the immediate control of the participants and me to other realms, and the potential significance they then acquire beyond the projects themselves. In the case of all three projects for this PhD, I distributed outputs to participants and project-partners as a way of bringing closure to the work (in Chapter 2 I wrote about the importance of communicative outputs as shared goals, see pp.112-115). Beyond the participants themselves, what other publics might the projects' outputs be able to communicate with? Could Nancy's idea of the 'community of communication' (Chapter 3 pp.167-168) extend beyond those who were directly involved in the creation of the work? What is necessary for that to happen? What might be the best way to promote their potential future vitalities?

There has quite rightly been a lot of attention on the aftermath of participatory art projects (Foster 1996:196, Kwon 2002:97, Matarasso 2019:114, 118-120). Some writers correctly point out that drawing the kinds of complex, social situations that often form a central part of these projects to a close can be awkward and disappointing for participants. I found this too in the case studies I considered for this thesis: When interviewing participants from Hefin Jones' *Cosmic Colliery* project, it transpired that his withdrawal from Ystrad Mynach had been experienced as bewildering and abrupt by the children and staff at the local youth centre. I consider the lack of a clearly delineated project output besides the utopian space station to be the main reason for this. In contrast to this is Mitch Miller's method: Here the focus of working together to design, populate and complete the dialectogram galvanises the group around a clearly articulated shared goal.

However even a clearly articulated output-as-collective-goal doesn't necessarily spell out what to do with the work once it has been completed. Beyond the distribution of copies to participants there was every chance that without further intervention the work would end up stored in a cupboard in my studio. After some reflection I decided to deposit the outputs of

all three projects in publicly managed and accessible repositories. *Walking the Elephant* in its final output as a webpage, is filed on *Layers of London* – a crowd-sourced, map-based history website developed by the Institute for Historical Research (SOAS, University of London). Copies of the book *Write Women into History* – in addition to being distributed through various feminist networks and sold in some local bookshops in Hackney – are currently being submitted to a number of public libraries. The original maps of *Cracks in the Pavement* and a variety of accompanying documents were donated to the Hackney Archives, where they were presented and exhibited during Open House London 2022, before being filed in their archival storage system.

All three projects present the experiences of a group of people in a specific geographical place at a particular moment in time. The outputs, in their form of illustrative documents, register a set of geographical, historiographical and social configurations. By submitting these to various repositories I inject other spatial and temporal dimensions into these encounters and enable futural possibilities of relating to these moments. This might read as a straightforward and harmonious epilogue to my projects, however there are a few more discussions I would like to draw out.

In the first section of this chapter I reflect on the formal and material nature of the illustrative documents that form the outputs of my research. What enables them to record and to some degree subsequently replay, the enactments of community that created them? I answer this question in reference to their indexical, documental, and suggestive qualities. The outputs contain evidentiary records of a series of social acts, and as such they contain traces of the process of their creation. As documents they can attest to the singular plural moments of their creation. My own interventions consisted of adding illustrated and designed input, as well as making decisions regarding the print production of the materials, all of which aimed to amplify the potential responses of future audiences through the deployment of suggestive visual cues.

Nancy's argument about community being enacted through communication is advanced in this section in reference to Italian philosopher Maurizio Ferraris, who argues that it is not merely communication, but inscription and registration that is fundamental to society (2013:176). Acts of inscription create a fixedness and stability that enable transmission and the relay of documents to other times and places.

Once I have ensured that my illustrative documents are indeed transmissible, where do I file them? The second section of this chapter discusses their insertion into the public record. I reflect on this in reference to Arendt's writing on the public sphere, as a 'space of appearance' that 'constitutes reality' (1998:50). By depositing my projects' outputs in publicly accessible repositories I create the opportunity to extend Nancy's 'community of communication' to include future audiences.

In the third and final section of this chapter I discuss why I am offering these documents up to the public record. What value might these acts hold for contemporary as well as future audiences? Reflecting on our moral obligation to preserve cultural expressions and articulations of 'worlds' in the face of looming extinctions and destruction and to safeguard different standpoints against oblivion, these projects demonstrate that illustration has the capacity to conjure hopeful visions of collectively articulated common ground.

Overall, this chapter argues that collaborative illustration projects can serve to mediate and bind us together over periods of time around shared concerns, provide a 'space of appearance' for marginalised groups and contribute to the structuring and endurance of a shared and plural public realm.

Indexicality, documentality and suggestiveness

For my projects to exist beyond the duration of their unfolding between the participants and me, the outputs needed to have permanent form. I have written about how the illustrative documents emerge in the course of the projects as an arena for collective sense-making and how the paper substrates were able to record a 'non-totalising intertwining of singularities captured at the moment of their creation' (p.177). It is this act of recording, that is then able to preserve, and to a certain extent replay these acts over a period of time stretching into the future, that I will discuss in this section. This ability to enduringly record and afterwards replay, to register something at the moment of its taking-place and to subsequently communicate this to other audiences arises in three distinct, but interconnected ways: Firstly via the inscription of indexical traces, that point future audiences back to the moment of their genesis, namely the communal encounter which gave rise to them; secondly in my framing of the outputs as documents, that, like other types of documents such as certificates or licences, register and produce our social reality; and thirdly in the material and graphic qualities of the final outputs, that are designed to evoke a resonance with future audiences.

Throughout this thesis I have referred to my outputs as 'documents' and the act of marking the various sheets of paper, that eventually result in these documents as 'inscription'. 'Inscribe' or 'inscription' is generally understood as the permanent alteration of a surface with a meaningful mark, and it is the word's free-wheeling openness that I was initially attracted to. On a practical level I thought that inviting participants to 'inscribe' a piece of paper would be less intimidating than asking them to 'illustrate' something. Although I did not actually utter or use the word 'inscribe' in any of my communication with participants, it acted as my internal indicator as to what I was inviting people to do, prompting me to use words such as 'mark, sketch, add, draw, stick and scribble'.

Beyond its enabling breadth that formed part of my attraction to the word, 'inscription' has other conceptual facets that proved meaningful for my work. Notable amongst these is its coupling of discursive and material qualities. In Chapter 1 I briefly referred to sociologist Michael Callon's (supposed) quote that defines an inscription as 'the result of the translation of one's interest into material form' (p.95). A fuller elaboration of this idea can be found in Latour's notion of the 'immutable mobile', a concept that he used to explain the sudden progress in modern science that, according to his line of argumentation, occurred because

'anything and everything was transformed into inscriptions' (1986:4). The immutable mobile, essentially any kind of image, writing or diagram on paper, is an object that is immutable, presentable, readable and combinable (1986:7). In its light-footed potential for circulation, amalgamation and reorganisation, it thus gives rise to new combinations of ideas, perspectives and knowledge. Inscriptions need to be both mobile and fixed to acquire their power, and this power, in Latour's view, is best expressed in their ability to provide an advantage in agonistic situations and to mobilise allies (ibid:17-19). Both qualities espoused here by Latour are of critical importance for the afterlife of my projects too: their durability (immutable) and their transmissibility (mobile).

Artist and visual theorist Johanna Drucker distinguishes inscription from the more rigid and formal idea of notation, which is an *encoded* system of registration. Drucker defines inscription as: 'the transformation of a material substrate through deposit, scraping, other physically marked change' (2009:no page number), a similar set of words to the ones I used as prompts for my participants. Drucker proceeds to remind us that an inscription 'always has a physically material indexicality to it, linking the change to the action and its effect on the substrate' (ibid). I alluded to the indexical quality of my projects in my previous chapter when I wrote about illustration as a *trace* of community: Acts of communal sense-making are materially captured at the moment of their creation. The inscriptions thus refer us back to the moment of their origin, namely the singular-plural encounters that produced them in the first place.

'Inscriptions' thus turn out to be fixed, mobile and indexical markings. I shall elaborate on these qualities in the discussions that follow. Indexicality is discussed first, while the projects' fixed and mobile aspects play a greater role a little later in the section.

Indexicality

The concept of indexicality was originally introduced by Charles Sanders Peirce in the second half of the 19th century as part of his semiotic theory. It was revisited by American art critic Rosalind Krauss in her seminal two-part essay 'Notes on an Index' ([1976–77] 1986), where she analyses the formal logic of the index in relation to 1970s North American art practice. Indexical marks, writes Krauss, acquire their meaning due to a direct, physical relationship to their referent. 'They are marks or traces of a particular cause, and that

cause is the thing to which they refer, the object they signify' (1986:198). An index therefore functions as a 'pointing gesture [that] isolates a piece of the real world' (ibid: 216). Like Drucker she calls attention to the fact that indexical inscriptions are not encoded. Instead, 'drawing is converted from its formal status of encoding reality to one of imprinting it' (1986:216) making the surface of the drawing a 'repository of evidence' (ibid.).

This can be related to the outputs of my three projects. On the face of it they might each speak of different subject matter and themes – the intricately woven social networks of a migrant community in South London on the cusp of its erasure, the concerns of the Women's Liberations Movement and the isolation and reorientation towards our hyper-local neighbourhoods during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, their vitality is largely derived from the process of their creation, making them 'about' the encounters that gave rise to them, just as much, or perhaps even to a greater degree, than they are 'about' the ostensible subject matter they refer to. This is another inflection of the point I made in the previous chapter (p.160), when I argued that my projects animate both 'politics' – issues relating to the everyday political contestations of power, as well as 'the political' – considerations regarding our fundamental relationality. Future audiences will, at least partly, come into knowledge of the encounters that led to the documents' creation by noticing the heterogeneity of the participants' contributions that are present in the final projects outputs and that have obviously been produced a range of different people. These diverse inscriptions function as indexical traces of the communal acts of sense-making, reminding us of the moment when people gathered around a shared concern and collectively manifested a new vision of the places and times held in common.

Krauss describes how an indexical trace is experienced as 'physically present, temporally remote', giving rise to a 'presence' that yet also 'fills the work with an extraordinary sense of time-past' (1986:217). In my projects this continuous 'presencing' of an event at a temporal distance is most palpable in *Cracks in the Pavement*, where the outputs consist of largely unaltered inscriptions by the participants themselves. Even more so, because in this project it is not only subsequent audiences that encounter indexical traces connected to prior events, the internal logic of the project itself rested on 'physically present, temporally remote' material inscriptions. Set up to evoke the temporally staggered co-presence of fellow participants, there is every reason to believe that future audiences who access the original maps in the Hackney Archives will have similar experiences of remotely sensing the

presence of those walkers. In their storage box in the archives the original documents retain the verve and vitality that initially arose from their shared materiality and layered inscriptions, in the absence of actual embodied encounters in the course of the project.

The indexical quality of a 'pointing gesture' that refers to a past event is retained, even when the original paper that was worked on by participants does not form part of the final output. Krauss herself uses the process of photography as a model in her elaborations on the index. '[T]he ghostly traces of departed objects' are not dependent on the continuity of the material substrate of their inscription for their evocative power. The process of 'physical genesis … [that] disallows processes of schematization or symbolic intervention that operate within the graphic representation of most paintings' is what produces the indexical quality of the inscriptions (1986:203). In *Cracks in the Pavement* scanning and printing copies of the maps for all participants produced outputs that obviously lacked the battered quality of the original maps, but still retain a significant degree of the evocative power that conjures up the process of their creation.

The final outputs of *Write Women into History* (book) and *Walking the Elephant* (webpage) contain fewer of these indexical inscriptions compared to *Cracks in the Pavement*, correlating to the level of my intervention in the production of the final output. In the case of *Write Women into History* each printed edition of the artwork (there are several) still points back to the polyvocal moment of its origin as the vastly different styles of rendering each other's portraits is evident in the final version. I took care in my intervention not to obscure these differences and thereby preserve the indexical qualities of the drawings. *Walking the Elephant*, as I have previously discussed (pp.131-134) suffered in part precisely because of the erosion of its indexical qualities in the process of my intervention. In order to remedy this, scans of the original maps were integrated on the webpage.

Another quality of the indexical trace highlighted by Krauss is its ability to sidestep questions of style (1985:208). Because of the limitation, or even elimination of artists' formal intervention in creating the work questions on the nature of authorship acquire a new inflection. An artists' task becomes one of framing, selecting and presenting, thereby undermining a history of aesthetic convention and expressivity. Feminist media scholar Mary Anne Doane eloquently summarises how indexical traces function in an artwork: 'Things speak for themselves, they are not spoken' (2007:3).

For many illustrators the idea of abandoning the pursuit of an individual style will be an anathema, so engrained is the quest for the development and perpetuation of a 'personal voice' amongst most practitioners. This is not without reason: a consistent, recognisable style will in most cases be rewarded by the demands of commercial commissioning practices[30]. Beyond the requirements of the contemporary market however, working with indexical traces rather than stylised representations offers another perspective on the debate around authorship I sketched out in Chapter 1 (pp.72-75). I argued there that the opposition between commercial versus so-called authorial practice is a false binary and presented Grove's proposition to recall the idea of illustration as 'art-in-service' as one possible alternative. Working with the affordances of the index in the form of traces or inscriptions of an event or a process is yet another possibility to expand the scope of illustration practice.

An illustrator more strongly attached to their personal expressive style, and perhaps more generously imbued with a knack for observational drawing than I am, would probably have pursued a project on the intersection of illustration and community in a radically different way compared to what I have done. They might have chosen to contemplate and represent gatherings of different types of people, encoding and schematising what they discover in their distinct graphic language of representation. In contrast, I decided to create frameworks for letting community articulate itself. But my argument stretches even beyond the idea of letting 'things speak for themselves'. In my work community *becomes* community in these very acts of articulation. The resulting illustrative documents contain the indexical traces of this process, material evidence of the articulation of community.

Documentality

Indexicality in its very nature is oriented towards the past, towards a prior event or presence that is fixed and framed for future recall. Italian philosopher Maurizio Ferraris'

30 Presumably there are many other reasons why practitioners would want to develop a consistent personal style. One of these might be that it creates the comforting sense (illusion?) of a coherent personhood, and makes us recognisable not only to others, but to ourselves too. While these are valid desires, I propose that much is to be gained from creating greater awareness amongst illustrators for other modes of expression. See for example comic artist John Miers' masterful adoption of multiple visual styles in an attempt to disrupt 'the [presumably] unmediated voice of confessional truth telling' (2021:25) in his narrative of his medical diagnosis. Self-consciously drawing in the style of other comic artists allows him to present a range of distinct narrative inflections, that bring out different facets of his experience (Miers 2021:25-38). Another example is Rachel Emily Taylor's interrogations of the possibilities of illustration to communicate a historical person's voice and more generally the use of illustration to 'speak' on behalf of another (Taylor 2018).

book *Documentality* (2013) places a different emphasis on this discussion of traces and inscriptions, namely on the role inscriptions play in the construction of social reality. His main focus is not the analysis of artworks (although he does attempt that too), but a detailed scrutiny of so-called 'social objects', things such as universities, marriages or money. He argues that these fundamentally rely on a system of inscriptions and registrations (he seems to use these terms interchangeably) – a practice he comes to call 'documentality', which contributes to the creation of meaning and social bonds (2013:175). His book, which he somewhat grandiosely claims is a systematic 'book on everything' that aims to correct the errors of 'most of philosophy' (Ferraris 2022), contains a usefully granular 'doctrine of traces' (2013:175) and an in-depth analysis on the nature of documents. He argues that the social world is constituted by documents, which consist of the inscription of acts and the registration of facts (2013:247). It is through their fixing in the form of documents that social acts can be recorded and stored, and subsequently referenced and used. In other words – social reality draws from the sedimentation and re-elaboration of traces (ibid:175).

It is Ferraris' description of documents as stable objects that can register and thereby produce social realities, that is relevant here. I have been arguing that through participating in collaborative illustration projects individuals enact community; they become community in the process of inscribing themselves on a shared document around a common concern. Ferraris' work shines a light on the mechanism of this process, it explains *how* community becomes community in the act of inscription. Every social role or agreement depends on the shared memories of a series of acts and events, and it is in the form of inscribed documents that these acts are registered, their memory is materialised, and their meaning amplified. By framing my projects' outputs as 'documents' I draw attention to their role as evidentiary records of a series of social acts, an attestation of a social reality.

In the previous chapter I discussed Nancy's conviction that communication is central to the being of community, as it forms the basis of collective sense-making. Ferraris pushes this point a little further. He argues that 'a system of communication that was unable to keep traces and to register the communications would be ruinous, because it would lead to the dissolution of society' (2013:176) and that therefore '[t]he act of communicating is not sufficient on its own but turns out to be a function subordinated to something more essential, namely registration' (2013:179). Although Ferraris claims a false universalism here, as there have indeed existed many societies that functioned without writing or registration (see for

example Yeganeh 2021), I am content to go along with this argument, as it holds validity in the contemporary Western context that I am operating in. In my projects the communication played itself out in the form of inscription from the from the outset. By working on paper expressive articulations are always already registration, rendered in permanent form (allowing for the obvious limits to this due to the possible erasure of some marks and the eventual disintegration of the substrate). Framing my project outputs as documents highlights their status as a public registration of a social act.

I hasten to add some more exactitude to this claim. There is clearly a superabundance of different types of documents in existence. I shall spare the reader the painstaking system of differentiation drawn up by Ferraris, adding a few additional clarifying remarks in its place. Certainly, the documents emerging from my projects do not have the same standing as for example a marriage certificate might – another type of document that attests to a social bond. Besides the obvious legal distinctions which do not need to be spelled out here, a marriage certificate has a different relationship to time and duration. Its effects on social (and legal) affiliation are intended to extend themselves into the future continuously. This is to say – people remain married until an event (death or divorce) puts an end to it. In contrast the illustrative documents I am discussing attest that something, in this case an enactment of community, *has taken place* at some point in the past. They are a form of documentation, attestation and substantiation, rather than a licence, certificate or contract. This distinction is important. I have after all been arguing for a conception of community that is generative and active and does not rely on any form of essentialist constancy. The permanent registrations of the enactments of community that are recorded in these documents are important for what I will in the final section of this chapter call the 'endangerment sensibility' that surrounds the communities and their concerns. Taking note of these on a public record marks them out as having value and significance, rather than the documents being a legitimising seal of approval for the permanent existence of a particular community.

Besides this significant distinction, there is one more overlap between the marriage certificate and the illustrative project outputs that I wish to highlight. One of the types of

documents that Ferraris describes is the so-called 'strong document'. This kind of document 'is not descriptive but performative[31], […] it aims to produce effects' (2013:269). These documents contain 'inscriptions of acts, which would not exist without the inscriptions', for example marriage and degree certificates (ibid:268-269). When I was discussing performativity in Chapter 3, I wrote how performative gestures trump representationalist ones in my three projects (pp.176-177). My projects' outputs put forward a 'presentation of a world', they render worlds that would not exist were it not for the communal acts of inscription that created it. They are thus performative in respect to the world they refer to, but they are also performative in another sense. While the projects outputs put forward a 'presentation of a world', they also render those presenting it *as* community. Once again, we see how my projects operate on two levels simultaneously: they refer to both politics *and* the political, to the everyday tussling over power and influence in the empirical realm *as well as* the most fundamental principles of our sociality, to the worlds they present *as well as* the community that is rendered in the act of their presentation.

Suggestiveness

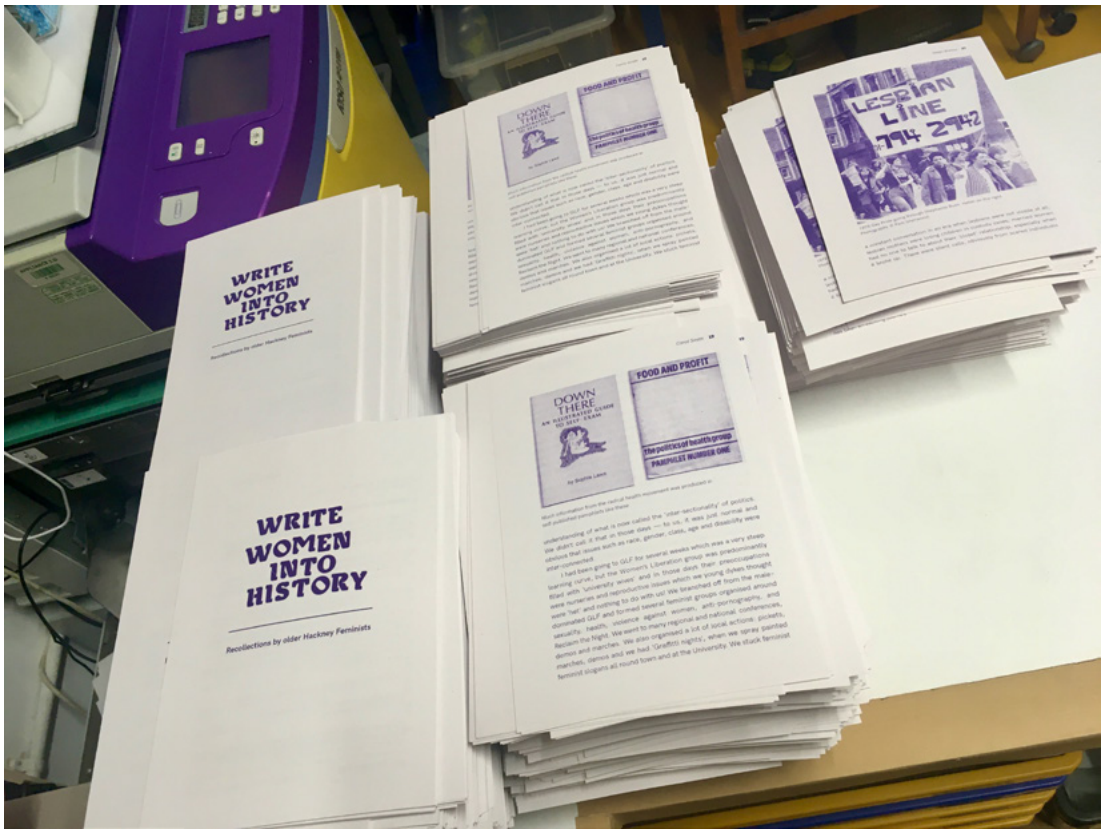
In addition to their indexicality and their 'documentality', my projects' outputs have a third quality that enables them to reach future audiences in meaningful ways. The final pieces are not solely made up of indexical traces of the participants' inscriptions. My own interventions, my processes of assembling and consolidating the contributions, resulted in varying degrees of illustrated and designed input from me (see also Chapter 2 pp.135–139). Indexicality is not the only possibility for visually communicating experiences and encounters. Designer and academic Alison Barnes argues that print and its material and graphic qualities can communicate evocatively about everyday life and place (2019:20). Even though paper is (relatively) stable and fixed, qualities that are central for its capacity to record and re-elaborate its contents, its tactile qualities can offer an embodied experience for future audiences. Combined with thoughtful print design this has the capacity to bring about emotive and affective experiences in the audience that unfold as ongoing and relational, suggesting embodiment through touch, vision and in some cases even smell (ibid:24). In reference to Umberto Eco, Barnes proposes that we consider (some) creative print design

[31] Ferraris makes the point that 'performatives' are generally discussed in relation to speech acts following Austin's theory of performative utterances (see Chapter 3, p.176), rather than documents, which he argues are actually more intrinsically performative.

an ‘open work’ that offer ‘*suggestiveness*’ rather than communicating a fixed, single narrative (ibid:23, emphasis in original).

In the case of my three projects these considerations resonate particularly well with *Write Women into History.* This book now exists in a variety of print runs (using different processes), but the first 200 copies, which were my responsibility to produce, were printed at local riso-print shop called Duplikat Press on uncoated paper using three of their specialist inks – purple, ‘seafoam’ (a bright teal) and light mauve. Mauve was chosen as an accent colour, while the other two, combined with the white of the paper, reference the colours of an earlier wave of feminists in the UK – the suffragettes. The risograph printer is a piece of Japanese technology released in the 1980s, but the imperfect look and feel of riso prints is also suggestive of earlier DIY print publications and graphic ephemera such as activist pamphlets and fanzines of the 60s and 70s.

Fig. 86: The first print-run of *Write Women into History* in production at Duplikat Press.



The typographic design of the book's title was created by one the women in the group, who submitted this as her placard design. She made it using one of the Letraset sheets I sent to her as part of the pack of materials distributed to participants. I scanned and used this without altering her design, maintaining the slight unevenness of the letter placement, and adding a white 'displacement shadow' when blocking in the colour. Letraset, which came into widespread use during the 1960s, is said to have 'liberated' typography from the restrictions of the printing press (Garfield 2011:165), and became a dominant force in self-published punk fanzines and student newspapers in the 70s and 80s, producing a kind of aesthetic extensively documented in Russel Bestley and Alex Ogg's book *The Art of Punk* (2022). I am unable to retrospectively determine exactly which typeface the title is rendered in, but it is similar to the *Rooney* typeface I used for headlines inside of the book, which I chose for its general retro-feel, vaguely gesturing towards the 60s, 70s and 80s, without being overtly connected to any particular decade. Together with the jumble of other typefaces that were employed for the various placard designs on the cover, most of them produced using old Letraset sheets, some of them hand-rendered, it lends a distinct 'DIY-aesthetic' to the overall design. Taken together the tactility, print quality and the overall design, were intended to conjure the spirit of 60s, 70s, and 80s counter-culture in general, and the Women's Liberation Movement in particular.

I do not have any feedback from other audiences, but many women from the group thought that the design and production of cover artwork does offer Eco's '*suggestiveness*' to its viewers. One woman said: 'I think it speaks of the time, the colours, were just brilliant. The style of it is very in keeping with second wave feminism, somehow. […] It really does conjure up what we were.' Another commented: 'I showed it to my partner, I didn't say anything, just showed it to him, and he said: "Oh, that is so of the Women's Liberation Movement!" It just did exactly what it was designed to do' (Appendix p.340).

Walking the Elephant in its format as a webpage has fewer of these suggestive and performative qualities. The design of the page uses many of the illustrative elements I created in response to the participatory workshops, but in its interactive, online format it is the work of a design studio called 'See, Also'. Their design is organised around the downward scroll that visitors are invited to perform upon landing on the page, which triggers the gradual appearance of a range of assets and movements: quotes come into sight, clusters of people slide across and partly obscure the explanatory text, the long

illustrative strip, peppered with participants' recollections, presents a sudden change of movement (sideways rather than downward), before the downward journey resumes offering the visitor a view of the original outputs (maps) and documentary photographs of the workshops. I have already extensively discussed the limitations of this project, and I do not need to rehearse these arguments again. I am pleased with the sense of liveliness and movement that See, Also brought to my illustrations through their design, and although I am not sure to what extent the overall result is suggestive of Elephant and Castle or of similarly bustling migrant communities either to the participants, or future audiences, I believe that the result is passable contribution to the registration and commemoration of a vibrant community.

Cracks in the Pavement presents yet another scenario in terms of the suggestiveness of its print design. This piece has two sets of final outputs – the original maps, now in the Hackney Archives, and the thank-you-packs I produced for all the participants. These contain a 1:1, full colour printed reproduction of the map that they contributed to, alongside a number of other bits and pieces: a simple A4 riso-printed leaflet containing a recap of the project alongside some reflections, with a A5 full-colour insert showing reproductions of the other four maps, a riso-printed register that lists the names and comments of the people who had contributed to the recipient's map, as well as an A6 riso-printed thank you card. The pack was distributed in a light green A4 envelope, which harmonised with the fluorescent red, green and black of the riso-printed publications (see Figs. 53, 54, 55 on p.60).

The central output of *Cracks in the Pavement* are the maps themselves, and they consist nearly entirely of inscriptions by the participants. As I previously explained I only intervened when individual walkers specifically requested I do this, sending me their contributions via email or WhatsApp and asking me to inscribe the map on their behalf. The reverse sides of the original maps do contain some print design. A range of illustrative and graphic elements combine with text to explain the project's rationale and rules of engagement. In contrast to the other two projects these illustrations and designs were produced in the early stages of the project. Rather than communicate the results of a participatory phase, they were intended to invite people to enter into the project, by showcasing different types of drawing and mark-making styles in an attempt to make the project feel accessible. The illustrative vignettes are very obviously made up of different pieces of paper arranged together. Their composite character is further emphasised through the inclusion of paper clips and tape in







Figs. 87, 88, 89: Collaged assemblies for *Cracks in the Pavement*

the illustrations and the emphasis on shadows that appear between the different elements. Overall, they do not conjure a particular place or time, but are generally suggestive of improvised convergence and temporary assembly.

The printed outputs I produced for the thank you pack re-use elements of the same design that appeared on the reverse of the maps. The riso-print technique that was of significant

relevance in *Write Women into History* was used in this case for its more general aesthetic appeal. Using specialist inks in colours that are neither available on screen nor in other more widely used printing techniques on high-quality paper was intended to produce an output that conveys my care for the project and my gratitude to the walkers for their participation. This is a good illustration of Black's point I raised earlier (Chapter 2, p.112) who noted that when illustrators work on participatory projects, they are more likely to give thought to the participatory aspect of the work *as well as* being attentive to the production of a final output, even if the piece's primary function is to document a prior event (2012:56-57).

The presence of indexical traces in my projects' outputs, the hand-rendered inscriptions of my participants, but also, in the case of *Cracks in the Pavement*, the battered quality of the original maps, combine with suggestiveness of my illustrated and designed additions to produce communicative documents that have the capacity to speak to other audiences beyond the participants themselves. The indexical elements in the outputs refer us back to the singular-plural moments of their creation, where individuals came together in a collective process of sense-making around a shared concern. The resulting documents attest to the enactments of community that have taken place in their creation, while also speaking of the particular concern at hand. Thus immutable, but mobile, I can cut them loose.

The public sphere – a space of appearance

All things must come to an end (even PhDs, I am told). In Chapter 2 I wrote about how an agreement to work towards the production of communicative outputs can propel a project forward and orient participants towards a shared goal (pp.112-115). Now that these outputs have been produced, what to do with them? If I cut them loose, where should they go? In the section above I discussed how my projects' outputs enduringly record and present enactments of community and the common concerns that drew people together. In this section I offer reflections on the act of surrendering the outputs to public repositories in the hope that they may encounter other audiences, generate new 'communities of communication' and perhaps even contribute to the continuation of the public sphere itself.

While reflecting on literature and praxis in general Nancy writes about these moments of completion. He asserts that 'the work […] must be offered up for communication' (1991:73). He goes on to explain that this means that '…it must in effect be *offered*, that is to say, presented, proposed, and abandoned on the common limit where singular beings share one another. The work, as soon as it becomes a work, at the moment of its completion […] must be abandoned at this limit' (ibid). I must confess that when I was planning and carrying out my projects I had not thoroughly considered how or to whom I was hoping to 'offer, present or propose' the projects' outputs to, and where exactly I wanted to 'abandon' them. While I was quite focused on the production of an output, I had not considered in much detail what to do with these outputs, beyond their role as a coherent and satisfying tokens of achievement for the participants and myself.

While working on *Walking the Elephant* my initial and admittedly vague thoughts had been that the outputs I produced could be used by Latin Elephant as a form of evidence of the vitality of existing social configurations at the shopping centre in their ongoing battle for its preservation. This ambition resonates with Latour's explanation of the potential power of 'immutable mobiles' – scientific visual and verbal inscriptions, enduringly recorded (immutable) on paper (mobile)[32]. He likens the gradual establishment of scientific facts

32 Ferraris makes a very similar point to Latour in his work on documents: '[T]he secret power of [documents] is that they are fixed, 'making them available beyond the here-and-now that generated them, and making them transportable' (2013:270).

to a confrontational battle, where the accumulation of written and visual aids can help 'make this agonistic situation more favourable' as they 'convince someone else to take up a statement, to pass it along, to make it more of a fact' (1986:5). In other words – inscriptions on paper can be used to 'win an agonistic encounter' (ibid). However, as the situation on the ground in Elephant and Castle changed faster than I was able to complete the project, this purpose fell away, and it became clear that whatever I produced would take on the form of an archival or commemorative piece of work, documenting the existence of a thriving community on the threshold of its destruction.

In *Write Women into History* I had imagined that the booklets we were producing were intended for the women in the group and their friends and families – I had originally planned for a very small print-run of only 60 copies. And while I was working on *Cracks in the Pavement* I had no particular ambitions for any form of publication at all. Beyond the distribution of copies to participants there was every chance that without further intervention the various outputs and documents that I produced during this PhD would end up stored in a cupboard in my studio at home.

Over time this came to seem like a somewhat stymied fate for the richness of these projects. *Walking the Elephant* in its form as a webpage did have a certain public profile, but as the Elephant and Castle site was ripped out and I saw the gaping hole where there had once been an intricately woven web of relations, I felt the desire to also register the project on a more general public record. In the case of the other two projects the impetus for greater public exposure came from the participants themselves. The women in the Hackney HOWLers Writing Group pushed and fundraised for a bigger print run (200 copies) and were generally keen to ensure a wider reach for their publication. As a result the book is now available to order via a print-on-demand service as well as there having been a second (cheaper) digitally printed edition of the book that is being sold via local bookshops. When I conducted my survey with the participants in *Cracks in the Pavement*, the idea to exhibit the maps in a local venue was repeatedly mentioned. This motivated me to seek out opportunities with various organisations in Hackney, which eventually led to the event at Hackney Archives and the donation of the maps and accompanying materials to their collection. I am indebted to the various participants for these prompts and suggestions. Collectively they led me to understand that the projects' outputs each had to be 'offered' to the public sphere, where they now have the chance to be encountered by future audiences.

The idea of the public sphere was of critical importance to Arendt's political philosophy. The public sphere is a place where 'everything that appears […] can be seen and heard by everybody and has the widest possible publicity.' This is crucial because '[f]or us, appearance – something that is being seen and heard by others as well as ourselves constitutes reality' (Arendt 1998:50). She contrasts this with the private realm and concludes that '[c]ompared with the reality which comes from being seen and heard, [private thoughts, feelings and experiences] lead an uncertain, shadowy existence unless and until they are transformed, deprivatized and deindividualized, as it were, into a shape to fit them for public appearance' (ibid). Going into greater detail about the possibilities of translating private experiences into public ones, it almost seems as if she might be writing about the kind of work that I undertook for this PhD: 'The most current of such transformations occurs in storytelling and generally in artistic transposition of individual experiences' (ibid), however she does think that this can also be achieved without 'the form of the artist' (ibid), simply by speaking out in public. With or without 'artistic transposition', for Arendt the public space offers us a 'space of appearance', a kind of stage where human beings in their plurality can co-constitute a shared world, an understanding which has been characterised as an 'ontology of display' (Curtis 1999).

As Arendt develops this line of thought she comes to write about how the 'human artifact' structures and organises our public realm (1998:52), which leads her to speak of 'the world of things [that] is between those who have it in common [like] the table [that] is located between those who sit around it' (ibid). I have discussed Arendt's metaphorical image of the table that gathers us up and puts us in relation to one another in some detail in Chapter 3 when I argued that the ability to assemble while simultaneously preventing a collision is one of the key affordances of collaborative illustration projects (Chapter 3 p.165). Here I would like to nudge this point a little bit further. When I was writing about Arendt's 'table' in Chapter 3, I was thinking of the projects as they unfolded in the process of working on them. Might it also be possible to conceive of the projects' outputs as potential structuring devices for future publics? Designer and academic Carl DiSalvo relates Arendt's invocation of the 'human artifact' that organises the public realm specifically to design. While her table is a convenient example of a certain kind of product design, DiSalvo argues that Arendt's considerations 'should include all manner of made things: communications, events, environments and systems' (2020:261). This is important because these things can 'serve to mediate and bind us together' (ibid). But he adds another, more urgent consideration: 'In addition to being a

means to gather and stage the public, the stuff of design also enables the endurance of the public. It provides a continuity of relations, and while these relations can and do change, there remains a means of ongoing orientation' (ibid:261-262).

Inserting, or – as Nancy would say – 'abandoning' the outputs of my three projects in publicly accessible repositories has added another facet to the work. In the previous section I showed how these outputs are documents that attest enactments of community. By filing them on the public record these attestations acquire value and esteem for those communities and their concerns. I have offered them up to the 'space of appearance', Arendt's description of the public sphere, where 'everything that appears can be seen and heard' (Arendt 1998:50). These illustrative documents now stand a chance of extending Nancy's notion of a 'community of communication', to offer the possibility of a 'continuity of relations' and suggest an 'ongoing orientation' towards a similar set of concerns to future audiences.

Future worlds

It is of course impossible to predict if and how my projects' outputs will ever perform the noble function of enabling the endurance of the public (DiSalvo) or even just reach others in an extended 'community of communication' (Nancy). In many ways neither I, nor any of the participants, nor anybody else has that much influence over how the work will actually be encountered or experienced by spectral future audiences. Imagining ever-expanding periods of time stretching forth into the unknowable future (one year, ten years, 100 years, 1000 years?) lends this feeling of powerlessness a vertiginous quality. In the face of this, it was a certain kind of relief to abdicate responsibility and give them away. Arendt underscores the 'miraculous openness and desperate contingency' (Canovan in Arendt 1998:xvii) that underpins any kind of action in the public sphere. She writes about how our plurality combined with the fact that new people are unceasingly coming into this world makes for a situation where we are all continually starting new things and setting off trains of potentially unexpected events (ibid). On the one hand this gives rise to hope – new beginnings cannot be ruled out even when society appears ensnared in disastrous dead-ends. However, this also means that 'one cannot foresee even the effects of one's own initiatives, let alone control what happens when they are entangled with other people's initiatives in the public arena' (ibid:xviii). While this is undoubtedly true, well-known designer-philosopher Tony Fry qualifies this outlook. He reminds us that 'the future is never a blank slate, it is already colonised by whatever the past and the present have sent to it' ([1999]2020:10).

In this final section of the chapter I discuss why I am offering these documents up to the public record. What am I hoping to send to the future? What value might the gestures that are recorded in these illustrative documents have for contemporary as well as potential future audiences? Ultimately, I argue that all three of my projects speak to themes relevant to our times and propose an orientation which I wish to send to the future.

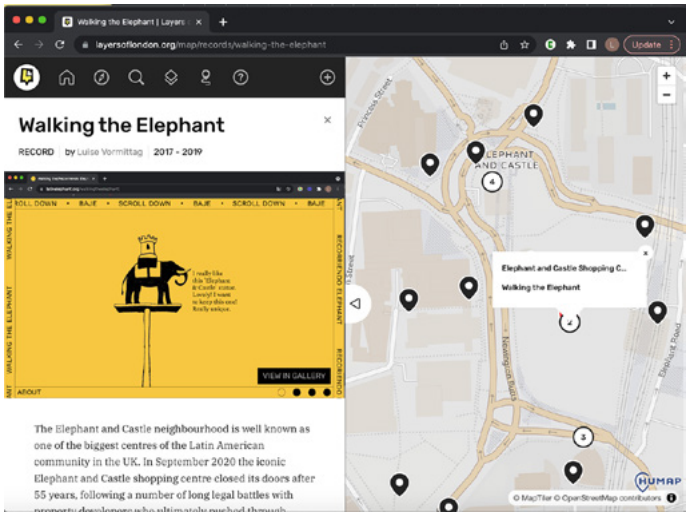
In one sense, what happens to the illustrated documents in future doesn't matter. Even if nobody ever looks at them again, the mere act of depositing them in a publicly accessible repository inscribes the work in a new temporal framework. Their storage in temperature-controlled rooms (or on a publicly funded website) makes their continued (material) existence for longer periods of time more likely compared to their potential fate in my more hazardous

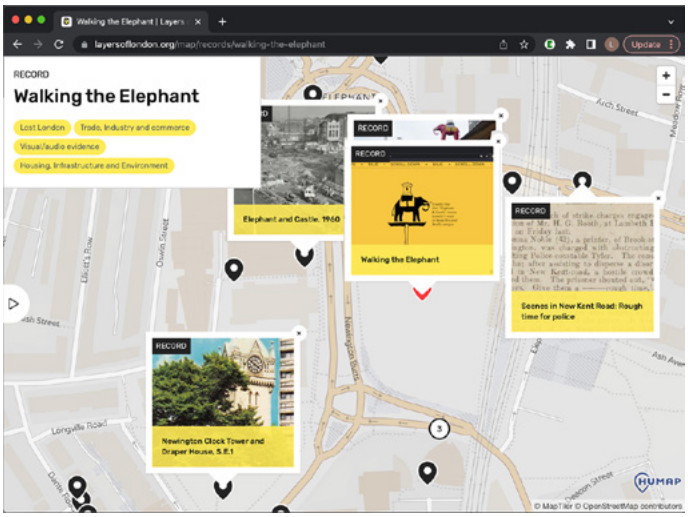
domestic settings. Their enrolment in systems of classification enables them to be positioned in relation to other records. The addition of keywords and digital metadata markers such as hashtags allow for cross-referencing and accessible search protocols. Overall, these various preservation and filing practices offer future-making capabilities that they would not possess in my studio-cupboard. Whether these possibilities of contributing to future worlds are realised or not, this orientation towards possible futures bestows an atmosphere of value, anticipation and hope, experienced and felt in the present, which I was happy to share with my project partners and participants. For example, as the event celebrating the maps' transfer to Hackney Archives had finished, I overheard one of the participants excitedly say to another: 'We are part of history now!'. And one of the women taking part in *Write Women into History* reflected on the value of the project by commenting: 'It has validated my life and all my struggles' (Hackney HOWLers 2021:6).





Figs. 90, 91: Open House Show and Tell Event at the Hackney Archives, 10. Sept 2022. This event marked my donation of *Cracks in the Pavement* maps and other materials to the archives and was attended by approximately half of the participating walkers. It was a great chance to meet each other in person.





Figs. 92, 93: Screenshots of *Walking the Elephant* on the *Layers of London* website.

Looking at *Walking the Elephant* as a record on *Layers of London* it is interesting to note how this project now stands in relation to other records that share its geographical location on the site. The current cluster of entries around Elephant and Castle include a compilation of photographs of the shopping centre from 2011, photographs of the centre and its construction in the 1960s posted by the Metropolitan Archives, alongside a few brief historical remarks noting the names of the architects and quoting from its sales brochure. There are also entries of the General Strike in 1926, including a photograph of mounted police containing protesters at the time, and other entries dating further back (the Elephant and Castle Pub from 1760). It is to be expected that these relational connections, if not so much to other people, but to other records, will continue to propagate as *Layers of London* continues to grow in complexity and abundance.

Write Women into History has libraries as its destination – both specialist feminist and activist collections as well as prestigious national organisations like the British Library. Organising these deposits has faced some delays, but efforts are underway to realise this ambition. Much like *Walking the Elephant*, its cataloguing and tagging with keywords will embed it in these repositories' collections and offer the book the opportunity to be seen alongside other publications and documents exploring similar themes. Even though feminism remains an urgent area of activism and campaigning, its establishment as an academic focal point and general topic of concern is by now largely uncontroversial. There are thankfully a number of organisations, initiatives and individuals that concern themselves with the history of feminism and as such I am confident that this book will meet its future audiences alongside other historiographic feminist documents.

Cracks in the Pavement is well looked after in Hackney Archives, for now at least cared for by an archivist who is keen to host future events that activate the project to new audiences. However, it is also this project that I believe has a lot to offer us as we face increasingly uncertain futures and reassess many of the assumptions and tenets of our current way of life.

Rodney Harrison, professor of critical heritage studies, describes how today's heritage practices emerged in the context of the temporal framework of modernity. Quoting many other academics who have published on this topic he maintains that modernity's emphasis on rapid progress generates a sense of moral obligation to create 'an archival grid through which the past might be accessible in an imagined future' (Edwards in Harrison 2020:21). He argues that this moral obligation has recently intensified in the context of endangerment and threat we find ourselves today. The perception of vulnerability, the risk to and likely loss of numerous natural as well as cultural assets and a sense of looming extinction and destruction is widespread and contributes to an 'endangerment sensibility' that creates a strong, affective impulse towards preservation and perpetuation (ibid: 28).

This 'endangerment sensibility' that emotively prompts acts of preservation for the potential benefit of 'future generations' (a term with complicated histories of its own, see Harrison 2020:21) is at work in my projects too: In *Walking the Elephant* and *Write Women into History* there was a strong impulse to record something exceptional and precious, to capture a particular moment in time that has now passed and ought to be preserved. *Walking the Elephant* was created on the brink of the neighbourhood's destruction: there was still a

sense of the possibility of the area's preservation during the workshops, but this possibility had been decisively ruled out by the time I drew the project to a close. *Write Women into History* was the most self-conscious project in terms of its own historiographical relevance – explicitly setting out to capture and secure the women's memories and experiences for posterity while this was still possible. In the introduction to the book two of the group members recall the importance of the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1970s and 1980s, reflecting that '[t]hose of us involved in that exciting period are now ourselves getting old. Many of us have already died. […] [T]his is an ideal time to record our own stories and […] of passing on our experiences of struggle and hard won understandings to a new generation' (Burgess-Macey & Chester in Hackney HOWLers 2021:5). The sense of endangerment and the moral imperative for preservation is clearly articulated.

Cracks in the Pavement emerged in the midst of an exceptional moment of crisis, with a sense that this might somehow, in an as yet undefined way, be important for the future. This project relates slightly differently to this 'endangerment sensibility', as it was neither conceived of (by me) or entered into (by participants) in a spirit of wanting to preserve something precious. Instead, it was a response to finding oneself in the midst of a crisis, a disorienting scenario that disrupted our social, spatial and temporal experiences. The various Covid-19 lockdowns and restrictions as well as anxieties about the virus itself, brought on an atmosphere that can be characterised as what anthropologist Rebecca Bryant calls an 'uncanny present' (Bryant 2016). She argues that a crisis can 'bring the present into consciousness, creating an awareness or perception of *present-ness* that we do not normally have' (emphasis in original, 2016:20). Bryant's 'uncanny present' is certainly an apt description for the experience of lockdown. The stark temporal and spatial interruptions during this period meant that the reflective acts of attention (see Chapter 2 pp.145-148) I was hoping to encourage through participation in my projects were perhaps already part of people's everyday experience. Lockdown made us look at our everyday environments, experiences and companions afresh in a similar way as my previous projects had prompted participants to take note of who and what surrounds them. *Cracks in the Pavement* provided a framework to amplify and register that moment, when many of us were walking around our immediate neighbourhoods, somewhat aimlessly, with no particular destination.

Cracks in the Pavement suggested we trace each other's footsteps and see if we can discover new things about our neighbourhoods, each other, ourselves. Looking through

the finished maps I note observations, memories, thoughts, occasionally some historical knowledge on the area and a surprising amount of sensory data that goes beyond the visual: 'Absolutely freezing' (Map 2), 'Chip shop smells of chips – for obvious reasons' (Map 4), 'Had a great tit singing as I approached Butterfield Green' (Map 5). When I was planning this project, I wasn't particularly thinking of cold hands or the smell of chip shops. In the context of increased levels of anxiety, isolation, restrictions and the near-total digitisation of everyday life, I had been keen to develop a project that foregrounded materiality, embodiment, and being-in-common. The question that had propelled this project was how it might be possible to be alone, but still be acting towards one another, in active relation to one other.

The resulting maps do indeed speak of relations and attachments. I read them as a record of the bonds we formed and strengthened to our shared neighbourhoods during these peculiar, solitary months. For example on Map 1: Walthamstow Wetlands walkers focused on the natural environment and its textures. As I study the drawings, photographs and inscriptions on this map, it becomes obvious that the sheet of paper and art supplies were not the only materials that had been shared. The ground, the path, the 'pavement' of the project's title, is another instance of materiality held in common. Our common ground is rendered as heterogeneous, verdant, shimmering.

The other two projects spoke of similar themes. Both *Walking the Elephant* and *Write Women into History* invited participants to look around and pay attention to how we are intertwined with each other and our environments. *Walking the Elephant* materialises experiences and expressions of place-based community at a moment when this sociality was itself under threat. Encouraging participants to share their *habitual* routes emphasises relationships that have developed over a period of time and that on any given day are probably not at the forefront of people's minds. The invitation to mark these up on a shared piece of paper makes us see them afresh. *Write Women into History* awakens our senses to the presence of companions with overlapping life experiences and rekindles memories of defining experiences such as the participation in an era-defining protest movement. All my projects elicit and articulate our interdependence with one another and the everyday environments in which our encounters unfold.

Today the shopping centre is no longer there, the Women's Liberation Movement has morphed into other forms of feminist practices, lockdown is over. Preserving the outputs

of all three projects confirms the projects themselves as well as the people, places, times and the networks of relations that link them together, to be of collective value and concern. The preservation of the particular experiences (of Elephant and Castle, of the Women's Liberation Movement, of lockdown in East London) safeguards these different standpoints against oblivion. Collectively the projects propose that examination of and engagement with place, everyday life and others is constitutive of who we are. By filing them in publicly accessibly repositories these illustrative documents can become one of many touchpoints in ongoing and emergent chronologies and orientations. This becomes particularly apparent when viewing *Walking the Elephant* on *Layers of London* and seeing this piece of work in relation to multiple other histories that have unfolded on this site. But the other projects too take up their place as points of reference – in histories of feminist practices, creative community projects in Hackney, as well as other possible future narratives not yet conceivable today.

If illustration is conceived as a performative method of knowledge production, where the existence of an illustration generates the world it is referring to, the process of illustrating community and its relation to place offers a dynamic possibility for local and temporal reinvention. Rather than just documenting what is already there and/or what happened, illustration can conjure hopeful visions of collectively articulated common ground. This approach staves off nostalgic temptations to cling to a picturesque past and creates potential to embrace the possibilities inherent in uncertain futures.

Conclusion | Common grounds?

Summary of argument: catalyst, focal point, trace

I set out on this research with a question about how illustration practice could more meaningfully engage with notions of community, compared to the often-superficial ways in which this term is used in commercial commissioning practices. The main question that animated my research throughout this PhD was: How does illustration bring to light the concerns and challenges of (a) community? I answered this question by assembling a theoretically grounded portfolio of practice that demonstrates that participatory illustration projects offer us the opportunity to reconsider, record and reflect on the relations that occur within our everyday experiences of community. I did so by pursuing three objectives: conducting action research in the form of three participatory illustration projects, critically analysing and reviewing existing examples of participatory practice (primarily via the in-depth interviews I conducted) and bringing conceptions of community, drawn from 20th century European philosophy into relation with illustration practice.

The main claim that emerges from this research is that participatory illustration projects have the capacity to *enact* community by drawing people together, prompting, revealing and recording our fundamental nature of 'being-with'. Nancy, one of the main philosophers I draw on to make my argument, characterises enactments of community as 'the exposure of singularities' (Nancy 1991:30). He maintains that his philosophical considerations regarding the fundamental nature of our sociality are 'political', even though his writing is distinct from what might more generally be understood as political philosophy. His work maintains a focus on the fundamental, ontological conditions of our sociality, rather than directly campaigning for a particular political orientation, or proposing a set of principles of governance.

Like Nancy, I too was primarily concerned with fundamental questions regarding our relationship with others in this PhD and have refrained from explicitly offering guidelines or instructions for illustrators wishing to work with communities, although the operational

principles and situated methods I discuss in Chapter 2 might be useful touchpoints for other practitioners. However, my main focus has been to outline the potential of participatory illustration projects as a site for ontological disclosure. I have shown how my projects draw out and delineate aspects of our co-existence, illustrating how our being is fundamentally constituted by our relations with others. In this regard my work mirrors Nancy's idea of 'the political' in its interest in the fundamental conditions of our sociality. But because I pursued this research not in the abstract, but through staging collaborative illustration projects associated with particular people, places and issues, my work necessarily spilled over into what is more conventionally understood as the political – the everyday wrestling for power and influence in the public sphere. Two of the projects I conducted directly dealt with obviously political concerns of utmost importance that I was pleased to take up – the callous eviction of well-established migrant traders from a neighbourhood they had helped build up (*Walking the Elephant*), and the continuous struggle for women's rights (*Write Women into History*). And while the third project (*Cracks in the Pavement*) is not engaged in such obviously combative causes, this project too can be seen as a political one in its quiet encouragement for hyper-local larking about, as opposed to our contemporary society's default imperatives of individualistic striving, efficiency and economic growth.

In contrast to theoretical writing that sometimes adopts abstract language in the establishment of an argument, my practice-led illustration research in its action-oriented engagement with people, events, places, and histories cannot help but operate on two registers simultaneously. The work is 'political' in the sense of Nancy – exploring fundamental ontological questions of our being-in-common and the manner in which society is produced – as well as political in the more conventional understanding of the word. As a result, the knowledge that is produced through my projects also falls into two categories. I draw out specific and particular knowledge about each topic that the project refers to, while at the same time using the work as a site for considering more general questions on the nature of 'community'. The beneficiaries of my work also fall into two camps: I do my best to serve the group I am working with in the production of an output that relates to their needs and interests, while at the same time I am also striving to offer something to my fellow illustrators and academics in the form of new thinking about the affordances of our discipline.

The limitations of current conceptions of 'political illustration' are discussed in Chapter 1, where I then propose a definition of illustration that reaches beyond ideas of singular

authorship. For the purposes of this PhD I defined illustrations as co-produced, visual documents, that foregrounds the multiplicity of perspectives and forces that led to their creation and that function as evidence of geographical, historiographical and relational (re-)configurations.

There are a number of principles of practice that crystallised in my work while working on this PhD. While these are not universal edicts, some of them might prove useful for other practitioners. Furthermore their emergence highlights the value of situated methods for illustrators working in complex social settings more generally – methods that take into consideration the specific context of each project. I discussed these methods and their development in Chapter 2 of this thesis. I explained why I preferred engaging in the construction of responsive 'climbing frames' for my project participants, rather than performing more extensive acts of authorial renunciation. I argued that postulating a definitive and communicative output as a shared goal for a group of participants can have the effect of propelling a project forward to a conclusion that is both anticipated and satisfying, as everyone walks away with a tangible output that can be kept and shared with others. I reflected on various methods for persuading participants to draw or otherwise inscribe the shared documents we were working on – methods that partially overlap with other illustrators working in participatory practice: the preparation of enticing art materials, the option to use stickers, the usage of prompts that undermine the repressive ambition to produce a 'good drawing', the invitation to draw a route (which cannot really be drawn 'badly'). When it came to synthesising the participants' contributions, I arrived at the conclusion that it is best to harness the vitality of their original inscriptions as much as possible, rather than re-interpreting their contributions (as I had done in *Walking the Elephant*).

There are also a number of points that emerged through my reflections in Chapter 2 that explain why illustration in general is an apposite discipline for this kind of participatory work, that recounts and records everyday realms of experiences and interaction at a particular moment in time. Firstly, illustrators, trained in the procedures of a creative service discipline, are well-disposed to synthesise other people's needs and requirements (traditionally those of a client) with their own creative vision – a useful skill when planning projects that call for sensitivity towards the participating group as well as an ambition for visual impact and flair. Secondly, inviting participants to illustrate elicits reflective acts of attention which bring the usually unnoticed everyday 'life-world' to the front of people's minds. This happens

regardless of whether people are engaged in observation or recollection as a catalyst for their inscriptions. In both cases, the task of having to draw things out on a sheet of paper enlivens the situations and circumstances that are being recorded – observed or remembered – in the minds of participants; situations which otherwise, however interesting and vital they might have once seemed, slumber at the peripheries of people's consciousness, dulled by the corrosive repetitiveness of the everyday. The act of illustrating makes you look afresh.

Building on my three projects I developed my tri-part argument, comprehensively laid out in Chapter 3. The main argument I make in this PhD is that collaborative illustration has the capacity to act as a catalyst, focal point and trace of a public encounter. These kinds of encounters, I argue, are an enactment of community, where community is not conceived as a closed group of people fused together through essentialist characteristics, but as the process of 'acting towards one another' by singularities – Nancy's preferred term for individuals. Illustration projects can gather people up through a focus on a shared concern, provide a structure for their communicative engagement through the collaborative activity of inscription, and can provide a documentary record of the encounter after it has taken place via the results of this activity. By prompting participants to productively engage with their environments and relationships through the deployment of attention and inscription, these collaboratively produced illustrative documents constitute a form of collective 'world-making' – new visions of their joint concerns.

In Chapter 4 I discuss the potential that arises from submitting the outputs of the three projects to publicly accessible repositories. Firstly, they act as historical documents that refer back to the moments of their creation. They confirm that yes, indeed, these enactments of community took place. But they also do more than simply record the fact of an encounter. Through their articulation and public display, previously privately held thoughts and convictions are thus transformed into widely accessible visual artefacts, Arendt's so-called 'space of appearance'. This is significant because 'something that is being seen and heard by others as well as ourselves constitutes reality' (Arendt 1998:50). Because they appear as material inscriptions or registrations on the public record, these concerns and articulations achieve a fixedness and longevity that more fleeting forms of collective sense-making such as spoken conversations lack. The illustrative documents therefore have the potential to reach into the future, act as touchpoints for ongoing orientations and debates and contribute

to shaping a polyvocal public realm. The ‘community of communication’ (Nancy 1997:114) can thus extend over periods of time into the future.

Overall, this PhD has resulted in a theoretically grounded portfolio of practice, and a practice-oriented theoretical study that, taken together, make the argument that illustration can expose and delineate aspects of our social co-existence. Illustration, in the form of co-created visual documents, presents itself as the space where we can reconsider, record and reflect on the relations that occur in our everyday experience of community and practices of collective world-making.

Relevance: What is illustration (research) good for?

While working on this PhD there have been many joyful moments of discovery alongside the inevitable frustrations, struggles and moments of doubt that accompany a long-term project of this scale. There were times when the limitations of my projects in particular and illustration practice in general loomed uncomfortably large. My main argument centres on the potential of illustration to prompt a creative coming-together and generative process of world-making. However, what was I to do when the projects threw up failed connections and broken links? What about the affiliations that did not materialise, either because of flaws in the project structure, the unpredictable ebbs and flows of external events, or because the work amplified, rather than overcame, some of the many creases and tears of our social fabric? What about the moments when worlds did not emerge or I was unable to make them intelligible to myself and others?

My projects all had their limitations: *Walking the Elephant*, besides its shortcomings I have already discussed in Chapter 2, did not live up to its initial ambition to support the community organisation by providing convincing materials to bolster their cause. *Cracks in the Pavement* gracefully connected strangers of a wide variety of different ages, but did not manage to reach beyond its circles of white, middle-class citizens, despite my attempts to include a broader range of perspectives[33]. And while *Write Women into History* largely 'worked' insofar that it did deliver on its promise to help gather up and establish a group of older, local feminists, and support them in their efforts to present themselves to external audiences, it remains by all accounts a relatively modest undertaking involving 14 participants and a slim, self-published booklet.

But perhaps these limitations are tolerable, or sometimes even productive? While the projects might have some limitations in themselves, their success as projects does not stand in direct relation to their generative capacity for research insights. *Walking the Elephant* and *Cracks in the Pavement* had some obvious flaws, but it is also those two projects that

33 Prominent sociologist Susan Wessendorf describes Hackney, the London borough where the majority of the participants for *Cracks in the Pavement* including myself are based, as a place where 'diversity is acknowledged and sometimes talked about, [but] actual engagement with difference remains limited and people rarely explore cultural differences more deeply' (2014:394). *Cracks in the Pavement* appears to confirm this characterisation of the neighbourhood.

proved more productive for developing my thesis compared to *Write Women into History*. For example, it is precisely because of the difficulties I encountered during *Walking the Elephant* that this research pivoted towards the insight that it is constructive to think of illustration as a performative knowledge creation practice (rather than representational). In *Write Women into History* I was able to confirm this hypothesis, while also testing new methods of assembling participants' contributions. *Cracks in the Pavement* provided an opportunity to foreground the indexical qualities of participatory work. In this project the framework I designed visually recedes into the background, and the interlocking inscriptions of the participants come to the surface to speak of plural but overlapping worlds. The research insights here might not have been the direct result of the projects' limitations, as was the case with *Walking the Elephant*, but they emerged regardless of its shortcomings.

During the years I was working on this PhD I was propelled by my belief that despite inevitable limitations there are moments of profundity in our work as illustrators, and that there is value and significance in the contributions we can make to bigger questions that reach beyond our discipline. After all, illustration is a method of making sense of the world. In *The Creation of the World* (2007) Nancy writes how the praxis of making sense creates the possibility of a world as such. The sense of the world is never given, he says, it must be made – a struggle that, in a typically labyrinthine paragraph, is described in terms of 'effervescence of thought […] transformed into contagious communication as propagation of an enjoyment' (ibid:55). In other words: sense-making is a world-creation practice, that ought to be communicable and ultimately joyous. Grove has recently voiced similar sentiments, and she ties them explicitly to illustration: 'Conjuring is the imaginative act at the heart of illustrating' she writes (Grove 2023:np). And she continues: 'Let us remember that an illustration is a theory of what something *is* or could be' (ibid, emphasis in original). Nancy speaks of 'world-making', Grove uses the word 'conjuring', both invoke creation rather than representation of something pre-existing. And by describing illustration as a 'theory of what something *is* or could be', she is confirming that, indeed, it is a method of making sense.

Grove goes on to explain the power that therefore lies at the core of illustration. Reflecting on some of the seemingly insurmountable challenges in the world today she writes:

> 'Changing the future is imperative […]. This is where illustration conjuring comes in: if we can't see where we're going, we'll never get there. If we can't agree on where to go, we'll never start. If we leave our problems unseen, we won't know how

> to begin. Illustration sets ideals, attracts and bonds collaborators, and documents applications, failures and solutions—illustrating is always at the start of any meaningful human action. And every illustration begins with a conjuring act, turning nothing into something […]' (Grove 2023).

I share Grove's views and could not have formulated this more eloquently. My challenge in this PhD was not only to realise this potential of illustration, and I use 'realise' here in both senses – that of 'understanding' as well as 'enact', but also to entice groups of other people to partake in this enterprise of conjuring and documenting worlds of experience. I am confident that in the projects I worked on the participants and I have created illustrations that indeed conjure hopeful visions of polyvocal worlds. By submitting them to publicly accessible repositories there is potential that they can continue to 'bond collaborators' oriented towards more optimistic futures.

In the introduction I wrote that the methodological advancement of illustration practice was of crucial importance (p.23) especially in the face of recent developments in AI image creation practices, that can potentially mimic the results of many run-of-the-mill illustration commissions. I believe that this PhD is testament to one of the many *other* things that illustration can do, apart from quickly filling a gap on the page. It demonstrates that illustration can act as an innovative and imaginative creative practice that can illuminate, record and amplify constellations of interdependence. However, what about illustration *research*?

Much has happened in the years since I began this PhD to solidify and legitimise illustration as a serious discipline. However, a 'serious discipline' is not an end in itself. Illustrators are increasingly realising that our talents can be applied much more broadly than many people had given us credit for, perhaps including ourselves. But in order to secure new and exciting possibilities for illustration as a cultural activity that can creatively respond to opportunities within the private, public and third sector, as well as defend our roles as 'public intellectuals' (RISD 2015) by using our work to contribute to debates in the public realm, we need more than our illustration practice alone. We need spoken and written language, we need scholarship and we need the ability to convincingly present an argument. Concepts open our understanding to what is around us, but we otherwise fail to see, convincing arguments can recruit allies. This recalls Bolt's distinction between 'artwork' and 'the work of art' (2007:34, see p.27). 'Artwork' can be understood as the way in which illustration practice in itself puts

forward claims, makes worlds, conjures new visions. However, in order to complete this promise inherent in practice we also need 'the work of art', which Bolt locates in the written 'exegesis' that articulates the effects and significance of practice.

Through working on this PhD the importance of combining periods of practice with periods of reflection that encompass the study of cognate theory and practice as well as the sometimes laborious interweaving of theory and practice, is superabundantly obvious to me. Writing is needed for a number of reasons. Through writing one is able to draw out knowledge which is dormant in practice, but is more fully activated, including to the practitioner themselves, in its alliance with linguistic ideas, concepts and narratives. Furthermore, writing helps make knowledge claims more generalisable beyond the specifics of an individual project, and lastly, spoken and written language aids us enormously in advocating for ourselves as illustrators, the concerns and causes we chose to take on in our work, and illustration practice more generally. Bolt makes similar arguments in defence of the 'exegesis' (2007:34). However, the fact that illustration practice and scholarly research are not opponents, but that they can support and nourish each other, is far from universally accepted. My experience of teaching in and visiting various HE illustration courses in the UK reveals that many of them encompass no significant written components at all, and in those that do, students often struggle to appreciate their significance.

There are a considerable number of parallels in that can be drawn between the development of translation studies and the gradual growth in scholarship in/on/through illustration. Like illustration, translation is also a creative discipline that is practiced commercially through a series of commissions, mainly by freelance practitioners, who are embedded in various economic and regulatory systems which shape key parameters such as budgets, deadlines and copyright. Illustrators, like translators, have often felt overlooked and undervalued (see Venuti (1995:8) for a chronicle of translators' marginalisation, see Male (2019:8) for an account of illustrators' historic 'low-rank' status) and have grappled with the general perception that their creative practice is characterised by subservience to an 'original' or primary text. Translation scholarship has challenged this perception which has gradually led to a much broader and nuanced understanding of and reflection on the practice of translation. Illustration is arguably in an earlier stage of academisation, and consequently is still contending with the challenges of scholarly research establishing itself around a commercially practiced creative discipline, which seems to provoke the occasional suspicion

and reticence by some of its practitioners. Grove discussed this scepticism in an article in the *Journal of Illustration* published in 2011 (Grove 2011). My experience of working in HE illustration environments confirms that these debates are still very much alive a decade later. So even while illustration has made great strides to establish itself as a more academic discipline, more work needs to be done to articulate and demonstrate the value of illustration scholarship.

While I believe that illustration practice can benefit greatly from scholarly research, it is vital to emphasise, that I am not advocating for scholarship on its own. Once again translation studies acts as useful precedent. Translation studies and translation practice, which have made great strides by informing and enriching one another, also do not always intertwine in mutual support and harmony. Bassnett describes how academic theory has in some university departments separated itself from the practice of translation, resulting in an awkward and unnecessary chasm between the two (Bassnett & Bush 2006:2) – undoubtedly a resonant warning for us illustration scholars.

I am confident that the steadily growing number of people and organisations dedicated to the thoughtful evolution of illustration practice and its associated realms for scholarly exploration and exchange will continue to collectively advance the possibilities and reach of our discipline. I am proud to be contributing to these inspiring conversations and networks.

Methodological reflections

In this PhD I have braided illustration practice with theory to reveal and record aspects of our co-existence. My contributions to knowledge emerged from this intertwining: I have demonstrated how participatory illustration projects can act as a site of ontological disclosure, where we can enact, record and reflect on our experiences of community. I have also established illustration as a performative method of knowledge creation, where the act of creation establishes the reality it refers to. These are contributions to knowledge at the intersection of illustration with philosophy, geography and anthropology.

It was through writing this thesis, and the various preceding documents and drafts, conference presentations and lectures, that I was able to draw out this knowledge from my three practice projects, activate and articulate it in writing. This aligns with the generally accepted definition of 'practice-led research' that I introduced at the start of this document, a creative arts methodology where questions arising in practice lead the research and significantly contribute to its development, but the contribution to knowledge can be fully articulated in text form (Candy 2006:1).

I have repeatedly referred to the fact that my PhD operates on two levels simultaneously: it is political both in the sense of being invested in the nature of the social body at its most fundamental level, while also getting involved in everyday power struggles and activist contestations. It produces knowledge that is significant for illustration as a discipline, while also producing specific local insights about the experiences of a particular group of people at a particular time and place. The two-pronged nature of the PhD results from the existence of two distinct kinds of outputs: On the one hand there are the outputs from practice, and on the other hand there is the scholarly knowledge created by the practice. I have already reflected on the nature and merits of scholarly knowledge that is the result of practice-led research in in the previous section. I here wish to add a few more reflections on the mode of knowledge production in the practice itself.

My practice is broadly concerned with coming to know the world in the companionship of others. In the introduction I wrote about Heidegger's insistence that we can only know about the world through our relational involvement in it. Bolt transposes these philosophical insights into her work on creative arts inquiry, where 'praxical engagement with tools,

materials and ideas produces its own kind of [in]sight' (2004:187). My practice complicates these statements as I do not set out to learn about the world through practice on my own, but rather by setting up groups of other people to collectively generate and express their own version of a world. Anthropology and ethnography have offered some methodological guidance for my work, in particular on the necessity for continuous self-reflexivity. However, unlike anthropologists who through years of painstaking self-reflection arrived at the difficult conclusion that studies *of* people almost inevitably involve a process of 'othering' (Ingold 2011:226), I designed my projects from the start as events that got people involved in something new together with me. Rather than assuming the position of an observer in an attempt to generate knowledge about existing cultural or social practices, I was always an obvious actant, ringleader even, setting up encounters, situations and activities, in an attempt to study *with* people, an orientation which Ingold optimistically refers to as 'a process of togethering' (ibid).

This 'process of togethering' resulted in the production of newly articulated, shared worlds. In Chapter 2 I reflected in detail on processes of collective world-making: I drew on Husserl's concept of 'life-word' to explain how from the early 20th century onwards the subjective experiences of everyday life were reconceived as constituting unifying worlds in the face of the perceived fragmentations brought about by modern science, technology and industrial capitalism. Nancy, characteristically, offers a slightly different perspective. Just as he argued that it is our very separation into 'singularities' that makes community possible, he suggests that it is precisely the world's fragmentation that offers a profound possibility for its renewal. Through processes of creative sense-making that produces new meaning, we have the capacity to collectively make and enact new worlds.

From the point of view of the illustrator the process of world-making sounds, initially at least, relatively straightforward: the process of drawing and or designing worlds, seems to fall squarely within the realms of illustration practice – illustration is after all a practice of 'conjuring' (Grove 2023). On closer examination however, perplexingly complex questions emerge. To represent a world, implies a vantage point from outside, from where the world can be seen and represented. However, this stands in opposition to the idea that the world reveals itself through our involvement with it. Viewing the world from outside reduces it, in Heidegger's words, to a conquered object in front of the supposedly masterful subject ([1950] 1977). He decries 'the world becoming picture' (1977:132) and man's [sic.]

concomitant transformation into 'subiectum' – a supreme individual bestowed with powers for the 'calculating, planning and moulding of all things' (ibid:135). Nancy elaborates on the same problem when he writes that '[a] world "viewed," a represented world, is a world dependent on the gaze of a subject [who] cannot itself be within the world' (2007:40).

The difficulties I experienced while working on *Walking the Elephant*, my struggle to find adequate means to synthesise and *re*-present the contributions the participants had produced during the workshops, were in essence borne from my inability at the time to fully grasp the limitations of an outside perspective. Like some anthropologists, who assumed that writing necessitates a turning away from observation (see Clifford 1988:52), I had designed my project around two discrete phases of observation or data gathering, followed by subsequent illustrative rendering. However, once I was back in the studio, separated from the world I was trying to represent, I was paralysed by my inability to conjure anything that felt adequate. The only way I found to salvage the project was to re-inject workshop elements back into the final package of outputs: the maps and the photographic documentation that revealed the process of their creation.

The challenge then is how to draw up a world without an outside? How can illustration articulate something as elusive as the everyday world as it discloses itself through our immersion in it, through our actions, involvements and relationships?

Rather than attempting to step outside of our worlds to look back on them I have, in my projects, set up the possibility for new circumstances, actions and relationships that illuminate our pre-existing identities and experiences afresh. People found themselves sitting around a sheet of paper, and then had to work out collectively, who they were here, now, with this, and in relation to each other. The ensuing 'lifeworlds' resulted from the interlocking articulations of many perspectives, rather than a pre-existing imaginary shared by all. Creating the collaborative illustrative document was therefore a generative, rather than representational process. Rather than engaging in a form of 'data collection' about a community and the worlds they make and inhabit, and then grappling with the means to adequately render this information, I created frameworks for people to come together and in the process of doing so become community in the act of drawing up a plural world.

Lockdown visions

I have not made much mention of the Covid-19 pandemic in my thesis, apart from noting relatively briefly that my two latter projects were carried out during the various 'lock-downs' of 2020 and 2021. When Covid-19 first arrived in the UK and it became clear that this would indeed lead to the same severe disruptions it was causing in other parts of the world, I was as distraught and disoriented as most people. But alongside all the general worry, I was also at an utter loss as to how I might carry on with my PhD research. My main method had been to bring people together, around a table with a shared piece of paper at a location that was resonant and meaningful to them. None of that was now possible. What was I to do?

Heidegger goes to considerable lengths to explain how, when things go awry, when 'an assignment has been disturbed' and the smooth functionality of the everyday is interrupted 'the environment announces itself afresh' and 'the world is lit up' (1962:105). The abrupt interruption of our normal social and spatial practices and the suspension of much economic activity threw our hitherto commonplace relationships, movements and pursuits into sharp relief. I was not fully aware of this at the time – too overwhelming was the sense of disorientation, but the public health restrictions, that forced us into social isolation and for many months essentially prevented us from leaving our local neighbourhoods, brought to the fore precisely some of those questions of sociality and worldhood that I was grappling with in my research.

Write Women into History had been conceived before the onset of the pandemic, was then put on hold, and was subsequently replanned to take place online. During the early months of the pandemic, it was still a novelty to see a computer screen filled with rows of small rectangular video streams of meeting participants, but this gridded display soon became the standard way in which groups manifested themselves visually online. Although some of the members of the Hackney HOWLers Writing Group knew each other personally prior to joining the group, many did not. As a group this was their view of each other; a vision that has been – unconsciously, I hasten to add, but with a therefore somewhat disquieting accuracy – reflected in the gridded design of the booklet cover. This is certainly one way in which the new visions of lockdown were captured in the work.

It is of course impossible to know, how the group itself or the creation of the artwork for the cover would have played itself out in other circumstances. As it was, there were numerous occasions, when group members spoke of the severe challenges they were facing because of the pandemic, and how, in light of this, the meetings with the writing group provided a sense of relief and wellbeing. I am sure that the group would have felt important to its members without the pandemic too, but it is reasonable to assume that the absence of everyday social relations during this time, heightened the experience of being a member of the Hackney HOWLers. The existence of the cover illustration which visually attests to the group's existence therefore feels particularly meaningful.

Lockdown restrictions and so-called 'social distancing' measures brought into focus the presence, or in actual fact the absence, of people around us. *Cracks in the Pavement* was conceived in direct response to the public health measures during the pandemic, when our social and spatial routines were severely disrupted: Where many of us had previously rushed down our local street on our way to someplace else, suddenly these streets were all we had. They were familiar, yes, but uncannily so, in the Freudian sense of the familiar turned strange and unsettling. Lockdown thus also brought with it a distinct kind of looking, a different gaze. Bruno Latour reflects on how the modernist belief in continuous progress is expressed in the spatial imaginary predicated on the gaze through Galileo's telescope – looking ahead into a seemingly infinite cosmology of isotropic space (2020). The suspension of most economic activities during the pandemic meant that this forward-looking striving was interrupted. Instead, we found ourselves looking around. Who is next to us? What is happening on our street?

Ingold reflects on the qualities of a 'striding gait', with its singular aim of onward locomotion: 'As a rigidly mechanical, straight-legged oscillation from the hips, with eyes gazing ahead rather than downcast, the stride only works with booted feet on a paved surface' (2011:17). With nowhere to go during lockdown, other modes of walking and looking came to the fore. With our gaze no longer fixed on the horizon, and with the modernist metanarrative of perpetual progress at least temporarily interrupted, we found ourselves confronted with our earth-bound existence. Looking around, instead of ahead, we were now in a better position to survey what might be growing in the *cracks* of that very pavement, which previously had been only hastily passed over. What had hitherto been for the most part a walk on the way to someplace else, a distance that had to be traversed, space to be overcome, now revealed

itself, from the vantage point of ambling steps and wandering eyes as a tapestry of worldly goings-on, a 'sphere of contemporaneous multiplicity' (Massey 2005:148). Ingold celebrates the practice of aimlessly looking around by noting how 'it is precisely in this ocular itineration along the paths of the world's becoming that the essence of vision resides' (2011:223).

But there was also another type of looking that this project prompted in its participants. Their eyes were not only scanning the environment, which had been 'lit up' by the ruptures caused by the pandemic, they were also looking at the traces and trails of others on the map. The bodily response to the tracks laid out by others who went before them, initially by following them with their feet on the ground, and then by retracing it with their hands on the map, fuses observation and participation, a joining-together across intervals of time. Even though the walkers in their feedback comments did not highlight the experience of togetherness to one another as much as they noted their rediscovery of their shared, everyday surroundings, they were, consciously or not, following each other's footsteps, echoing each other's movements. Looking at the maps to guide their own steps, enabled them to interweave their singular trajectories with the lines of others.

There is no way of knowing how this PhD would have shaped up without Covid-19. *Write Women into History* would have probably gone ahead but would have surely been a different kind of experience, which would in turn have resulted in a different output. *Cracks in the Pavement* would not have taken place and I would have engaged with a different group and issue instead. However, this project opened up new vistas of community projects as a process of distinct mode of collective looking. People were bonded together not because of a pre-existing concern, but by overlapping their walking routes and sharing what they noticed along the way with each other. And the kind of sociality that manifested here – a form of temporally staggered relay – prompted me to consider the role of future audiences in continuing this pattern of connecting across intervals of time.

It feels like something of a cliché to express one's ultimate appreciation of a crisis, that at its moment of initial unfolding felt calamitous, but ultimately prompted a response that led to an outcome that in all probability is preferable compared to the hypothetical results that would have been achieved without the disruption. But here we are, and I shall do just that. While I am of course mindful of the devastating effect that Covid-19 had on many people's wellbeing around the world, it was, in the context of my PhD at least, a productive disturbance.

What next?

Completing any kind of project is always a difficult task. It is hard to know how to draw a finishing line around a constellation of processes, outputs, deliberations and relationships, as the work continuously throws up new lines of inquiry that beg to be followed. But the reigning consensus is that this is the time, and whatever remains shall be taken up under the rubric of future endeavours.

I am currently pursuing two main avenues to activate and disseminate the research resulting from this PhD. I have signed a book contract with Bloomsbury Visual Arts in their new illustration research series to publish a monograph that will substantially draw on the insights developed in this thesis. I am planning to augment my findings by involving a broader range of practitioners in the conversation and include their work and subject positions in the book. I hope to engage in conversations with practitioners and organisations pursuing similar work (such as Prof Nina Sabnani (IDC Mumbai), other international colleagues (tbc) and the community initiatives at the Quentin Blake Centre for Illustration, London) to broaden and internationalise the perspectives, and include a diverse range of case studies.

Additionally, I am in the early stages of testing out the possibility of developing a new postgraduate offer in illustration at my university that builds on some of my research insights. The main idea is that the curriculum would encourage the use of illustration as a tool to illuminate, interpret and amplify systems of social and ecological interdependence to a global cohort of students, who remain embedded in their local communities while studying on this course online. Many details remain to be explored, but I am excited by the idea in principle and am currently working with the programme director for illustration and the associate dean of academic strategy to see if this might be worth developing in greater detail.

In my own practice I have recently been approached by Hackney Council (in association with Sports England) to develop a project, that seeks to generate collaborative, community walking maps in an around a specific ward in the borough. This commission is a direct result of their knowledge of *Cracks in the Pavement* through its affiliation with Hackney Archives. I am currently involved in conversations regarding the details of this work.

I am continuing my research collaboration with Dr Stephanie Black called *Colouring In* through which we are examining the overlaps of illustration practice with themes of critical importance to global debate. We are about to publish our third 'working paper' in the form of a PDF online. Each PDF is clustered around a topic and takes in contributions of others as well as our co-authored analysis of a selection of relevant illustration projects. The current paper, called *Colouring In: The Past*, is our most ambitious to date, and emerges from a generative symposium we hosted at UAL in December 2022.

There are of course also further avenues for continuing the research presented in this PhD. While the focus has been on illustration and 'community', and I have done my best to advance a nuanced understanding of this term, not all concepts have been analysed in such depth. The word 'encounter' for example, which I used many times in the thesis, is begging to be subjected to greater scrutiny. Academic and urban designer Paul Carter in his book *Meeting Place* (2013) positions Australian Aboriginal understandings of meeting in contrast to the Western enthusiasm for public encounter. He claims that Australian Indigenous societies would understand their territories and societies '[…] relationally, as expressions of a web of reciprocated responsibilities whose well-being depended on maintaining the tonos of the distances in between, as if space were composed […] like a string figure, and psychological as well as material prosperity depended on keeping the strands of the figure taut' (Carter 2013:2). How can illustration practice help us think about systems of interdependence more generally, while taking into account that a 'web of reciprocated responsibilities' might involve a host of different types of meetings, or – on occasion – no direct encounters at all? How might illustration be able to interpret other forms of relationality that extend over periods of time and/or space, and might indeed be reliant on us never meeting each other, while still being intimately bonded? I am looking forward to pursuing these questions in greater depth through future projects.

I conclude this PhD with the firm conviction that illustration both as a practice as well as the research that is prompted and propelled by the practice has much to offer. As a form of sense-making it can help situate ourselves and draw out our relationships to our environments, experiences and each other. Illustration can elicit and articulate our interdependence with one another and our overlapping worlds. It can bring into focus that which we have forgotten and can contribute to the structure the public realm. It can sketch

out patches of common ground on which we may assemble, however briefly, and provide an orientation for where it might be that we want to go next.

Bibliography

Abdulla, D. (2022) *Designerly Ways of Knowing*, Onomatopee Nr 214, Eindhoven: Onomatopee

Adorno, T. ([1958] 1991) 'The Essay as Form', in Adorno, T. (1991) *Notes to Literature*, Volume One, Rolf Tiedemann (Ed.), New York: Columbia University Press, pp.3-23

Adorno, T. ([1944] 1997) 'The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception', in Adorno, T. & Horkheimer, M. (1997) *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, London: Verso, pp.120-167

AOI (2023) 'The AOI's stance on AI', *Association of Illustrators website*, online. Available at: https://theaoi.com/campaigning/campaigns/consultations-blocks-2/artificial-intelligence/ [Accessed 5 April 2023]

Arendt, H. ([1958] 1998) *The Human Condition*, introduction by Margaret Canovan, Chicago: Chicago University Press

Arnstein, S. (1969) 'A Ladder of Citizen Participation', *JAIP*, Vol. 35, No. 4, pp.216-224

Ashbrook, S. & Syme, A. (2018) 'Chapter 15: Beautifying Books and Popularizing Posters in Europe and America, 1855–1910' in Doyle, S., Grove, J., & Sherman, W. (2018) *History of Illustration*, New York: Fairchild Books, pp.232-247

Austin, J.L. (1962) *How to do things with words*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press

Ávila, M. (2022) *Designing for Interdependence: A Poetics of Relating*, London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts

Barnes, A. (2019) 'Geo/Graphic Design' in Boyd, C. & Ewardes, C. (Eds.) *Non-Representational Theory and the Creative Arts*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.19-32

Barret, E. & Bolt, B. (Eds.) (2010) *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry*, New York: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd

Barthes, R. ([1967] 1977) 'The Death of the Author' in *Image Music Text*, London: Fontana Press, pp.142-148

Bassnett, S. & Lefevere, A. (Eds.) (1998) *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation*, Clevedon & Bristol: Multilingual Matters Ltd

Bassnett, S. (1998) 'The Translation Turn in Cultural Studies', in Bassnett, S. & Lefevere, A. (Eds.) (1998) *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation*, Clevedon & Bristol: Multilingual Matters Ltd, pp.123-140

Bassnett, S. & Bush, P. (Eds.) (2006) *The Translator as Writer*, London & New York: Continuum

Bell, R. (2003) 'Handmade by Computer', *Creative Review*, October 2003, pp.68-72

Benjamin, W. ([1923] 2021) *The Translator's Task*, in Venuti, L. (Ed.) (2021) *The Translation Studies Reader*, London: Routledge, pp.89-97

Bennet, J. (2010) *Vibrant Matter*, Durham: Duke University Press

Berger, J. (2007) *Berger on Drawing*, Cork: Occasional Press

Berlant, L. (2011) *Cruel Optimism*, Durham: Duke University Press

Bermingham, A. (1986) *Landscape and ideology–The English Rustic Tradition*, London: Thames & Hudson

Bestley, R. & Ogg, A. (2022) *The Art of Punk*, extended edition, Atglen: Schiffer Books

Bishop, C. (2012) *Artificial Hells*, London: Verso

Björgvinsson, E., Ehn, P. & Hillgren, P.A. (2012) 'Design Things and Design Thinking: Contemporary Participatory Design Challenges', *DesignIssues*, Vol. 28, No. 3, pp.101-116

Black, S. (2012) 'Rear View Mirror', *Varoom*, 18, pp.54-59

Black, S. (2014a) *Illumination through illustration: Positioning illustration as practice-led research*, PhD thesis, University of the West of England

Black, S. (2014b) 'Illumination through illustration: Research methods and authorial practice', *Journal of Illustration*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp.275-300

Blaiklock, D. (2019) 'What is the Nature of Illustration Expertise', in Male, A. (Ed.) *A Companion to Illustration*, Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons Inc, pp.185-198

Blundell Jones, P., Petrescu, D. & Till, J. (Eds.) (2005) *Architecture and Participation*, London: Taylor & Francis

Bogart, M. (2018) 'Making Meaning of Illustration', *Rockwell Centre for American Visual Studies*, online. Available at: https://rockwellcenter.org/essays-illustration/making-meaning-of-illustration/ [Accessed 14. Feb 2022]

Bolt, B. (2004) *Art beyond Representation: The Performative Power of the Image*, London & New York: I.B. Tauris

Bolt, B. (2007) 'The Magic is in the Handling', in Barrett, E. & Bolt, B. (Eds.) *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry*, London & New York: I.B. Tauris

Bolt, B. (2011) *Heidegger Reframed*, London & New York: I.B. Tauris

Bolt, B. (2013) 'Introduction', *Carnal Knowledge: Towards a 'New Materialism' through the Arts*, London & New York: I.B. Tauris, pp.1-13

Bourriaud, N. (2002) *Relational Aesthetics*, Dijon: Presses du Rel

Bowman, P. (2008) 'Heated Debate: Educate, Agitate, Organise', *Varoom*, 8, pp.64-65

Braund, S. (2011) 'Slowing time down: Correspondences, ambiguity and attendance', *Journal of Illustration*, Vol. 4, No. 3, pp.427-443

Brazell, D. & Davies, J. (2011) *Making Great Illustration*, London: A&C Black Publishers

Brazell, D. & Davies, J. (2013, 2017) *Becoming a Successful Illustrator*, London & New York: Fairchild Books

Brazell, D. & Davies, J. (2015) *Understanding Illustration*, London & New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts

Bruinsma, M. (2018) 'Unicorns in the Geometrical Park', in Horton, I. & Furnée, B. *Hard Werken*, Amsterdam: Valiz, pp.212-216

Bryant, R. (2016) 'On critical times: return, repetition, and the uncanny present', *History and Anthropology*, Vol. 27, No. 1, pp.19-31

Candlin, F. (2000) 'Practice-based Doctorates and the Questions of Academic Legitimacy', *Journal of Art and Design Education*, Vol. 19, No. 1, pp.96-101

Callon, M. (1991) 'Techno-economic networks and irreversibility' in Law, J. (Ed) *A Sociology of Monsters: Essays on Power, Technology, and Domination*, London: Routledge, pp.132-161

Candy, L. (2006) *Practice-based Research: A Guide*, CCS Report: 2006-V1.0 November, University of Technology Sydney, online. Available at: https://www.creativityandcognition.com/resources/PBR%20Guide-1.1-2006.pdf [Accessed 16.March 2019]

Carter, P. (2004) *Material Thinking*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press

Carter, P. (2013) *Meeting Place*: *the human encounter and the challenge of coexistence*, Minneapolis, MS: University of Minnesota Press

Chamberlain, H. (2019) *British Artist Ian Wright*, Youtube, online. Available: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85CjoRNPGDs [Accessed 8 May 2023]

Chute, H. (2010) *Graphic Women: Life Narrative and Contemporary Comics*, New York: Columbia University Press

Clifford, J. (1986) 'Introduction: Partial Truths' in Clifford, J. & Marcus, G., *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, Berkley: The University of California Press, pp.1-26

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

Clifford, J. (1988) *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press

Coe, S. & Metz, H. (1983) *How to commit suicide in South Africa*, London: Knockabout Comics

Cosgrove, D. (Ed.) (1999) *Mappings*, London: Reaktion

Craig, S.R. (2020) *The Ends of Kinship*, Seattle: University of Washington Press

Critchley, S. (2020) *Apply-Degger*, podcast, Athens: Onassis Foundation

Cross, N. (Ed.) (1972) *Design Participation: Proceedings of the Design Research Society's conference, Manchester, September 1971,* London: Academy Editions

Cross, N. (1982) 'Designerly Ways of Knowing', *Design Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 4, pp.221-227

Crow, D. (2003, 2010, 2018, 2022) *Visible Signs: An Introduction to Semiotics in the Visual Arts*, Lausanne: Ava Publishing

Cullum, A., Jarvis,P., Unitt, C. (2020) 'Layers of London: Mapping the Journey, Evaluation Report', *Layers of London*, website, online. Available at: https://lol-content.rooftop.io/sites/398/2021/01/15161740/Layers-Evaluation-Report-4_FINAL-ISSUED-300920.pdf [Accessed 18. May 2023]

Curtis, K. (1999) *Our Sense of the Real, Aesthetic Experience and Arendtian Politics*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press

De Carlo, G. ([1970] 2005) 'Architecture's Public', in Blundell Jones, P., Petrescu, D. & Till, J. (Eds.) *Architecture and Participation*, London: Taylor & Francis, pp.3-18

Dean, R.T. & Smith, H. (2009) *Practice-led research, research-led practice in the creative arts*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press

Devisch, I. (2013) *Jean-Luc Nancy and the Question of Community*, London: Bloomsbury

Disalvo, C. (2020) 'Publics', in Tassinari, V. & Staszowski, E. (Eds.) *Designing in Dark Times: An Arendtian Lexicon*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing, pp.259-262

Doane, M.A. (2007) 'Indexicality: Trace and Sign, Introduction', in Doane, M.A. (Ed.) *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies; Indexicality: Trace and Sign*, Vol. 18, No. 1, pp.1-6

Doyle, S., Grove, J. & Sherman, W. (2018) *History of Illustration*, New York: Fairchild Books

Drucker, J. (2009) 'Nano-Graphology and Models of Digital Writing as Notation, Inscription, Trace, Code and Attitude', in *Beyond the Margins*, publication following a symposium on experimental typography organised by Anglia Ruskin University in association with the research unit for Information Environments, UAL, Cambridge, 12.9.2009, no page numbers

Drummond, H. (2021) 'Looking Through My Phone', *Colouring In: Nature* (Issue 1), pp.31–36, online. Available at: https://www.colouring-in.com/images/uploads/colouring-in-nature.pdf [Accessed 2. December 2021]

Eisenstein, E. (1980) *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Elkins, J. & McGuire, K. (Eds.) (2013a) *Theorizing Visual Studies: Writing Through the Discipline*, Abingdon & New York: Routledge

Elkins, J. (2013b-ongoing) *Writing with Images*, website. Available at: http://writingwithimages.com/ [Accessed 24. February 2022]

Escobar, A. (2018) *Designs for the Pluriverse: Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds*, Durham: Duke University Press

Fauchon, M. & Gannon, R. (2021) *Illustration Research Methods*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing

Ferraris, M. (2013) *Documentality*, New York: Fordham University Press

Foster, H. (1996) 'The Artist as Ethnographer', in *The Return of the Real*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press, pp.170-203

Foucault, M. ([1969] 1977) 'What is an Author?' in Bouchard, D. (Ed.) *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, pp.113-138

Fraser, N. (1984) 'The French Derrideans: Politicizing Deconstruction or Deconstructing the Political?', *New German Critique*, No.133, pp.127-154

Fry, T. ([1999]2020) *Defuturing*, London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts

Garfield, S. (2011) *Just my Type*, London: Profile Books

Gitelman, L. (2014) *Paper Knowledge, Towards a Media History of Documents*, Durham: Duke University Press

Goldsmith, K. (2011) *Uncreative Writing: Managing Language in the Digital Age*, New York: Columbia University Press

Gorner, P. (2006) *Heidegger's Being and Time – An Introduction*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Gray, C. (1996) 'Inquiry through practice: developing appropriate research strategies', originally presented at *No Guru No Method? International Conference on Art and Design Research*, 4-6 Sept 1996, University of Art and Design Helsinki UIAH, online. Available at: http://carolegray.net/assets/inquiry-through-practice.pdf [Accessed 9.April 2023]

Grove, J. (2011) 'Netting jellyfish: A point of view on illustration research from the United States and Canada', *Journal of Illustration*, Vol. 4, No. 3, pp.287-307

Grove, J. (2018) 'The "Theoretical Turn" and pedagogy in illustration education', *Journal of Illustration*, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp.179-190

Grove, J. (2023) 'The Lacuna's Calling: A Graphic Reckoning with History, *Colouring In: The Past* (Issue 3), online, forthcoming on https://www.colouring-in.com/

Hackney HOWLers (2021) *Write Women into History*, London

Hardie, G. (2011) 'Foreword', in Zeegen, L. *The Fundamentals of Illustration*, Lausanne: AVA Publishing, p.7

Harley, J.B. (1989) 'Deconstructing the map', *Cartographica*, Vol. 26, No. 2, pp.1–20

Harrison, R., DeSilvey, C., et.al. (2020) *Heritage Futures: Comparative approaches to natural and cultural heritage practices*, London: UCL Press

Heidegger, M. [(1927] 1962) *Being and Time*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell

Heidegger, M. (1977) *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, London & New York: Garland Publishing

Heidegger, M. (1993) *Basic Writings* (ed. David Farrell Krell), New York: Harper Collins

Heller, S. (2000) 'The End of Illustration' in Heller, S. & Arisman, M. (Eds.) *The Education of an Illustrator*, New York: Allworth Press, pp. 23-28

Hoogslag, N. (2014) *On the Persistence of a Modest Medium: The Role of Editorial Illustration in Print and Online Media*, PhD thesis, Royal College of Art

Hoogslag, N. (2015) conversation with the author, Brighton, 28. Aug 2015

Horton, I. & Gray, M. (2023) 'Seeing ~~Comics~~/Illustration through Art History: Alternative Approaches to the Form', *Colouring In: The Past* (Issue 3), online, forthcoming on https://www.colouring-in.com/

Husserl, E. ([1954] 1970) *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Philosophy*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press

IDEO (2009) *HCD Toolkit*, San Francisco: Designkit IDEO

IDEO (2015) The *Fieldguide to Human Centred Design*, San Francisco: Designkit IDEO

Ingold, T. (2011) *Being Alive, Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*, London: Routledge

Islam,A.K.M.N., Mäntymäki, M. & Turunen, M. (2019) 'Why do blockchains split? An actor-network perspective on Bitcoin splits', *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, Vol 148 , [119743]

James, A., Hockey, R. & Dawson, A. (1997) *After Writing Culture: Epistemology and Praxis in Contemporary Anthropology*, London & New York: Routledge

James, I. (2006) *The Fragmentary Demand: An introduction to the Philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy*, Standford: Standford University Press

Janus, A. (2016) 'Introduction', in Giunta, C. & Janus, A. (Eds.) *Nancy and Visual Culture*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press

Jaramillo, G. (2021) 'Lines of Enquiry: navigating hybrid mark-making assemblages' presentation at *Remote Sensing Symposium*, hosted by Camberwell College of Arts, UAL, 30 April 2021, online. See publication available online: http://remote--sensing.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/RS_publication_A4.pdf [Accessed 20. May 2023]

Jost, E. & Whadcock, I. (2018) 'Contested Spaces', *Varoom*, 38, pp.58-63

Junoon Theatre (2019) *Mumbai Local with Nina Sabnani: Art as Ethnographic Practice*, Youtube, online. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uJJtu3884l0 [Accessed 8 May 2023)

Kester, G. (2004) *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*, Oakland: University of California Press

Kim, Y. (2022) 'Intangible to tangible: Illustration practice as a tool for safeguarding a disappearing culture of lived experience', *Journal of Illustration*, Vol. 9, No. 1-2, pp.239-261

Kimbell, L. (2011) 'Rethinking Design Thinking: Part 1', *Design and Culture*, Vol. 3, No. 3, pp.285-306

Kimbell, L. (2012) 'Rethinking Design Thinking: Part 2', *Design and Culture*, Vol. 4, No. 2, pp.129-148

Kitchin, R. & Dodge, M. (2007) 'Rethinking Maps', *Progress in Human Geography*, Vol. 31, No. 1, pp.331-344

Kolb, D. ([1984] 2014) *Experiential Learning: experience as the source of learning and development*, Hoboken: Pearson FT

Krauss, R. ([1976–77] 1986) 'Notes on the Index: Part 1 & Part 2', in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, Cambridge: MIT Press, pp.196-220

Kress, G. & Van Leeuwen, T. (1996, 2006 & 2020) *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*, London & New York: Routledge

Kwon, M. (2002) *One Place after Another*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press

Lacoue-Labarthe, P. & Nancy, J.-L. (1997) *Retreating the Political*, London & New York: Routledge

Lacy, S. (1995) *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*, Seattle: Bay Press

Latour, B. (1986) 'Visualisation and Cognition: Drawing Things Together', *Knowledge and Society in the Sociology of Culture Past and Present*, Jai Press, Vol. 6, pp.1-40

Latour, B. (2005) 'From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik, or How to Make Things Public', introduction to Latour, B. & Weibel, P. (Eds.) *Making Things Public*, ZKM Centre for Art and Media Karlsruhe, Cambridge & London: MIT Press, pp.5-31

Latour, B. (2020) 'Land and people once again', keynote address at *Anthropology and Geography: Dialogues Past, Present and Future*, conference hosted by The Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland (RAI), online. Recording available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O0DItLVJsXg or via the RAI website [Accessed 30. August 22]

Leeson, L. (2019) 'Our land: creative approaches to the redevelopment of London's Docklands', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 4, pp.365-379

Lefebvre, H. ([1961] 2002) *Critique of Everyday Life Volume 2*, London: Verso

Leishman, D. (2018) 'More eyes, different eyes', *Journal of Illustration*, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp.191-205

Lovejoy, R.W. (2018) 'Chapter 11: Dangerous Pictures: Social Commentary in Europe, 1720-1860', in Doyle, S., Grove, J. & Sherman, W. (2018) *History of Illustration*, New York: Fairchild Books, pp.170-183

Lupton, E. (1998) 'The Designer as Producer', in Heller, S. (Ed.) *The Education of a Graphic Designer*, New York: Allworth Press, pp.159-162

Lynch, K. (1960) *The Image of the City*, Cambridge: MIT Press

Male, A. (Ed.) (2019) *A Companion to Illustration*, Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons Inc.

Massey, D. (2005) *For Space*, London: Sage

Mason, R. (2000) *A digital dolly?*, Norwich: University of Norwich

Matarasso, F. (2019) *A Restless Art: How participation won and why it matters*, London: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation

McCarthy, S. (2013) *The Designer as…: Author, Producer, Activist, Entrepreneur, Curator, and Collaborator*, London: Laurence King Publishing

McLoughlin, C. (2022) 'An illustrated Reader: Illustration, fiction and historical narratives', *Journal of Illustration*, Vol. 9, No. 1-2, pp. 217-238

McQuiston, L. (1995) *Graphic Agitation: Social and Political Graphics since the Sixties*, London: Phaidon

McRobbie, A. (2001) '"Everyone is Creative": artists as new economy pioneers?', *Open Democracy*, online. Available at: http://www.opendemocracy.net/node/652 [Accessed 20. March 2016]

McRobbie, A. (2011) 'The Los Angelisation of London: Three Short Waves of Young People's Micro-Economies of Culture and Creativity in the UK' in Raunig, G., Ray, G. & Waggenig, U. (Eds.) *Critique of Creativity: Precarity, Subjectivity and Resistance in the Creative Industries*, London: Mayfly, pp.119-131

Miers, J. (2017) 'Event review of 'Markings: Festival of Illustration and Performance', at Central St Martins, UAL, 8-9th July 2016, *Spark*, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp.68-83

Miers, J. (2021) 'Conflict or Compromise? An Imagined Conversation with John Hicklenton and Lindsay Cooper about Living with Multiple Sclerosis', *Biography*, Vol. 44, No. 2&3, pp.25-38

Miessen, M. (Ed.) (2007) *The Violence of Participation*, Berlin: Sternberg Press

Miessen, M. (2011) *The Nightmare of Participation*, Berlin: Sternberg Press

Miller, M. (2016) *An unruly parliament of lines: The dialectogram as process and artifact of social engagement*, PhD thesis, Glasgow School of Art

Mitchell, W. J. T. (1984) 'What is an Image?', *New Literary History: A Journal of Theory and Interpretation*, Vol. 15, No. 3, pp.503-537

Mitchell, W.J.T. (1994) *Picture Theory*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Mitchell, W.J.T. (2002) *Landscape and Power*, 2nd Edition, Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Mitchell, W.J.T. (2005) *What do Pictures Want?*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Moran, D. (2000) *Introduction to Phenomenology*, London & New York: Routledge

Moran, D. (2012) *Husserl's Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Morgan, C., & Fauchon, M. (2011) *Phantom Settlements*, London: Ditto Press

Morgan, C. (2012) 'Phantom Settlements', *Journal of Writing in Creative Practice*, Vol.4, No. 3, pp.329-350

Morgan, C. (2014a) *A Taxonomy of Deception*, PhD thesis, Royal College of Art

Morgan, C. (2014b) 'Illustration and Deception', paper presented at *Mokita: 'Style' Illustration Symposium*, London, Somerset House, 10. Oct 2014

Morgan, C. (2016) 'The New Canon', *Varoom*, 32, pp.36-37

Nancy, J.-L. (1991) *The Inoperative Community*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

Nancy, J-L. (1997) *The Sense of the World*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

Nancy, J-L. (2000) *Being Singular Plural,* Stanford: Stanford University Press

Nancy, J-L. (2007) *The Creation of the World or Globalization*, Albany: SUNY

Nancy, J-L. (2017) *The Possibility of a World*, New York: Fordham University Press

O'Reilly, J. (2013) 'Interview', *Well Said*, catalogue of BA Illustration, Camberwell College of Arts, UAL, pp.12-17

Pandian, A. & McLean, S. (2017) *Crumpled Paper Boat: Experiments in Ethnographic Writing*, Durham: Duke University Press

Pateman, C. (1970) *Participation and democratic theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Perloff, M. (2010) *Unoriginal Genius: Poetry by Other Means in the New Century*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Pink, S. (2013) *Doing Visual Ethnography*, 3rd Edition, Los Angeles & London: Sage

Poynor, R. (1999) 'Illustrate This', *Frieze*, 49, pp.58-60

Poynor, R. (2010) 'Show and Tell: "Illustration Criticism" is practically and oxymoron', *PRINT*, June, pp. 30-32

Regan, C. (2016? – undated document) 'Illustrator as Detective: Discovery through Drawing', *Varoomlab*, Nr 4, 'Visionaries', pp.73-84. Available at: https://theaoi.com/resources/research-and-insights/varoomlab-4-visionaries/ [Accessed 3. March 2022, accessible for AOI members only]

Rees, D. (2008, 2014) *How to be an Illustrator*, London: Laurence King

Rees, D. (2000) 'Mutant Futures: Is Obsolescence Really Looming?' in Heller, S. & Arisman, M. (Eds.) *The Education of an Illustrator*, New York: Allworth Press, pp. 36-39

Reyna, S. P. (1994) 'Literary Anthropology and the Case against Science', *Man*, Vol. 29, pp.555-581

Ricoeur, P. (1977) *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press

Robertsen, T. & Simonsen, J. (Eds.) (2012) *Routledge International Handbook of Participatory Design*, New York: Routledge

Rock, M. ([1996] 2013) 'Designer as Author', in *Multiple Signatures: On Designers, Authors, Readers and Users*, New York: Rizzoli, pp.45-56

Rockmore, T. (1991) *On Heidegger's Nazism and Philosophy*, Berkley: University of California Press

Roney, P. (2013) 'The outside of phenomenology: Jean-Luc Nancy on world and sense', *South African Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 32, No. 4, pp.339-347

Schatzki, T. (2005) 'Early Heidegger on Sociality', in Dreyfus, H. & Wrathall, M. (Eds.) *A Companion to Heidegger*, Malden, Oxford & Carlton: Blackwell Publishing, pp.233-247

Schön, D. (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner*, Aldershot: Ashgate Books

Schütz, A. (1945) 'On Multiple Realities', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 5, No. 4, pp. 533-576

Schütz, A. ([1932] 1972), *The Phenomenology of the Social World*, London: Heinemann Educational Books

Sele, K. (2020) 'Actor Network Theory and Routine Dynamics', in Feldman, M., et.al. (Eds.) *Cambridge Handbook of Routine Dynamics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.73-84

Shaffi, S. (2023) '"It's the opposite of art": why illustrators are furious about AI', *The Guardian*, Mon 23 Jan 2023, online. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2023/jan/23/its-the-opposite-of-art-why-illustrators-are-furious-about-ai [Accessed 5 April 2023]

Shaughnessy, A. (2011) 'Authorial Practice', in Brazell, D. & Davies, J. *Making Great Illustration*, London: A&C Black Publishers, p.195

Sinclair, M. (2017) 'Illustrators-in-Residence', *Creative Review*, 31.3.2017, online. Available at: https://www.creativereview.co.uk/nous-vous-artists-residency/ [Accessed 20. May 2023]

Siddall, L. (2015) 'Pick Me Up 2015 has arrived and here's why it's totally great', *It's Nice That*, online. Available at: http://www.itsnicethat.com/articles/pick-me-up-2015 [Accessed 9. August 2016]

Spicer, T. (2023) 'AI replicates inequity at scale. We need to learn about its biases – and outsmart the algorithm', *The Guardian*, Thurs 23 Feb 2023, online. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/books/2023/feb/24/ai-art-replicates-inequity-at-scale-we-need-to-learn-about-its-biases-and-outsmart-the-algorithm [Accessed 19 May 2023]

Taylor, C. (2004) *Modern Social Imaginaries*, Durham & London: Duke University Press

Taylor, R.E. (2018) *Heritage as Process: Constructing the Historical Child's Voice Through Art Practice*, PhD thesis, Sheffield Hallam University

Till, J. (2005) 'The negotiation of hope', in Blundell Jones, P., Petrescu, D. & Till, J. (Eds.) *Architecture and Participation*, London: Taylor & Francis, pp.19-41

Till, J. (2006) 'The architect and the other' in *Open Democracy*, available online https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/architecture_3680jsp/ [Accessed 10 May 2016]

Triggs, T. (2000) 'What am I?' in Heller, S. & Arisman, M. (Eds.) *The Education of an Illustrator*, New York: Allworth Press, pp.48-50

Tsing, A. (2015) *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the possibility of life in capitalist ruins*, Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press

Tuan, Y.F. (1991) 'Language and the Making of Place: A Narrative-Descriptive Approach', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 81, No. 4, pp.684-696

Van Toorn, J. (2016) 'Operationalising the Means: Communication Design as Critical Practice', *Modes of Criticism*, Issue 2, pp.39-44

Vargas, G. M. (2020) 'Alfred Schutz's Life-World and Intersubjectivity', *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, No. 8, pp. 417-425

Venuti, L. (1995) *The Translator's Invisibility: A history of translation*, London: Routledge

Venuti, L. (2021) *The Translation Studies Reader*, London: Routledge

Vormittag, L. (2014) 'Making (the) subject matter: Illustration as interactive, collaborative practice', *Journal of Illustration*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp.41-67

Vormittag, L. (2015) 'Rumor, Legend, Tradition, Fact', *Journal of Illustration*, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp.223-244

Vormittag, L. (2017) 'Hello, my name is Mavis Davis', *Varoom*, 35, pp.50-53

Vormittag (2021) 'Optical Unconscious', *Varoom*, 42, pp.82-93

Weizmann, E. (2011) 'Prologue: The Paradox of Participation', in Miessen, M. *The Nightmare of Participation*, Berlin: Sternberg Press, pp.9-11

Wessendorf, S. (2014) '"Being open, but sometimes closed." Conviviality in a super-diverse London neighbourhood', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 4, pp.392-405

Withagen, R. & Caljouw, S. (2017) 'Aldo van Eyck's Playgrounds: Aesthetics, Affordances, and Creativity', *Frontiers in Psychology*, Vol. 8, [1130]

Yeganeh, H. (2021) 'Orality, literacy and the "great divide" in cultural values', *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, Vol. 42, No. 5/6, pp.564-582

Young, I.M. (1990) 'The Ideal of Community and the Politics of Difference', in Nicholson, L.J. (Ed.) *Feminism/Postmodernism*, London & New York: Routledge

Zeegen, L. (2005, 2012, 2020) *The Fundamentals of Illustration*, Lausanne: AVA Publishing

Zeegen, L. (2012) 'Where's the content? Where's the comment?', *Creative Review*, March, pp. 52–53

Zeegen, L. (2014) 'Opinion: Lawrence Zeegen is left unmoved by this year's Pick Me Up', *It's Nice That*, online. Available at: http://www.itsnicethat.com/articles/opinion-lawrence-zeegen-pickme-up [Accessed 7. August 2016]

Zenker, O. & Kumoll, K. (2010) *Beyond Writing* Culture*: Current Intersections of Epistemologies and Representational Practices*, New York: Berghahn Books

Appendix

Interview with Mitch Miller

9. May 2016, Wasp Studios, Glasgow

Transcript

MM = Mitch Miller
LV = Luise Vormittag

[…]

LV: So this is *Travellerology*?

MM: *Travellerology*, yeah. I'll just give you the run-down on that.
This was made in 2009, end of 2009. And it's really ….. a satirical take on architectural and anthropological diagrams, basically. I've got connections with the travelling community in the East End of Glasgow: It's a very big community, it's 10% of the local schools… so 10% of the people in the local schools of the East End are travellers, travelling show people. So it's a big minority, there are about 30 – 40 yards there as a whole. And it was that thing with the Commonwealth Games coming [they were held in Glasgow in 2014], as it happened in London in the East End, they had a clear-out mostly, big development, chunks of this being sold off, left, right and centre. Not just affecting this community, but also others. So everyone was trying to work out what they thought of it, you know, it was a healthy investment into Glasgow, it needs it, at the same time, we know what happens when money does come into Glasgow, [unintelligible] council is pretty illiberal [?] in its approach. So, obviously I have a personal connection with these places, so I suppose I do this as a satire on a lot of the images I was seeing – you know: glossy, architectural renderings, that way that architecture has of creating space, where we know there's loads of things happening, but pretending there's white space you're drawing onto, rather than a very complex ecosystem in its own right.

So I suppose I made this as bit of a satire of that, as a bit of a challenge to it, as it were. So I took the bird's eye view and I [unintelligible]. All the information here is real, all these are actual people, these are actual places… I suppose what I was trying to show was that these things aren't encampments. This one here had been there for 17 years. It was an established place.

LV: These are caravans?

MM: Yes, these are the tops of caravans. I always quite liked the lozenge shape from above that was quite an interesting one. As I say, even then, there was a slightly theoretical element to it. I read the works of Judith Okely, who was the sociologist on gypsies and travelling communities and knows more than anyone outside of them, I think, you know, how they work and how they generally think. She shared this idea of the ideal gypsy camp as seen from above. It was just a paragraph [of her writing], that's hidden in my thesis, where she basically describes looking down on it and getting the shape of it, and how the shape represents how that travelling community sees themselves.

'When Gypsies choose the layout, they often place the trailers in a circle, with a single entrance. The main windows, usually the towing bar end, face inwards. Every trailer and its occupants can be seen by everyone else.' (Okely, 1983: 88). Okely's textual sketch of the gypsy camp was a direct inspiration

for *Travellerology*. Her text 'illustration' struck me as a simple, yet effective way of explaining a culture through a pattern it made on the ground. (Mitch Miller's PhD thesis, Booklet 3, p.6)

And yet the knowledge and the texture of that sketch, as it were, was all about 'grounded' information, it was all about seeing it from the ground level. It was that suspension between the two that caught my attention. Not in a particularly developed way back then, but just somewhere at the back of your head, that reptilian brain we all have, it was ringing through.

I took an element of that and the idea of the shapes [unintelligible]. It might not your way of living, it might not be a particularly cosmetically pleasing one for some people, but there is order here and we have to acknowledge that. So that was the very first one [the very first Dialectogram].

As an insider – I might as well say: That's my mum and dad there, my brother there, my sister there. We all lived here. So these are all family, right?

So I had inside access that anyone would kill for, obviously. I was at the time doing a show at Market Gallery which was here, at Duke Street, and where this first hung and where *Duke Street* happened, project *Duke Street*, Market offered me a chance to hang. And I'd never exhibited before. It's always been proper cartoons, editorial in magazines, and I would make magazines or do zines, but never put stuff on a wall. So it was a bit of – Jesus, now I put this on a wall, you know. And then I came up with this idea and just did it. And I did speak to the family and did sort of say 'I'm doing this thing', but I didn't know what that 'thing' was either. It was kind of hard for me to explain what it was, because I was ostensibly making a buzz about it all. And when they saw this afterwards they were actually moderately impressed. Or they seemed to be impressed [laughter] …. They were as impressed as my family ever show. But they were also concerned, because there is a lot of…

LV: There is a lot of very personal information in here, right?

MM: Yes, and there were also site plans, which came with this, which showed things like relationships and business relationships and things like that. All stuff that makes anthropologists rub their hands. And now, looking back, kind of naïve, oddly, given my background naïve as well, it was quite embarrassing when I look back at it. Anyway, they said: Could you maybe take some things out? Take that out there and that out there, and I was like: No, it's in the drawing, you can't. So what we agreed was to do the next best thing – which was this – so this thing doesn't get shown much anymore. I put it in my thesis, it gets shown on rare occasions, but this will never be online. And they [the family?] were quite good about this, they said that I could hang it somewhere or put it in a museum, but they didn't want it online. So this doesn't get seen very much anymore.

And this is what we did instead. And this was done as part of the thesis. There were two reasons I did this. One was trying to correct that error. They were very like: 'We liked it, you know, we liked what you were doing. We went along with that, but we think…. Maybe there is there a way you can retain privacy?' And I said, okay, I invented names, so these are all invented names.

LV: So you added a fictional layer to it!

MM: There's a fictional layer with the invented names. The actual information is all true, but all the names are changed. And that was just a way we saw, we can still retain the value of it but we could also …. As I said, all the information is true, but the names have been changed to protect the guilty – or innocent – as you prefer.

LV: And that was the only part you fictionalised? Or did you fictionalise other aspects as well?

MM: Well, there was some, with this sort of brief….. – with these complicated family diagrams and things, I did change a couple of relationships, as an extra layer. So some of the cousins, so – there's this diagram with all the relationships – so some of these have been changed slightly, just to give them another remove. But I think, the good thing was, by the time I'd done this it was 2012, [I had started in?] 2009. The time I was doing this I was much more practiced in these things.

LV: Yes, this feels so much more sophisticated already.

MM: Yes, a more complex thing: It was all contained in the one board, and there's colour as well. I'm not good at colour, but I've gotten better, because I made myself get better at it because I think you need colour actually in these things. To some extent. But I was able to…. As I said – I had more practice, I had more awareness at that point of where the drawing and the research and the ethics all came together. And I was able to, sort of, test that out. I also was able to look at where my style was. And I changed my style had been developing since then, and was able to [unintelligible] where it is now. So there were a lot of things I was doing with this. I call it an experiment.

LV: So here you open up things from inside [of the caravans].

MM: Yeah, this is what came with the Red Road as well, was the slicing-the-top of thing. And that was one thing I said about this – was: 'What does he say?' It was probably a good thing I didn't have that at that point [laughter] …
But here I could. And again: There's some fictionalisation here, I changed some of the details here but it's not that different. I mean, that is my old room there. You know, so some of that is very similar. So the same idea: Cutting the top of the whole thing and looking in, there is just very different ways of looking at it.

Other things I developed were more object-based approaches. Here is – just looking at an object and drawing the object out.

LV: What is that?

MM: It's a Crown Derby plate. If you see inside the wagon you will see lots of Crown Derby plates. And English Rose. Bohemian Dux. And those awful shepherd…. What's it called? My wife was offered one as a wedding present and she very heroically managed to decline. [laughter]

LV: Without offending people?

MM: I don't know. She's got … it was … I don't know. I have a feeling it will come back to her one day. We'll have to have one, I think.

Also with these elements as well, I was able to add extra context. This is quite an interesting [unintelligible]: if you look at the original one in the thesis, you see there is a whole keyboard this size, no A1 size, rather than A2. So I just shrunk it down.

So as I said, this was a way of righting some wrongs, but also of looking at where I was, in a way. Here's where the method is, here's the strengths and weaknesses and what it can do and what it can't do and this is it. You're lucky to see this, because this is going into the Riverside Museum in about a month's time…

LV: What's this? Is this a map?

MM: Yes, this is a map of family connections. The family's [unintelligible] and what it establishes is pretty much everyone is connected.

LV: The [name] are separate?

MM: Yes. I couldn't find any family connection there, but all the rest are, pretty much.
So, you have this on the [USB] stick.
So that was – and I suppose this represents the classic style, if there is a classic style, but before this there had been four Red Road drawings as well. You can see ones behind you there. This is a print. Look at the state of this. I need to be more careful with these things. This one. This is the last of the Red Road ones. This is just four best everything [?].

LV: So what's 'Red Road'?

MM: The Red Road Flats are a high-rise housing scheme up here in the estates, that until last October you could probably just see if you went up to the top of that bridge there and looked over you could see Red Road Flats. They were once the tallest residential buildings in Europe. They were built in a steel framed, steel coated, Manhattan style and it was switched to Glasgow to-- there was taking the Manhattan principle and putting it in the worst possible district [?] – [laughter] – because Manhattan high-rises worked, because you got Manhattan there, you got every kind of food you'd ever want, and they tried it as a social housing. A very grandiose social housing statement in the north of Glasgow and the north of Glasgow has always been a tricky part of Glasgow. We had been the periphery of Glasgow, seen it that way and so forth. It lasted 40 years, it had a very good patch, late '60s through to late '70s, was a good time. People went from single end tenements, so all living in one room and the shared toilet and terrible, awful conditions to these flats.

I don't know if you can see this, this is the concierge office. It's got the same schema here, this would usually be a living room here and two bedrooms, toilet, balcony, modern, sleek. At the time, it was just amazing.

As with a lot of high-rise, not all of them, they suffered issues with tenancies. The wrong tenants got in. Drugs, of course, came to this country, in the '80s, that changed everything again. There was always a gang culture in Glasgow, it got worse with the drugs coming in and the flats went through several phases of trying to cover it and they did, in the late '80s, brought concierges in. Really improved things for a while and then you had an upsurge of homelessness and a laudable desire to get them almost off the streets, but the ways in which those tenancies were sometimes managed, weren't always great. In the late '90s, you had this real downturn, because they weren't managing the tenancy properly and sometimes you were having people who just who needed a different place to be and a much more supportive tenancy, rather than a high-rise one with an old lady and you know…. You can imagine that. They'd chuck their fridges out of the window instead of taking them downstairs, stuff like that.

And then a lot of suicide and stuff. Then the asylum seekers came in from 1999. And that brings conflicts as with a lot of people. A lot of asylum seekers and immigrants, with immigrant status, look back fondly, but some of them didn't. When I started at Red Roads in 2010, there was a suicide, three horrific suicides on the day I was due to start…

LV: Three? On one day?

MM: Yes, they all jumped. They were all going to be sent to Dungavel Detention Centre [immigration removal centre] and they just decided, 'We're not going back. We are not risking it.' They just– the family of three just jumped. It was horrific. That actually put a stop to all work. I should've said, that I was there under the auspices of the Red Road Cultural Project and that was run by Glasgow Life. They are a semi– what are they now? They're public, but they're slightly privatized company that runs all museums here and sport centres. There are a beast. They are apart from council, they've broken off. It's a public company, but it's not private, but it's not… you know. They were running it with the partnership of the YMCA. We're running a lot here, refugee flats, and Glasgow Housing Association. Who again, are a similar case of social housing being taken out into its own…

LV: What a complicated setup, but interesting. Very complex.

MM: It was very complex and they were running this project together.

LV: What were you supposed to do? What was your mission?

MM: Well, my mission that I was supposed to accept was– [laughs] was I was supposed to look at the interiors and to focus on documentation that they're…

LV: Was this an initiative that came from one of these organisations that you've just named or was it your personal initiative and that you approached them with it?

MM: A bit of both. What happened was that the Red Road Project had been going since 2008

and initially it had been about giving provision to mostly asylum seeker kids, but also some of the indigenous Scottish local kids who didn't have anything to do round here, because North Glasgow is a bit of a desert, bad residential housing and the odd Tesco. They were basically trying to provide something for the kids. It that was workshops and…. Yeah.

But then it started by 2009, it was very clear that the flats would be coming down [the housing blocks], and [unintelligible] was going to be the first and that was definite. It became, more about legacy. There were already artists working up there and Alison Irvine, a novelist, had just started when she saw this [dialectogram] at the show and actually was with an artist who she was also very good friends with. It's a very Glasgow thing, because everyone in Glasgow knows each other. We were at the same wedding and she said, 'Could you come and do that, that would be great', and I got an invitation to put together a proposal at that point. I looked at it and I thought, 'Yeah, I could do that', and I didn't have a method set or anything. I didn't know what the hell I was doing, but I thought that, 'Yes, I'm just going to try it. This is too interesting not to look at'.

LV: The emphasis already here was on legacy, on capturing and preserving something?

MM: Yes. It was more about documentation, at that point. Which is interesting, because actually since then, I've become more participatory and I've seen another way in which the participation might've been more in the forefront and more open. But at that point, it was more a documentary process. What's interesting about this, was that it shows detail and it shows stories and narratives in a different way. It is a document of something, whereas, a lot of people do, quite rightly, 3D or panoramas or shots of the flats, ... and Alison was looking at the story and there was something between them. That's why I got in there.

I started at the concierge, six months there, hanging out with those guys. They gave me a studio as well in that block, on the 25th floor. I got a full experience of Red Road swaying in the wind with weird noises and stuff like that. I would work, I had a studio for three years as well, which was great. I was working at Red Road.

LV: So you'd just go and hang out with the guys downstairs?

MM: Basically, yes.
I did have an inner demon – why is this so embarrassing for me in some ways—because I have a lot of experience in ethnographic field work and I had done a lot of that with Traveller Education Project and been at university for various educational bodies in Scotland. I'd done that as a job, so there was kind of a divided self. It was the researcher in me that did that sort of work to make a living sometimes and the other me that was a cartoonist and illustrator. I did that in the other hours, at night and usually—

LV: Doing the ethnographic fieldwork, what did that look like? You were commissioned by these other bodies that had this anthropological projects and you were brought in as a– ?

MM: It was a mixture. The Traveller Education programme really, we were trying to establish the situation….. On one hand, had a direct educational need to look at truancy and school attendance and issues about accessing education for travelling show-people, gypsy travellers and Irish travellers and so forth. But it was also a slightly sneaky attempt…. this is a chance to actually know what's going on, to actually look at – to move beyond the perfectly fine ethnological stuff…There was a strand in Scottish culture, collecting ballads and folk tales. The Scottish Highland Travellers in particular, were an amazing resource for that. It was all very much focused on that. There was no real interest… I mean, anything, any books on Scottish Highland Travellers [unintelligible] … up until 1935. After that, it ceased to exist.

If you want to actually understand Highland Travellers today, and it's not a fairy story of [unintelligible – makes joke?]…, no one had done that research. The step was trying to establish things… and similarly with my group…. the show-people, all the books you could ever find were about Gavioli organs and boxes [?] …. all fine. I love a bit of that myself, but nothing about our context, our situation, social issues we face, marginalization, that thing. Nothing. There was some stuff on Romanies in English – well, we call it English Romanies up here, because we often have English [unintelligible] for about two or three generations at least.

A lot in that, because of the Romany diaspora and a lot of stuff being down in England by people like, [Judith] Okely and Thomas Acton [?], but very little up here. There was an element to which I was part of a very rag-tag team of people just trying to do what we could. And it was very… Basically, it was like my first experience of ethnography was like, 'Here is a tape recorder, here is an expense form. Good luck.'

That's all we could do, because I had the connections, I was able to get stuff. I was able to come back and that was a very rude and rough introduction into that. I did take a Masters in Social Research, because I actually found it really interesting.

LV: You did a Masters in what? Social Research?

MM: Social Research Methods, yes. Nothing to do with… again, this is why this is so embarrassing to me, but my art education came much later. Yes, I did a Social Research Methods Degree and…

LV: Wow. There is a whole degree just on methods?

MM: Yes, it's a year long, but it's very intensive. You start stuff and I never got my head around it, numeracy it's not my thing. I struggled, I fought through it and managed to get a…. I was told quite nicely, that [unintelligible], but I couldn't count, but there you go. It was worthwhile, because obviously, by the end of that and having done practical learning through the STEP work, I just knew how to do ethnography.

LV: When you say STEP work, what steps?

MM: Sorry, Scottish Traveller Education Program.

LV: Okay.

MM: I worked for them from 1996… I was still an undergrad then… 1996 through to 2000, actually. On and off, it was very casual. Sometimes it could be quite intensive, and other times…

LV: What was your undergraduate degree?
MM: History and Politics

LV: Okay, no arts?

MM: Yes, I'm a complete fraud.

LV: No, that's brilliant. Because I think– this is a whole other conversation, but the problem when you are teaching art, teaching design, is that it has to be about something and some of the kids at University, they're too young, they don't know, they don't have content and they don't know what they're interested in.

MM: Yes. I was very active in the underground comic scene in Glasgow and Edinburgh during that. I've drawn since I was young and always loved it and all the way through High School I then was still involved, but it was like… I got into Art School, bizarrely. And then I thought, 'I can't go to Art School.' I just didn't know how to tell my parents I got into Art School. My parents didn't care. They would have let me stay on [?], no one else in the family did. They didn't give a damn about me and my neurosis. I just couldn't tell them, I just couldn't. I didn't even mention it to them.

LV: You went to Art School after your Masters?

MM: Yes, I did a PhD. I taught in Art School for a while. And then I did a PhD. I'm looking forward to the undergraduate teaching. I'm sure it will come at some point, because the kids have a great time. No, I did it all arse over, really. I taught in ECA [Edinburgh College of Art] for about five years and then I came back [unintelligible]. I imagine you know about that and then I was doing a bit of teaching for the University of Glasgow's 'Creative School.. something, something'. I should know this, because I still do

teaching for them. [unintelligible], what do we call this? Then some for GSA [Glasgow School of Art] as well.

The GSA came about for a lot of reasons, I don't think it was ever for a clear reason. On one hand, I did what I wanted to do and I was at the stage. I was just at the point where I
was thinking about the PhD and I got in, this is what I was doing at the beginning of the PhD, this is where we were.

LV: This is the Red Road.

MM: Yes, this is The Brig, the underground bar. There was an extra underground bingo, of course, that was built like a ship. I always loved The Brig for many reasons. Although, it was the most terrifying one I've ever done. They were gangsters, half of them. It's called, 'The Brig' and in Glasgow parlance that's 'bridge'. I think we're 'We're on the bridge, it's like the Enterprise!'. But the bridge is the most [unintelligible…makes joke?] of a ship – I told a couple of them and they weren't amused. They were like, "What? He's a smart guy." Got to stop telling that.

It was an amazing place that had been derelict for 10 years. It had been shut down due to legal issues. I think someone got arrested. But a lot was just left there and these tables were left, these 'Compass' tables that you'd pay a premium quid for now, on one of those 'past and present' catalogues. My mate Chris, she was a photographer I mentioned before. We pinched one each.

That was where it was I suppose, at the time, this is where it got me to. What you're seeing here is obviously, seeing the clock view, the bird's eye view and the way I use it – that had been set, that became a 'thing'. I'm using the frame of the place as it were, to then contain narrative elements. Whether it's text or wee elevations or diagrams or wee comics. There's no comic strips on this one, but the other one's [unintelligible]. In a way I suppose, that's an important thing to acknowledge, that it's kind of like big comic strips. There's an element of that, because this is just a panel and then you can play around with that. All this here, every quote here is verbatim, from someone, someone has told me that, and I put it in the drawing. And that's the ethnographic part I suppose, the ethnographic knowledge I'm trying to work with and deal with.

LV: Are there any fictional elements in this?

MM: No, there are always some elements where I'll make a decision or negotiation around tricky issues. For example, some of the people who ran this place were terrifying people, from the dark Glasgow gangland. I don't know if it's quite as bad as the London gangland, but we're getting there. We compete, let's put it that way. Some of that stuff I kept out, some of that stuff I was maybe, a bit more circumspect with. Generally, speaking I try to make it true. It's not journalism, right. Journalism, you're there for the exposé, you're there to cut through things. Even then, these things were a much more collaborative nature between myself and these people. That takes a different ethic. You're creating an artefact together.

LV: It's not about the exposé, as you say. It's about documentation and what? Creating an archive?

MM: Yes, creating an archive, but occasionally in the last couple of weeks, I was increasingly worried. Worried is actually not a bad word about what they were getting out of it too. I've been working with groups of people at Red Road, sometimes for two or three years. Some of the people came back, the second one, *The Nivens*, I work with a family there and the son from that family there worked on this one as well. There's on-going relationships that stayed through the drawings as well as single shop [? – one-off participation?], which is just as you like... New relationships become increasingly important to me and increasingly clear that… going and extracting stuff from them, buggering off to my studio, making a *fait accompli,* and then say 'What do you think of that?' wasn't quite good enough.

LV: But was that you thinking that or did you get that sense from any of the people that you were working with?

MM: Not really, although there was an interesting case with this one. In this one here, became very

good friends with the guy called, Donny who…

LV: 'This one' is the *The Concierge Station.* I'm just saying that, when I listen back—

MM: I'm very fond of this one. In a way, as I see it, this is the 'properly first one' [first proper dialectogram]. This is where it all just happened and came together mostly, because in terms of my art, I didn't know what I was doing. I just thought, that I'd find a way of getting from that to something more credible and dealing with the fact I'm dealing with people here. I was there [*A Showman's Yard*], but these were people I knew. These were people I had almost immediately I had a sense of responsibility for.

And Donny was this great guy, he'd worked there for 10 years. Very funny, deadpan, a proper Glaswegian. He told me this, it was just this funny story about—they were told to polish the lift brasses. Now this is about a building that's been earmarked for demolition. At that point we'd been told it would be within 6 months. Actually it was in 3 or 4 years, but it felt that this building was doomed, then. And he was told to polish lift brasses [?], the wee bits of metal by the…. And he was like 'Alright…'. [laughter]. I can only assume that [unintelligible] [laughter].

And I thought – that's funny. I gotta take that, and I put it on [in the drawing]. And it wasn't until he… I finished the drawing and they all say, 'Oh, that's great.' I don't remember pointing it out to him. I put it on the wall of the concierge office for a few months [unintelligible] before The People's Palace Museum in Glasgow acquired it. And then it went up at The People's Palace. It was there, at that exhibition that Donny was there and I I was really glad to see him come or whatever [?]. He was like, 'Oh.' He saw that and he went red and was like, 'Did I say that thing?' I was like, 'Yes. Yes.' He was like, 'Oh, God. Of course I was not meant to do that. [?]'

Well, I think this is quite gently incriminating, in a sense and he's not, obviously, gonna get him fired for making it. It [unintelligible]. And actually he was glad I kept that in. There's an interview with Donny and he says – he says, that he's overall, glad we kept it in. Because it is funny. But you could see how that would be an issue.

That for me, at that point is like, right, these are problematic in terms of consent. Or at least – I've got to be very careful about how to guide people through these things, because you can mess up.

The joy of them is that you can look at them again and again and see something new, but the problem with it, is that's something you may be– something a little problematic. That was already pushing me towards a more participatory approach, a more phased approach. It was already trying to clarify for me that question: What do they get out of this? I'm getting a lot out of this. I'm coming in and I'm taking all of his stuff and I'm making my big drawing and I'm massaging my ego and all that stuff that an artist can do, right?

What was baffling – is there a way of dealing with that? Is there a way of improving that? That was the question I had when I started the PhD. What do you do about that? And in a sense, that is why, again, this is quite an important drawing, because it was starting to address that question. The PhD was about this– going back to the PhD. That's one of the initial questions. It was on the pragmatic reason to**…**

LV: I think it's a really interesting question, because it's a question that came almost out of your conscience. It wasn't a question that out of any of the interactions. Nobody came to you and was like, 'What am I getting?'

MM: People are remarkably forgiving. They're remarkably– and they can be. They can be..

LV: But that sounds like you committed a crime.
[laughter]

MM: Yes. Sometimes… I don't know. I do worry about it. In any kind of art, design, illustration process there's the ability to do that is there. You have a lot of capital and a lot of power.

LV: I do agree and it's not that I disagree with you. I think it's just a really interesting topic. Because

how in contemporary art production or whatever you want to call it, in this kind of whole socially-engaged-blah-dee-blah, the whole issue of ethics has become so large and has become almost– it almost dominates the discussion. It dominates how you evaluate it. It has become this big thing. It's almost like it has—Claire Bishop writes about this a lot, how it's become the dominating criteria. Is it ethically good? Have you ethically done the right thing? She just draws that into question a little bit and says, 'Well, since when is it artists' responsibility to be ethically good? Artist could also—' I'm not sure how much I disagree or agree or disagree. I think it's a really interesting point.
She's like, 'What about art that is disruptive? What about art that is alienating? What about art that shows up complicated things and creates complicated feelings?' I think it's a really, really interesting question. How we've all become so neurotic about it, myself included. I sometimes wonder if that is us artists, or designers, or whatever we want to call ourselves, almost thinking that the people that we participate with can't speak up for themselves or can't –they've got their own voice. If something's wrong they'll say it. But it's so complicated.

I wonder if it's almost a bit patronizing to the participants thinking that I have to somehow look after them?

MM: There is some paternalism there, I agree.

LV: It's just a really interesting complicated thing. It's not that I disagree with anything that it's doing, but it's just I've been thinking about this question a lot myself.

MM: I was feeling quite guilty at this about *Travellerology* and I had other things going on there. As I said, it that was part of a dawning realization that I contend with….[unintelligible]. Another version of the thesis is on traveller [?] ethics. But I'm never doing a second thesis, I may wreck myself [unintelligible… makes joke?]

I agree and disagree with Bishop. Bishop is quite shallow on ethics, that's the problem. I agree that there is a Blairite ethical turn. It's all feel-good and ethically good. A very interesting statement from her, and I'm paraphrasing, but it's kind of what she comes to. I actually think, well, okay, 'ethically good' – you are kind of mixing your moral philosophy with your ethical sense there and you're not really– you haven't read enough books about ethics – she hasn't. And she's very shallow on that.

Look, thing about ethics is this, I generally tend to think that any artist who is not considering their ethical position is not really doing art anyway, or design. What I mean, it's not about flagellating yourself or hating yourself or moralizing. Because moralizing isn't ethics. Ethics is about ethos and about case by case analysis of the values we have and how we act on them and how engage with them. That's different to a moral set of standards. Read Michele Moody-Adams on that, she's a moral philosopher who kind of says it for me.

Ethics isn't quiet. The reason we can't get a more universal morality, because we think there is one, or we think rather there's a set standard there that we can just access platonically. It's not there, we're working it out constantly and that's the whole of life and people and social interaction. It's all about ethical, ethically working it out. You can't socially engage without working out your ethical positions. You can't. You can't go into, 'I'm working with an African centre [?] now' – that's the next one on conveyor belt. Lovely people, I like them a lot, but there are ethical differences, of course there are. There are different standards and different motions of…. not even right and wrong, it's how you behave. I've got to manage that. It doesn't mean I won't disrupt it, it's something I might do. Don't stop me disrupting and worrying about it, but I am going to worry about it.

I don't know, I just find – there's something she thinks towards, some sort of autonomism that I don't think is ever going to go, I don't think it works. She's slightly selling a – she's slightly selling something in an utopian idea about there, that I don't buy for a moment. We do worry about these things. It doesn't mean we have to just make it the ethically good all the time, or go for the touchy-feely stuff. You don't need to do that to be ethical. It's a working through. And to me– the problem I have with these forms is it's an industry, almost like Health and Safety. It's like a layer rather than just something you're dealing with.

LV: Yes. It's become bureaucratized, the whole ethics committee thing.

MM: It becomes a specialism that we can take on as an academic.

LV: It becomes a box ticking exercise as well. Have you done enough to protect your participants rather than, as you say, an individual working through each particular case.

MM: Yes. It's about protecting the participants, but it's also about protecting you. That's what's dishonest about as well, the protection of the professional. Because that's what it's really about. I'm reading [Lynn] Meskell and [Peter] Pels on embedded ethics. Embedding ethics or embedded ethics. But it's in my bibliography as well.

Meskell, L. & Pels, P. (Eds.) (2005) *Embedding Ethics*, London: Bloomsbury.

There's Michele Moody-Adams – what was the name of the book?

Moody-Adams, M. (1997) *Fieldwork in Familiar Places – Morality, Culture and Philosophy*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

It's not widely published… Look for her in my bibliography. It's quite a technical model. I spent two days [years?] reading it in the library and it was quite an experience. But once you get into it, once you get through that and you get through that – an ethical-philosophical kind of thing of talking to people [?], it's actually… it's quite clear. And she says, 'You can't… we shouldn't give up on having shared morality and ethics, because that's human civilization.' That whole drive towards it, for trying to work that out, that's exactly it. But it doesn't exist as...

LV: Yes. It's almost like a utopian horizon that you strive towards, but never reach.

MM: Exactly, it's like democracy [?].
Democracy [?] and mutuality is something I think a lot about in socially engaged stuff. It's there and we want to work that out. We know we'll never get there, but the trying to get there, is more important, because it doesn't exist. It's only… what you said, that [unintelligible] in the world isn't out there, that moral discussion [?] of how you behave doesn't exist. And a lot of the codified practices and ethics sheets you get, pretend it does and that's another problem we have, because it's not true.

Meskell and Pels are two anthropologists… That's Lynn Meskell and Peter Pels. He's Dutch. They bring together archaeologists and anthropologists and sociologists in this book. They're really just trying to talk about the difficulties of… archaeology, especially, it's filled with ethical pitfalls and problems and issues. Anthropologists…. Is a massive horror. Anthropology is colonial... Anthropologists! They've got problems! But it's about that! It's about acknowledging that, but without throwing out all the good stuff, about [unintelligible], as Bishop says, Christian martyr [?]. And when you do, you do just try to embed the ethical process and stop thinking about the [unintelligible] and just thinking of another aspect of the various things you're trying to do on the project.

But it's tough! Ethics is… I don't know. I don't make much apology for being neurotic, because I think I'm being constructively neurotic now. Back then, I was almost paralyzed by it, but now I'm like, 'No, I can see how…'. I think I've got a sense of where disruption…, when I can justify disruption or when I can argue for disruption or not.

I think I have a sense of my participants and how to build a relationship with them without being paternalistic about it. Because Donny did say to me, he said quite clearly: 'No, don't ruin it. I liked having the surprise, seeing that in the drawing. I also like that. I was a bit shocked but I was also…'

It's about accepting the hard work of it. I think that's what Bishop actually wants to avoid – the hard work. It's hard work being ethical, and not being an [unintelligible – makes joke].

LV: But I think she's so embedded… Even though she tries to construct a new narrative of 20th century art by using more ideas about theatre and performance and not just visual arts, she is still within this

art context. And I think this kind of work, it comes much more from graphics and communication design and it just sits differently in the world. I have a different history and a different story and it doesn't have to be in this history of the avant-garde. And I think by placing this project not within this fine arts context, we save ourselves from in getting our knickers in a twist quite a lot. Because there is no history of trying to be separate. [What do I mean?]

MM: I think you're absolutely right. I think she's an art historian. She comes from an art historical perspective. And to me the history of methodologies – that's much more interesting! Actually, she's not really interested in methodology.

To me what all of this is – and I'm not copying Dada! – my thesis is Dada [?... unintelligible] It's all a nice neat line, which most historians, proper historians, they don't do that anymore. But in art history, there's still an element of that. And I've seen the Dada stuff, what I've learned from my situation and from Alan Moore, who is the master of comics, is – that's the trick, okay. [?] That's not me. I'll be the ethical poser only once, and I have been, but I know where I got it from. I didn't get it from Dada, or De Certeau, or Guy Debord, but they came later… And I still think they don't always…

That's what I got it from. I got it from a graphic tradition. I got it from picking up methodology and working it through. I'm not going to end up an ignorant about art history at all. I like a bit of Caravaggio and things like that. But I'm not like sucking it in and, just operationalizing that, which is almost like she presents it. I can see how with art school, like proper art history, you get that, you do.

LV: That's the narrative, yes. But I think with the graphic tradition or communication design tradition, or whatever you want to call it, there's so much less writing. There's so much less like history or theory to access. We don't have much so we look towards art, because art has been over theorized. There's so much materials there to draw from. That's why I think this kind of work is really exciting, because it is drawing on a different history and all the issues that Bishop or other people talk about I think get illuminated completely differently within this type of practice.

MM: Yes, exactly. I'm working in a graphic tradition. Even this one here was originally drawn in blue pencil. We just see some bits of the blue pencil there. So that's comic practice. That was me thinking of as a reproduction process even though it wasn't one then. Because it was stuck on a wall, but I automatically started drawing in blue pencil… why draw it in blue pencil – well, I'll start with them…. It was reproduced obviously eventually, but you know what I mean? As if the mind-set was there almost through the method: draw pencil – draw ink.

And that's still how I make a piece: they are pencilled, then they're inked. This white space has a function within the working within the drawing itself. It's comics.

LV: Yes. As you were saying: the blueprint [acts] as a panel almost. The spaces is like a panel-space…

MM: Yes. I'm taking up potential approaches and then turning them into graphic... Another kind of graphic approach. I think, that's what I'm quite interested in in my thesis. Looking at the graphic in an idea and where the graphic will take you. Because I there is so much flexibility in the graphic form and the ways of using it that haven't been explored yet. I think when you smash them together, like I tend to do, and borrow and steal them, and poach… things become [unintelligible], it's really quite interesting.

LV: We we're just starting to talk about how you got into a slightly worried space about what you were given back.

MM: [unintelligible, makes joke]
I've worked it out and I thought it through. As you were talking about, I did have experience in ethnography. At this point certainly I started to let that bleed through more. There would be a tendency in me to keep it to myself, but a wee bit and all that. Part of my life was [ethnographic] research. Another part of my life was doing comics and some paintings and things like that. I kept them separate and that was part of my own psychology, as it were.

I started to bring them together and realizing– well, actually, I know how to do these things. I do it,

whenever I'm interviewing travellers in a field in Perth, I know exactly how to deal with that and not be paternalistic while also keeping an eye out for them. Because there's that line in ethnography or any qualitative work, where you know some stuff that they're aware of but haven't thought of yet. To actually make them feel they know [?] and then connect with them, rather than making them put it forward. That's where the experience, I suppose, comes in and oddly enough by this point, I was really experienced.

As I say, I could really… I've been doing it for about 15 years at this point, on and off. I still do some. I'm doing a big survey of gypsy travellers and show people up in Dundee and Teeside this summer. I got the call and I said, 'No' as I always do and you check the numbers off there. It was like, 'Okay, that's fine. Yes.' Yes, I will get a new shower, thank you very much. I still do the work. There are actually other reasons I do it, as I think it's important to be done but, yes, I've had [unintelligible] working for educational agencies in Scotland with a field of researchers. I did newer stuff. I let it go into the work more.

Again, this is an interesting one, because a lot of socially engaged artists are, or illustrators – at that time – [using] ethnographic methods and anthropological methods, they are not always seeing the depth behind that or the problems behind that. I suppose I was lucky in that I had been getting lots of [unintelligible] for quite some time already. I knew the baggage, I had experienced it, I'd been through the dark nights of the soul, so that really helps.

The wee freak-out that I'd had, 'Okay. I see this is how I would do it now.' So I started to bring those methods in. It wasn't perfect, there was still a lot of working through.

That's why the PhD was geared in that way, [unintelligible]. The PhD went away from a more drawing research, cognitive approach to, 'Okay. Let's actually just look at methodologies', because what was clear to me and I'm sure is clear to you is that in illustration we have nothing written about this at all. We have nothing. We are it!!

[laughter]

MM: I hope that doesn't stay that way, but for the moment we are it, right? Lucky us!
That became apparent [?] at the Swansea thing [*Varoomlab conference January 2013 at Swansea Metropolitan University*] and couple of comments there made it clear to me that actually, you know what? No one else is going to do this, at this point. I could have just waited for you..! [jokingly] I thought well this is what I'm going to focus on. Just focus on this. Let's just try and look at this as a problem and an issue and let's see if I can lay the groundwork for a way forward for us.

Obviously, the great [unintelligible] in some ways, but if I can lay some groundwork and some basic condition now, even for us to follow, that would be not a bad thing. That's where it all went and that's where *Duke Street* came on board. What I was doing at the start of the PhD, I had all these possibilities and got commissioned by the Commonwealth Games to do some more legacy work in Edinburgh and Glasgow. That became a very handy case study there. I just said, I'll do one of those as a case study, or in [unintelligible], because they weren't really tidy enough to be case studies. [Unintelligible], in terms of a self-initiated one. And then *Duke Street* was going to be the first one. Some [unintelligible last?], but at some [inaudible] first – so there's a conflict [?]

Duke Street was, yeah…, that was a PhD on its own right! All the material I got! And watch that in your own [PhD] – are you doing it practice based? Watch for that! Because it's amazing how much you do generate! Really, you might find that first case study is enough.

LV: I'm aiming for one at the moment.

MM: That's probably enough. You're probably generally, enough. I'm still going through *Duke Street* stuff. There's still stuff I haven't quite got my head around with that. I'd wanted to draw the high street down there for ages, because there was a [unintelligible] I knew very, very well. It's changed so much. It went back and forth between almost gentrification and then it came back, because, as you know, Western civilisation collapsed in 2008, that had it's effects. There's all these things there that well that's a really

interesting place. It's a street, it's not a tidy thing like a bar or an office or even a traveller's yard. It's an unbounded place. Decisions you make about what to even draw have to be negotiated, the scale… There were just lots of things and I thought, I'm going to give it a go. I initially tried to negotiate for quite a long project, at the Market [gallery]. And they said, 'We'll give you six weeks.' That's not long enough.

LV: Wait. You were trying to do a 10 meter long thing [drawing]?

MM: Yes. I am slightly mad. Yes. I wasn't quite sure how long I was going to be at that point. If I'd had thought at that point it would be 18 panels, I would have not done it… But Market [gallery], they loved the idea of having a guy in their shop-front every day drawing the street. From a conceptual art perspective, I think for them that was interesting. That was interesting to them so they got something out of that. I'm going to actually show you one of the…This is a…

For me I had to look at it and think, 'Okay, what am I getting from this thing?' Actually what was clear was that actually this is the most research-focused of them [of the dialectograms] and what I'm going to do is I'm going to scare myself silly. I'm going to really disrupt what I do. If you think about this one here: I'm quite comfortable, very comfortable in what I'm doing. I'm quite comfortable with how I deal with the graphic side as well as the research side, I'm in control. They were very controlled and I can… not go ahead and be, I'll just like, "I know what to do, that's what you do." This one, I was going to have to reconstruct how you do things.

Again, going back to that idea of engagement. Away from documentary approaches to engaged approaches. I was actually thinking about making it participatory, and thinking about bringing the ethnographic and anthropological work that I'd done previously into the work more firmly. This is an opportunity, because what this would do is create a new path [?].

LV: When you were doing Red Road, you went down, hung out here. Did you sound record these conversations or just make notes or just memorize them?

MM: Mixture of both. It depended on the situation. Some things you just get to pencil in.

LV: Yes. Make a note. Then you went back into the studio and drew in your studio in a closed off scenario.

MM: Yes. I would go back into a wee cocoon. That would be however many weeks I was there, [unintelligible] and eventually emerge with a drawing. And then you'd say 'Do you like this drawing?' – and people generally liked it to be perfectly honest. You would talk through it and stuff like that but it was finished, right?

LV: With the Red Road – Did any of the work that you made create discussion, or was it more people went and looked at it and enjoyed it and said thanks that's great?

MM: It was probably more toward the latter, but there were elements of discussion and debate that happened, but of course it was always too late. Like I said with Donny in the concierges, there was elements of that…

LV: It was too late to feed back into the image, but a discussion is always…

MM: A discussion was there. There's a lot of discussion and they were quite valued by the project and by the museums because of that component and that's the mediums that I think [unintelligible]. That element was definitely there. You could see how it had a place to come around, because you think—

LV: [Unintelligible] concerned around it and look and talk together…

MM: It creates a location you can come around and talk about. That was definitely something I was picking up on even then…

LV: You hadn't planned that. That just—

MM: No. I'm [unintelligible, makes joke].
Though I got locked into that size, with them two ones... Then it just continued to be that size. Then I realized that size had a benefit, which was not just about how much you could cram into, but also it does become a place.

LV: It's a place. Yes.

MM: It's a site and that's something I like [?]. That, again, become much more woven into how I would work subsequently. Again, the idea with *Duke Street*, was that it would be a place, a site, a location. Yes. So *Duke Street* was about disrupting things.

LV: For yourself.

MM: For myself. Disrupting the comfortable and cosy approach that I'd had. I was practiced, I was….
I just knew how to do it. This completely fucked it up.

LV: In a productive way I hope?

MM: Somehow I held it together. I don't know how. My wife, that's how I held it together.

LV**:** [laughs] Where your stress level is just rising, rising, rising?

MM: It was getting a bit crazy. She was just amazing. She helped me with some initial organization of stuff. [Unintelligible], laying it out on a table, working out how I would do stuff. Whereas, with this was just like go down to the first [unintelligible] and take it from there. With *Duke Street* it was – I had to contact the businesses and keep appointments and the other parties… In *Duke Street* I had to then look at the residents. I had to…

LV: You contacted the business in advance?

MM: Yes. And none of them gave me attention, so then I had to go and doorstep…

LV: Saying what? 'I'm doing this thing…'

MM: 'I'm doing this thing, I'm making this giant illustration of Duke Street, I'm going to be in the Market Gallery, I'd love to come and talk to you at some point. I'll send a person is going to talk to you…', which was the element that was new here. I was going to ask that as a team. I don't know if you have ever been able to try and explain what you do to people, but it's really hard.

LV: Do you know I always found? I always find it totally clear in my head. You try and say it to somebody and they… people misunderstand you in the weirdest way.

MM: Absolutely, yes. No. It was about [unintelligible], but it's very hard. It was very hard. It was very hard to… people [the helpers in this project] were coming and saying, 'Tell me how to be you.' I'm like, 'I wouldn't advise that!' But also,— I don't know. I just don't do this.

If I was to walk in to, say, Coia's Café, there's just a set of… that you have in yourself, a set of practices and [unintelligible]. It's a way of being and a way of getting into the situation. Whereas, some of these people were…., they did have some practice, one was a photographer… my number two, [name] – she was amazing – she was a street photographer, so she had a lot of [unintelligible], a lot of [unintelligible] of being a photographer.

That's one of the things I've had to discuss with her. I was like – stop being a photographer, stop taking beautiful images, they're no good to me. I love them, I love them a lot. But I need to know about the light switches. I need you to map…rather than that. She got better at that. She actually took to drawing in the end, which is interesting. She didn't like drawing, but she's like, it's all easier to map, than with photographs.

Whereas, a geographer in the group was also great, she was great at mapping. She loved it. She's [unintelligible] of the butcher's and stuff like that. But the thing is I wasn't there.
Because what I had to do, is I had to be at the drawing boards in the gallery, producing. It was all in such a compressed amount of time. I had maybe a week of just research. I'd say that was the week I'd made the most of. But then I had – the rest of the time I just had to be drawing.

I'd often drop and approach people when they would come in. Which was great. I've got some great [material?] that way, but also still gotta be drawing. It was a 'Push me, pull you' thing. What I did find was that when I go into that bubble of drawing, my head is very different. It's a different set of skills. And actually it is quite hard to switch from researching out there to drawing. Either way it's difficult. So I was having to make that mental switch and sometimes some days I was just not doing well at all, and other days it was better. It became this endurance test all the time. By the end, the last week I had to shut up shop, because I just wasn't going to get through it. I didn't, it's not finished. It's still not finished. But it was serviceably an image by the end.

Duke Street threw up all these concerns and issues and ideas. I think it was a really valuable process and incredible rich, mountains of stuff, mountains of things to think about and the end of it it drove me a little bit mad. That puts us off and I came back.

[laughter]

LV: Got some sleep.

MM: Got some sleep a bit. We [unintelligible] with my wife, or fiancé, back then. She does [unintelligible] ... tried to take stock of that. I'll try to simplify the best I can: There was one thing I realized was I need to redo… there's something about bodily being able to do most of it and connect it up [?]. There's a connectivity thing between the different elements. It's not just being at the place, and gathering information, but also realizing [unintelligible] wasn't there at *Duke Street* half of the time.

LV: You felt that collaborating with your volunteers was not working for your process?

Mitch: It was, but it was, but…

LV: Because I think in your article at some point you say— at some point you realize, that instead of trying to make them like you, just letting them be, or be another layer.

MM: Yes. A lot more. Yes. I think that's what I'm trying to get at here is: I didn't make the most of it. I wasn't able to do it. In a way I really wish I could've moved most of that element of…the gender balance was 90% women and me.

LV: Was that a coincidence?

MM: Yes, actually it was. I expected to be mostly women. In my imagination it was always 50-50 – half-half, but then nearly all of them was women. But that's great, cos I'm a man and it's really good to have another perspective on new spaces. And actually I wish, I really wish we'd done as more residential work and having [unintelligible] really lucky. I should say really lucky on the collaborators. I just didn't get the chance to capitalize on…

LV: Sure, it was too short. Because it almost… You had to make that switch and then act up on it and there wasn't enough time.

MM: By the time I was at the end I realized all the things we could've been doing together. That would've been great. Maybe there will be another version of this, maybe not quite so mental, but there might be another version of this where we're doing that again, but I know what I'm doing this time.

So it was almost like I was learning all this new stuff and I couldn't activate it, in a sense, which is a bit frustrating to say the least, but also really, really useful. And actually that did carry on the next case study to some extent. So maybe we'll go to the next one, I can tell you more about *Duke Street*, I'd be

happy to, but maybe…

LV: Sure, yes.

MM: I went on to… the next one was *Piershill*, which was a community health club [?] in Edinburgh**.** It's a working class area in Edinburgh. It's very small. It's in a place called Jock's Lodge – it's an area on the other side of Arthur's Seat. It's the other side of the hill underneath and near Meadowbank stadium.

I'll just explain the project: Collective Gallery came to see *Duke Street* and despite the fact that it's clearly [unintelligible] at that point and it probably was such massive shambles, they said, 'Yeah, we'd love to work with you.' And I was like 'Okay…'.

So just before [unintelligible] said they wanted to invite me to work on this thing called 'All Sided Games', you can imagine, when the games were coming here, everyone was funding cultural stuff. It was like [unintelligible]. I was like [unintelligible] on to this two year thing. But anyway, artists always position themselves in various ways [unintelligible] where they want to get involved. I was very ambivalent about the games and so was my friend Chris and my friend Alison. The three of us worked together as a unit quite a lot and that's an interesting collaboration there…

We got a residency – the three of us together. I got my own residency offer as well from Collective, just by myself. But it was part of our six-part initiative called 'All Sided Games' and Collective are well worth looking at in terms of socially-engaged stuff, they're pretty good. Collective Gallery up on Calton Hill. You can talk to Kate Grey and/or James Bell. Collective were great. They're really good at what they do. They're really good at… they really think through the socially engaged aspect of things, they put together a solid project. They support projects properly. It was a nice…. What I'm saying, I was enjoying the luxury of having a team who offered to me a chance to get this fee and infrastructure, which was good.

I didn't have that at *Duke Street* at all. Market [Gallery] are wonderful, I'm on the board now, we still don't have infrastructure at Market, it's a voluntary, artists-run space. Market were great, I have to say, but they didn't have the staffing. Whereas Collective, they are a proper –a funded gallery, a funded staff.

LV: That's a little bit more solid.

MM: It's solid. And I was, I suppose… It was quite weird in a way, I was actually a lot more integrated into the whole thing than a lot of the other artists, because I was there the whole way through, all the way through the project, from start to finish. Whereas the others they were just there for chunks. There's Nils, Norman, there was what was the name? Sara Lucas and was it Sara Lucas? Sara? [should be Cristina Lucas], yes. We never got to meet unfortunately, and Des Byrne [?], who was a really interesting guy. A lot them were proper contemporary artists. Some of them were performative, some of them were sculptural, and I was I suppose, the weird illustrator guy.

But what it was like, for me again, was that documentation of the moment [?], so it was interesting. The socially engaged participatory bunch, you know what I'm saying? [unintelligible] It was like, 'Okay, but we're going to do it in a different way.' It was one of those cases where, I suppose, a pragmatic case study of [unintelligible] came about, it had pragmatic value, I got paid and I got logistical support.

But at the same time, they were very open to a bit of exploration, which was really nice. Because I was very uncertain [?], and what I wanted to do was I wanted to explore certain things that had come up in my work right now. As the [unintelligible] look at it and all that. They were told upfront.

We came up with initially an idea for 4 drawings, which I haven't got out for a fair amount of time, for good reason [sniggers], [unintelligible] a lot, these are slow. The idea was Edinburgh and Glasgow. We looked at, first of all, part of Edinburgh, which had been affected by the past Commonwealth Games, which was 1970 and '86 being submitted by the stadium. First one I got into was this health club in Piershill. It was a working class community right in the shadow of the Meadowbank.

And Meadowbank – Jock's Lodge is pretty working class. Probably one of the last working class areas in the centre of Edinburgh. So it was interesting from that perspective, I think. [unintelligible] . And there was this tiny, tiny flat, which had a health… not centre, but a facility. It was about holistic healthcare and social health models and about… not about, it's not a clinic, it's actually a flat. It was messy and they did a lot of crafts there, it had a lot of cups of tea. It was about dropping in and just talking about your worries maybe getting referred.

The woman who ran it, Beth, was in herself doing socially engaged work from a thing that [unintelligible] which made me feel weak by comparison. She was dealing with a very complex community there, been doing it for seven years. She knew exactly how to do it. She knew when to just offer a cup of tea and when to fill a form out and refer someone. It wasn't a clinic.

The idea that it wasn't a clinic was a stepping-stone, it was. It had this long-term care element where it was just a place where people congregate and do community stuff. Or if you really had a problem… If you saw a man in the doorway, you knew he had a real problem. And what you had to do was get him referred. The women were more like… just for drop in. I joined the woman's group, which obviously, for me, was a bit unexpected. We had the time to work on it. It was a time we didn't have at *Duke Street*. Some of the stuff I was learning from *Duke Street* about collaboration, how you can participate… The stuff, I was looking at was [?] ethics and was about allowing a more transparent approach to drawing as well.

Because another thing that *Duke Street* did, was that people could come and see just how little I'd done that day. That was terrifying, but also healthy in a way, and interesting. I went, 'Okay, I don't want to be doing that, because no one should have to suffer that.' But: are there ways in which we can make the drawing process more open?

LV: That's such a complicated question.

MM: Yes.

LV: How do you make collaborative drawing?

MM: Yes. You've got everyone drawing, that's one option. But I think, the work I do – the style is important. That unified style that…

LV: It gives it an authorial vision, I think. Which is not a bad thing.

MM: Yes, it's not a bad thing. Really isn't, because it does tie together stuff that's otherwise, disparate.

LV: Yes. I don't think it would legible if otherwise.

MM: No. You could've have different types of handwriting [unintelligible]. In *Duke Street* my wife did the [unintelligible], but I still avoided it. She did a lot of [unintelligible], but I was like …pfff! I still avoided it. [Unintelligible] I went over it too much…

Anyway, the [unintelligible], because I was there for eight months. Which was wonderful! They had to extract me from there. It was great. We made [?] candles and [unintelligible] and got to talk. They were really good, but we were dealing in that project, but I was having a hard time with my own work and they were like, 'There's something up with you.' [unintelligible]

They would help me. Which was really lovely. That project is one that I would go back to in a second. I loved doing that project.

LV: There was also a drawing outcome from that?

MM: Yes. I don't unfortunately, have… I had a print of it, but I've given it away to the architecture students…. But it's on the pen drive. When you see it, I think you'll find it quite interesting because it's possibly the most dense one I've ever done.

Density here is quite light. *Piershill* – you can see the architecture through the pattern of text rather than the actual [unintelligible]. It was dense and it was… it came out, it was very, very… it was a very collaborative venture, I think. In the sense of – they got to see the drawing at various different stages… I would literally bring the drawing to them at different stages. I would say: 'Here is where we are now! Let's talk about this!' We also managed, because Collective had all this money for this project, we got them over here, which was nice for them, a daytrip to Glasgow…

LV: Yes, you mean the studio?

MM: In the studio, yes, so they were in this room, in two shifts. It was [unintelligible – talks about how participants chatted about going to Glasgow?]
[Unintelligible] thoughts about the drawing at another stage. I think with three stages of that.

LV: How did you manage that discussion? How did it work?

MM: I got them round, talked them through it. In the earlier version, it was really just pencil lines. It was more about, 'Okay. What do we put in this thing? Because as you can see it's rubbish, so far. Let's enforce a little of this, how do we do more of this?' As it gotten more complex and had more material in it, it was more about, 'Right. I've said this here and I've said this here. What do you think if we had done that here? There is still a light patch here,…' The conversation became more structured. It went from being fairly unstructured and more about, 'Oh, this is what you're doing!' It's that first chance you see the drawing that you see the plan and see themselves from that perspective. It's like, 'Oh, this is what you're doing!' I mean, they knew, but they didn't know. You don't know until you see it.

LV: Did you run into difficulties when people say, 'Why don't we put that there?' If you didn't take up that suggestion, did you feel an obligation to act upon all suggestions? Or did they think they were… how did you manage that relationship between feedback and…

MM: Yes, that's a very interesting question actually. Yes, there was a sense of obligation and I couldn't always do it, I suppose.

LV: I'm sure maybe one person says that, and another person says that and then you actually disagree with both and do something else.

MM: What would often happen in discussion was, we had different views and then we would argue about it and then… there were some arguments. Not bad arguments, but decent arguments and useful ones about actually,… this here is a lot more [unintelligible] than that one there. We had the arguments, if we could, there and then. If I was left with that issue then I would make a choice based on a common defender. I suppose that's where the authorial voice would be coming in there and making that decision about how the drawing would work.
Most people understood that. Most people, I think, got that sense of, 'Okay, you know some stuff about this, but we don't. But we also know what should be in here and how this comes together in there.'
And we did all have a very good rapport, so that helped as well. If it had been more spikey, as it is with artists [joke] that becomes more of an issue, it does stall things… [laughter]

But most of the time it was like 'Okay, I can see that, but how about you put that here', or, 'I don't think we've got room for that, but if we did that...' Also we could argue over the drawing...

LV: That group was established as a group before you came in?

MM: Kind of. There was the women's group I joined. They were the core. They were the centre. But there was also…. Not a men's group but the men who were involved in the allotment outside. So I'd have to go and talk to them outside. But a rough group, bigger… rough kind-of super-group formed between those elements. And then others who weren't in either of those groups just hung around with some of the young people that hang out around the place. We had other sessions. What I did was, I did a mixture of things. I did women's group stuff, as I was just saying. I offered to do some workshops and other things and I did those. That became a different group again, and then did specific dialectogram groups, when we were talking about dialectograms…. that brought it in as well. And then even things

like the fun-day, I was part of the fun-day. I had a table and I drew things … a lot of rappers. Five year olds asking for rappers. I did a range of different things and created groupings around it. I wasn't just going to one group, I was trying to mix it up a little bit. What I found was that a rough community did form, and that community could be quite flexible and fluid. But there was a hard-core and then others…

LV: I'm wondering if… I can imagine if the group in itself is relatively harmonious. Then I can imagine this conversation being quite productive. I can imagine if the group within itself has got fractions and is antagonistic…

MM: There were factions, yes.

LV: That might come and… these might play out.

MM: It did. In some ways I didn't even realize, I wasn't told about until the end. There's one woman called [Anonymous] who people hated, but no one ever mentioned that and made that clear, because they were behaving themselves for me. But it did come into some of the materials. You could tell. You can tell there was something about [Anonymous] other people were taking umbrage at.

LV: The fault lines emerge in this discussion.

MM: They do emerge in these discussions, but it was like, there was the McGuffin of this [drawing] and they wanted to be part of this so they were setting things aside to be part of this as well. That's interesting as well. Again, the drawing acts as a site, as it were, and people react to it. That's an interesting tension that comes down when an artefact's been created like this. So there was that.

I think they did have the [unintelligible].

My best pal in the group was a lady called K. and her daughter, C., who had, like lots of people, terrible lives. One was basically running away from an abusive husband, but really keen. K. was one of the ones where ethically I had to just make sure she was… Make sure she was thinking of it all. Because she was something like, she'd found this place, where she was safe. She really enjoyed being there, she enjoyed what I was doing and she loved art. She had a bit of a frustrated element to her life. It never… always loved art, but could never do it, because of the cost of it, or whatever, and all that. It's something she really enjoyed, the whole process. But also that…
It was my job just to be the killjoy and say: 'K., you told a story about how you came here. Can I put that in? Are you sure?' Even at the very end, when I've done it I was like, 'K., if you want this out, it comes out. That's it. I'll get the tip-ex in! Are you sure?' She was. So I was a little bit paternalistic. It was just about making sure she thought about all the ramifications.

LV: So she was in a position to make the best choice for herself?

MM: Yes. That's what I think my job was. Getting them to make the best choice rather than making it for them. For good or bad. That's hard, that takes work and effort. Going through from Glasgow, when you can't be arsed, because that may be the day when you capture [?]. That was kind of what it came down to, because by the end, Kim was getting moved again and other things were happening. She's still in touch, but she wasn't able to be there in the way she had been. It was things like that to negotiate and just navigate and make sure we're okay.

As I said, it came up with a very dense and very interesting drawing. But if you develop these, it is probably the thing you want to [inaudible]. Because I think the more you develop it, the more you go on, the less you legible it becomes. There's definitely a limit to that. I think it's readable, but it's definitely a challenge, in that way. It's a drawing of social architecture rather than architecture. The building itself is not important. It's a perfectly fine building, but it's not important. In a way of saying the next one I did after that, made [unintelligible], but it wasn't part of the PhD.

One was very [unintelligible] it was dealing a situation and I was able to really, in a way, exercise some of the ghosts of *Duke Street* in sense of collaboration. Because one of the things I didn't mention as well was, and didn't even, I think, put in the thesis, was, it's all partnership there. K. [unintelligible]

became a broker. She got people in. She was doing a lot of [unintelligible] with B., and I really formed a very strong partnership through that. B. was using, and I was interested in—

LV: B. is the daughter, did you say?

MM: B. was the coordinator.

LV: Okay.

MM: B. is really… all these artists talk about [unintelligible], research methods and creating disruptions. B. was doing it. She wasn't just running an NHS thing, she was a genius on how to make that place—

LV: Oh, so it was an NHS place?

MM: Yes.

[3 redacted paragraphs]

And then the third one was *The Free Hetherington* which was going all the way through. So, the University of Glasgow had a postgraduate research club, The Hetherington research club, named after a past principal. It's actually well known and a lot of people would just [unintelligible]. I went a few times, just for Friday nights and stuff like that. There was three floors of a Glasgow sandstone building. And, like all student unions should be, it was badly run. [laughter]

There were issues and there was some dodgy stuff going on there, but to be honest, [unintelligible] probably nothing major. But the Uni wanted… there was a big real estate campaign going on for the last 10 years, to sell it off. Glasgow's West End was worth a fortune. They wanted to get rid of that place. That's probably contestable legally but that was sort of the story. They closed it. They forcibly closed it beginning of 2010, I think. By late 2010, of course, we had Mr Cameron in power and Nick Clegg, and all the stuff that happened and the cuts in university funding. Glasgow University is, like all of them now, big neoliberal institution hard-nosed.

They closed it, due to the cuts that were coming in. The students in Glasgow were great. It was a really strong network of … not just anarchists, one went back up to [unintelligible], but different leftist groups in the university and student groups. Basically, I think was the end of 2010, they occupied the old [unintelligible] at the old Hetherington and called it, 'Free Hetherington.' The occupation was very much about the cuts about marching, but also about seizing [?] a space and changing the nature of it. The politics came through in how they ran things as much as what they're saying. That is the whole idea. So, it was defined as a free university space, a free lecture space…

LV: There were educational things happening?

MM: Yes, there were lectures. They'd invite people in, and Billy Bragg came up, and Noam Chomsky you know – quite prominent figures and thinkers and they had a free kitchen. A free shop, if you needed stuff you'd go and get it from the shop and swap it. As I said, you could get free food, you could [?] drink [unintelligible]. It was like out in a social club, redirecting the postgraduate club in a new way, but also lectures and meetings and so forth. They had a base for protests and sit-ins, and stuff like that. It was everything a University [student club] should be. [unintelligible ……] were sleeping there. It lasted for 10 months.

LV: Wow, that's quite a while.

MM: Yes. It was absolutely fascinating. I went down a couple of times. A couple of times just because I knew people there. And they said 'You have to come down and see this…'

Later on with the interest of doing the dialectogram, because Maria**,** who was one of the protesters, was like 'You should do a dialectogram. You, recording this, would be really interesting.' It was a bit late in the day at that point, because basically, they had already agreed to some terms and they had

got some concessions from the University and they agreed to end the occupation. They did... lots of things had happened with the security [unintelligible] and they'd chuck them out and they got back in. There was all sorts of people who got arrested, you know, proper student protesting… By the time I was able to get in there, or rather, we decided to do something that was almost at the end. I did some documentation then, and then it became an exercise in reconstruction, almost, after the fact.

That was interesting about it, because we had to create a group. That's the opposite of *Pierhill*, where there were preexisting groups that I could work around. This was… there had been a group, [unintelligible], to be honest. But that group was now dispersed. So we tried to bring [unintelligible] people together. That was interesting, because it was successful initially. Again, I did that technique of drawing some stuff out, and then brought people in to look at it and talk about it.

LV: Were you relying on their accounts on how it used to be?

MM: I was much more about their account. I had my own account, I had my own visits to look back on, to look through my notes and the photographs I had taken. Emma, my wife, had taken some photographs, and she's a photographer… [unintelligible … joke]

I had stuff of my own, but I was very reliant on memory, so this was a memory exercise as well. There was a lot of indication [?] that this was going to be an interesting study. But what happened was, the group had its divisions. And even [unintelligible] that was not unanimous. Some people wouldn't be in the same room with the other people.

LV: [laughs] That sounds like fun!

MM: [unintelligible] Can we just all get along for ten minutes or so?!
It became very hard to get people together, increasingly hard so I tried a Facebook group.

LV: But could that kind of division somehow, become part of it in some way?

MM: It has, that's the point. [laughs] This is it, basically, that is as far as I got. Actually, there's some very nice drawing work because I had nothing to do. What happened by the end was…I was trying to honour the spirit of what they did and their values, to some extent. But also, this is a destruction of those values. Sitting down and [unintelligible] ink, is a disruption of that as well. And they saw that and were like: 'This is only one representation, it was more multifarious, and all that.' [?] I know! That's the problem we've got, isn't that great?

But actually there was a comment about that here… certain taboos, and the things you did and didn't do and stuff like that. We couldn't agree on that. That's one of the things they couldn't agree on or rather, I needed to check things with them. They were very assiduous about checking what I was doing. I would do something and it was, like, I've got to stop now, because I needed them to come and look at this now, in some way.

LV: So were they quite controlling in that way?

MM: Yes, they were. It was interesting. You could say they were more forceful collaborators. That's another way of putting it…
[laughter]

They…. they were very educated in these things. They wanted to exert control**.** They wanted to [unintelligible]. I was like, okay, that's interesting for me in the sense of what I'm doing. I'm not sure I could come up with a whole [new] way for what I'm doing here…

But we didn't even get to that point of having a... There were some arguments. We didn't have a really good [unintelligible] I suppose, a really good argument, we kept it light. What I was trying to do is get them in and have a meeting and just have an argument about some things, and just get that in the air and then deal with… where my line was and where their line is...

But of course, we never got to that stage. It fell apart before that. So I tried Facebook, but that didn't really work. I put some shots up on the Facebook group and then try to get them to look at it, but they didn't. You need to bring them around it [around the actual dialectogram]. I was [unintelligible] until I was really stressing out about it. Until my supervisor said: 'You've got a shitload of stuff, you have got more stuff than anyone needs, so stop worrying about it. This is where it is. This is what you found out. This is a conclusion.'

LV: Exactly, I think that's a really interesting conclusion, that the anarchists were so controlling, that it couldn't be finished.

MM: Yes…
Obviously, some of them are lovely but it was tricky. It was a very tricky point. There was also no need for it really… They were all in their twenties they were all off… off to go and change the world and who wants to convert some weirdo with a big drawing, when you've got that to do. There's other things, and I think was fair enough.

LV: They're also just developing their voice and want to practice their voice, in a way, I can imagine how that can be.

MM: And here's a guy is trying to create a document of that. He wasn't even part of it.

LV: Everything was contested immediately.

MM: Everything is contestable and rightly so to some extent. That's just probably how it is. I'm more and more accepting that this is the way it needs to be. This is *The Free Hetherington*.
Maybe they will all come back one day and still want to do it. I'll make a decision then. But in a ways – it says what it needs to say…

LV: I think you're absolutely right.

MM: I know sometimes artists can be a bit sneaky about it. "This is how it's meant to be! It's an artists' statement.' But actually that's not a statement.
So that was the last of my inquiries as it were. What you probably gathered, I had way too much to make sense of…

LV: You had tons of stuff.
I think that happens with a PhD. That you think it'll have to be everything. I'm sure I'll also fall into that trap, but I'm just trying to remind myself, just do one very small thing and if it's not very brilliant… all it has to be is okay. [laughs] [cross talk]

MM: If you want any advice from me – that would be it. Pick one!
Again this one, as I said, not as good as the other two, but still, plenty to say about it. I think [unintelligible] But yes, a very interesting one, very interesting way it all ended.

In a way, my PhD thesis is: one unfinished one, but, kind of, more than one person can do, or ever could do [*Duke Street*], another unfinished one that's just [unintelligible], and only one really finished one…

But the other ones, I actually did another two, that weren't included in my thesis, they were part of my contract with 'All Sided Games'. So I did other ones around that time and they're on the pen drive which you can have a look at and compare as well, which where I finished. Definitely finished. Because Collective wanted them finished.

It was interesting with Collective, because it is such a process-based outfit. But they were very keen on having it finished. It was interesting! I never say 'Look, it's all about the process, I have a great process can't that just be…' I never say that, but it was interesting [unintelligible]…

LV: Where do you see the prime locus of the work? Is it in the piece at the end or is it in the situations

that arise during or is it in the exhibiting of it afterwards? Is there any kind of hierarchy of importance within the whole thing?

MM: I think, for me, it is all about the process. That's what I enjoy. I didn't get as much out of these drawings as other people do. Inevitably. Because I made it. [Unintelligible] drawing it. So I'm not going to get the same out of it as other people. But I do think, being realistic, the drawing stands high in the hierarchy. It's an artefact, and when you look how the drawing [unintelligible] around it as it's being made, no question. The existence of a drawing, or the possibility of a drawing, is absolutely central.

LV: It's like a focal point for the whole process, isn't it?

MM: I'm not going to pretend it's all about process. The process is massively important. I think without the process, you wouldn't have an outcome. I think to have a dialectogram, you have a drawing a bit like this, and you have a process that's gathered around it and swirling it and trying to write itself all the time. That is also crucial – these two together. Or perhaps it's 3 or 4 things, it's not just process and drawing, there's other things happening too.

As I said, the existence of the drawing as a site and what happens [at that site], things like that are all critical. And then – the other life that the drawing has. The drawing has an original… will be installed… *A Showman's Yard* will be installed in a museum, which I don't mind. I can see why. They bought the damn thing. So that exists as an object and an artefact. And they're aware of the process, of course and that's why they wanted to buy it. But the process doesn't go in with it. They have the archive and they can use it in whatever way they want. So there's an archive as well, I should say, yeah.

I'll try and put it more distinctly [?]:
So there's a drawing. There's a process around that drawing, through that drawing. There's an archive, created, between those two things.

LV: What do you mean by that?

MM: An archive of other interviews, sketches,…and then there's this [unintelligible] I suppose which is an original art object, which you can place value on, if you want, and get insured, all that kind of crap, and then is installed somewhere, preferably, for me, in the place itself. *The Baltic Street Adventure Playground*, which you will see on the pen-drive, is at the playground. *Meadowbank* is at Meadowbank. *Piershill* was at Piershill, now it's at the local library. So there is an ethic there of trying to fit it in the place. So the illustration has a life in there.

And then there's the reproduction. So it's something you can reproduce, and then you have prints like this…and this…and 'foldy-ups', and online stuff, and all that stuff. It's fine with me, but never like having it there, having its own engagement and its own life.

There's all these different things that all have their different values. I would say the drawing is very high in there, the process is just underneath, beneath those two. The archive will occur because of that. The other elements that I mentioned, are probably less critical, but it's good that they are there, if that makes sense. I like them having an afterlife as well but I know that sometimes that's not possible.

LV: The other thing I wanted to ask you about is, it seems to me that the main focal point of the content is as you were saying a kind of recording of the present or the past, but also when I was reading your article that you've published in Varoomlab – you're also talking about imaginary and imagining. You also spoke about some fictional elements of that, changing the names and protecting identities. When you were talking about imaginaries and imaginings, what's that? Was that the participants? Did you ever ask about… what I'm saying is, what did you ask the people? Did you ask them to talk about the present and the past or did you also ask them about imagining a future or…

MM: The past comes into it. I do try and capture something of the imaginative lives of a character and that does come out. When you're doing your job properly it comes out.

With *Duke Street* for example: There was this lovely, amazing man who came in once and he was in

his 80ies and he [unintelligible], but he had this… he told me this episode where he was just walking along a side street down Duke Street and he saw his old self. And he said: 'I saw myself! There's nothing wrong with my head, but I just saw me walking.' And I was just taken aback. So that's obviously an imaginative moment that you try and capture.

I'm trying to complicate the… again, with the ethnographic background, I'm trying to complicate that idea of straightforward 'facts' … I know your stuff is not facts [?...]
So I do try to include perception – it's harder to do. It's a lot harder to do… it's a lot harder than just putting stuff in that you kicked the dog accidentally, and you were hit by a [unintelligible] in a dark alley – that's easy. This imaginative stuff, the perceptual stuff is harder to get, and I'm trying to find ways around that all the time. And sometimes it suffers. That's the fact of it, because it's hard. But as you say: The [incomprehensible] imaginative thing, yet, that has been there. *A Showman's Yard* does have conceptual space in it. There's the conceptual idea of the run [?], of places to go… so Scotland [unintelligible] – so I try and capture those sorts of things.

In terms of 'The Future', I haven't done much. I suppose, part of that is because of my relationship with architecture, and I'm always quite careful about this relationship. I like architecture. It's necessary. I'm all for it. [laughter]
Even if I do have a 'thing' sometimes. Anyway, there is an element of satire of the architectural style. Most architects who have seen it have really liked it, they really appreciate it. They see it as a point of discussion a way of setting of discussions about…. [mumbling]

LV: I might just save this and start a new recording.

LV: We were just talking about the role of the imaginary and the speculative and you were just thinking about architecture.

MM: Yes! Architecture, I'm all for it!
There is an element of satire there. I'm [unintelligible] using it in all sorts of 'wrong' ways. I think there is only one architect who has taken offense to that. He did a kind of architectural drawing style [?]…. he had an architectural drawing practice, he did work for other architects. And he just said: 'You've done that all wrong. You should have done that with a [unintelligible]!'and all that. And I was like: 'Can't you see what I'm doing here? You get what it is?' He didn't seem to get it at all… It was two men swinging their dicks, let's be perfectly honest, it was a pride thing there, and I was fucking with his thing.

Otherwise architects tend to really [unintelligible]: 'Oh that's so interesting stuff, you [usually] don't get to think about it.' [Unintelligible], actually I got a lot closer for architects. I've got better relationships with them I've been working with some architects and some architectural situations to use the [unintelligible]-graphic styles and the way the presentation to engage architects as well so became a development.

But back then I suppose…. I've always been careful about the architectural element will not… I'm not here to build anything. I'm here to map and understand and in a way it's much more human geography of a sort than architecture. It's a bit of a get-out, but it also helps to diffuse any issues about what I'm doing. Going to stick with the territory is [?]…. then you are becoming more architectural, trying to shape space.

It does happen, and the last one I've just done which unfortunately I can't show you because it's [unintelligible] was the conceptualisation of a new space. I will explain. I was invited in by West Dunbartonshire library services. West D, is if you follow the Clyde out West up towards the islands and from the north side that's where all the big shipyards are, QE2, Queen Mary, Britannia all that sort of stuff. The John Brown shipyards are one of the biggest in the world. The whole town was built around that and the Singer sewing machine factory. They went they had a blitz as well in 1940. [Unintelligible] for years. Hitler bombed it flat to try and get the shipyards [unintelligible] and in fact loads of people [unintelligible], about a thousand people died. Awful! The town is still there and the library is still there, it's still a working library, an amazing building and a terrible interior.

The library services were interesting, they're a good bunch. It's been interesting working with a big

bureaucracy like that because they can really screw you over, let's be honest. Also, I'm an illustrator, I'm not a contemporary conceptual artist, then that's who you're working with, that's where it gets interesting if you try and engage with these kind of bodies. What they were doing, they had half a million, almost nothing in reality, to redo the interior. 300,000 would be making it safe and secure, but 200,000 next to nothing, to make it a nice and modern library inside. So they got to think smart.

That was quite interesting for the project and they said 'We want you to come in and we know that you're willing to get people to talk and bring things together and your drawings [unintelligible] community [unintelligible] architects and designers and people we want to see the library. Because – librarians will tell you this – architects are usually a nightmare for libraries because they come in with this grand idea, some brilliantly looking thing, which makes a terrible, terrible library space. What they want – it's good to usually think it through and be told in a sense. [Unintelligible] realise what they could do in there. So it was an interesting design issue. [Unintelligible] with next to no money to do something interesting with this library. So that they're thinking smart and thinking through the space.
LV: You were brought into engage with…. What? The community using the library? To think about future possibilities for the library? How did you do that?

MM: Yes. It was really hard because they wanted as wide a consultation as possible. As I have already told you, dialectograms do work quite comfortably with a nice wee group that self-selects or you grow over time, right? That's your ideal. And it was a bit of a repeat of *Duke Street* in that way: Once again, I was looking at how to do stuff and having to save us time. So we consulted a thousand people, which was quite a lot. Well, to be fair, it was 850, through a citizens' panel questionnaire. So we managed to hijack a section of that and that gave us some information. I still talked to 150 people and they were not all quite as involved as some. I would say there was about 50 or so that were quite solidly involved in the drawing to some extent.

They gave me 10 months, which was a year ago and I did it in those 10 months. And what I did was attack it every way I could. So there was ethnographic stuff of just being in the library talking to all weirdos in there, God love them. And the staff, I chatted to the staff, [unintelligible], got to know the janitors [?] really well. And then – going out into the community – so a lot of stuff with schools, school libraries. Several sessions in there, often involving the drawing as it was…

LV: The drawing was of the current library?

MM: Yes, so we were looking at the current library in great detail, so that we could really look at the place, look at what happened. Not just the architecture, it's important to everyone, it's a beautiful building, but also the social architecture. What's happening here? We did include particular contributions from the young people we got to work with, three youth groups, two high schools and I did get them to draw for me. I've got some here. I haven't got them all here as some of them have gone. But this is a wee set of drawings that we did…. There was a first floor, which was dead and dated. And I said: 'How would you redesign the first floor? If they gave you the money, how would you do it?' By this point I had already done a couple sessions and they knew the dialectogram style, and I said 'Do what I do, just conceptualise it'.

I had another 20 of these from different schools and what I then did I went ahead and crunched them into a couple of sections. That was conceptual space a new space being created. What's not architectural aspect, it's just an idea of what it could be. What was interesting was our coming together of the very practical way of thinking about the library, [but also] let's be grand here, let's look at ideas. Think about what we want, so that was actually quite good because they had real vision but at the same time it was grounded.

LV: How old are these kids?

MM: These were first years, so that's 11, these were sixth years, so these are - these are Hannah, Ruth and Archer, they are off to rule the world I'm telling you. They were great. There were different age groups and so forth. I had a lesbian and gay group as well. I had a whole batch of methods I was using, I would just very pragmatically do whatever would work to get what we needed. One thing we did was tours, we did public tours, where you got to see behind the scenes. You got to see all the space and

the head librarian was amazing. She was, again, one of those collaborators that I really clicked with. She gave the tour, she knew the building inside out, she knew every nook and cranny. We sat down for a discussion session of undetermined length after that where we could just discuss what we'd seen and what it had meant. We invited people back to see the drawing. I did that in various ways: We'd take it to certain groups or we had some event-days where I'd just be literally in the library with my big drawing and people got to see new stuff. We just did every…

LV: Did you add to the drawing during these discussions or was the drawing just there as a drawing?

MM: We added to the drawing the kids were quite…. they would draw on it. What we'd say was 'That's a good idea, just write that down for me, I'll deal with that later '. The adults didn't want to, so I did it for them. The adults didn't want to – they were schooled in 'the sanctity of art'. [laughter]

I'm not careful with them [the drawings] at all. That was an interesting fault-line you see. The kids – you can invite them into draw and so we did a lot of that, a lot we didn't do, some things didn't go [unintelligible] but it would find it's way into the drawing. So that was an interesting one as well, because there was an element of reshaping the space within the drawing and I hadn't been there before.

LV: Then you handed back to the library, what?

MM: Well they got a big drawing, they got their drawing.

LV: And that then fed into the architect's design?

MM: Yes, it's still on-going, I'm not entirely done so they've got the drawing now, and I'll be finishing the digital version this week which will really let them go with it cause then they can package it up for their brief. They're an architecture team and then the council will take that on board. I've got some meetings coming up early June about that where I'm going to go and talk through what we did. I am writing a proper report because John who is the head of [unintelligible] does need a report. These people, the council will need something more official, and that is fine, I've done a thesis! So I'll be writing a proper report and there will be an archive, I've go to package it quite carefully. That takes a long time for me because obviously there's permissions and sensitivities around some of the stuff. I'll package it up and then and I'll get it to them and then I'm also setting up a user group for them it was the last thing I said I would do.

LV: What a fantastic gig! I imagine it's quite unusual to get a job like that where the commissioner is so open to your - you've kind of designed your own process, which is completely unconventional. And they recognise the value in it, and have embraced it.

MM: It's very special, I'll tell you why, because I'm working for XYZ libraries right now and I can tell you it's the exact opposite. It's an afterthought. It's actually not a dialectogram, because I told them, in the time frame they're saying I can't do it. We're doing a 'creative envisioning process' for them, whatever that means, they don't know. The woman who is running the XYZ libraries, doesn't know really what it's all about, she's clearly been given the short straw she just wants it done. It's a very different atmosphere and really what I'm trying to do within that very confined space is disrupt a little bit, that's where the disruption comes in. All right, I'm just going to push you a bit more here, we only have six weeks so we won't be able to do much…

LV: Yes, that's when the work becomes like a box ticking exercise isn't it?
A project that I did work with the brief was all about community-engagement, but nobody cared, it's just for the planning permission. It was like 'How many people have you talked to? 30? Great okay.' Like, the nature of the conversations, nobody cared.

MM: Exactly. And that's very common, that's what Bishop does point to: Art is often used as the soft-edge of often very shitty things.

[1 paragraph redacted]

I'll be disruptive, and then get the hell out of town, probably. It was a shame because Clydebank, Dunbartonshire was a really good cooperation, not without it's problems because it is a council and getting librarians to do stuff outside their comfort zone is really hard. I've done stuff with museums as well, very different. Curators can also be difficult, but librarians, my God! Even getting to go on a field trip to Glasgow Library to look at different possibilities was [unintelligible] takes my time away from this….[unintelligible] I had to pay for that. All right, okay never mind. [laughs]

But overall it was a very, very, as you say a very unusual thing. So willing to engage at that level. It doesn't happen every day but I suppose from a… if you're asking as a practising artist of some sort, or an illustrator, then that's the kind of project design I would like to have more of and fight for when I'm going into future engagements. That's what I'd be wanting to do more of...

LV: I think it's so interesting because the language of community, like the words like community, social engagement, participation, they're used by everybody at the moment all the time. I just wrote a piece about that and they're just these really woolly, soft words that nobody picks apart, nobody wants to pick apart, and they just get attached as an afterthought to all sorts of projects. They send an artist in and say – do a bit of that! Then you go and do these nice warm things where you.. I found myself feeling like the outsourced ethical consciousness…

MM: Yes, you were Jimini Cricket, basically [laughs].

LV: Well in my case… [explains project RLTF…]
Interesting! Complicated!

MM: A complicated place to be! But I would sooner be in that place than somewhere more rarefied or safe; I quite like that element now. I think now that I've taken my lumps [?] and I've sort of developed over time a way of approaching things and the experience and the knowledge I quite - am drawn to that more. I'd say that sounds a bit horrible but honestly, I'm drawn to that conflict a little bit, cause I think it's a much more important place to be. If you're a socially-engaged [inaudible] where structures might change or you might have some - its worth having a fight I suppose, I can also see how you are instrumentalised …

[cross talk]

MM: You are instrumentalised, and there's no discussion.

LV: Exactly there's no discussion, nobody's interested, they just want it done, so they can tick it on their planning obligation that they send to the council. I mean it was great for me to do it because that kind of set off my thinking in lots of different ways but as I think you're saying is… projects like the one that I've just described you have to then be careful not to choose to throw out the baby with the bath water and go 'it's all nonsense' because it isn't. It's nonsense in how some people want to instrumentalise it or put it to use in a very superficial box ticking exercise.

MM: I think you just find yourself in positions where you say okay, so this is a bit crap, how do we… how do I make the most of the crap pile I'm on until I get to leave [laugh], that's sort of how I take it. And sometimes you're very fortunate and it's not a crap pile at all.

Even with the Commonwealth Games [unintelligible] opening ceremony.

You know it's bullshit there you know and they are a group that most people would hate and there is ethical issues of even being involved with them and then again, you're like, well,- [sighs]

LV: I think again: that's where it's interesting! Engage with the shit! And then you try and navigate… Especially if you come from a communication design or an illustration background, that's the history! You're always in these kind of complicated situations where all sorts of different interest overlap.

MM: Sure, right, and if you think about it, from the old-fashioned illustrator / graphic art perspective…

Krazy Kat, George Herriman comic strips, [unintelligible]. That ethical encounter and that ethical bartering, it's always been there. It's just whether you chose to acknowledge it.
It's always a choice, you can just boycott, say fuck them and that's it, and that's a valid choice, I don't necessarily blame anyone for doing that, but for me it's never…

LV: That puts you in a weak position as well doesn't it, because you're just on the outside, and there's no…

MM: [Unintelligible] personal morals [unintelligible] [sighs]
I'm a pragmatist I think overall, I do have you know… I'm not an anarchist, I'm not necessarily an extreme leftist either, I am left wing, I'll be honest okay, it's become clear. You know I'm not… If you can save the hospital over the purity of the revolution, I'll save the hospital. I'm not a purist over the ideology of that, I think it's messy and dirty and your job, if you want to do this kind of work, if you want to socially engage you've got to get your hands dirty, just don't get them too dirty, just don't get them bloody. Dirty is one thing, bloody is another, I think it's more or less [unintelligible] the way I deal with it.

If something good comes from me working with the staff at XYZ library, and they're just a little bit more enfranchised and just a couple of things get through the barrier that the bosses have put up then it's not been wasted time.

If it's just a little better than it could be… I don't see my moral compromise as being too much to ask, in all honesty. I mean there are certain [unintelligible], where you would just be appalled at even the idea of that. There's a guy called Jim Colquhoun, who's a proper black anarchist, you know dark anarchy sort of stuff, and we argue all the time about that element. And I'm like okay, I see that. And maybe with you and me, maybe me doing what I do and you doing what you do is actually how it should be actually, I don't know. But we argue but we're also still friends and I think we appreciate where we come from and so…

LV: I do think it's difficult if you've got your heels so dug in that you're kind of rigid as well.

MM: Yes, the revolution is not coming any time soon. I'm not that bothered about ideology, I'd rather make some benefit come out of what I do than nothing whatsoever while you patiently wait for everyone to wake up apparently. So there you go that's the kind [unintelligible]

LV: How do you credit people?

MM: How do I credit, well, there's always a thanks list somewhere….. basically I do it on a case-by-case basis, but in *A Showman's Yard* nobody wanted to be credited, so I didn't. In *Duke Street* [unintelligible] to sign it, so I sent [unintelligible] out. If I can I just get [unintelligible] in and then I have a thanks list on the drawing, there are many for the supporting team. A lot of it depends on what people want to do, sometimes people say 'I don't want to be on anything.' – and I respect that.

LV: In your experience, what is the kind of percentage of people who want to stay anonymous?

MM: Quite low I think, 15%, most people want to be involved, most people want to …

LV: I guess because it is a self-selecting group anyway, that kind of narrows it down.

MM: and the ones who come back and come to the sessions, they're already signed on it's not a big deal. At the end of the process you have to have signatures and we ask you to sign the drawing – which people like. I find it's quite a symbolically important thing, they get to put their mark on. And then I do my consent forms at the end. So I always let them see the finished thing before I get any kind of consent, which is a little…

LV: Have you ever had anybody withdrawing consent?

MM: Not yet no.

LV: The consent is for exhibition because the drawing [already] happened?

MM: Yes, the drawing is here, the consent is for exhibition and reproduction, so no, as of yet no. I suppose if you've done your job well you shouldn't either…
What I did for this one [*The Free Hetherington*] is I got consent to show it as a research artefact, not to exhibit. Although I did get permission, I emailed them all for my PhD exhibition and said I want to exhibit it for the PhD exhibition so is that okay? And they all said yes. So that was it a bit more tricky – as everything in this drawing [laughs].

But usually the signing of the drawing and the signing of the consent is usually the same thing. So we deal with that the best we can. I usually basically had two, I had my own one [unintelligible] and the Glasgow School of Art one, which I have certain things on it, which is just the way it is, you have to get your consent done. But I do try and credit…. The authorial…..there is a tension there, it is authored by me, to a certain extent.

LV: Is that a bad thing?

MM: No, but some people think - some people may challenge that from a socially-engaged perspective, from a co-production perspective. I don't think it's a co-production, it is a collaboration. With co-production you have to have more of them in there. But I do think there's an element to which they deserve their mark on it, and they shape it.

LV: They co-shape it, but you have the overall vision.

MM: Yes

LV: I really think that's a good thing.
That's the other thing, a similar thing that we were talking about earlier, the ethics of authorial renunciation seem to dominate some of this discourse.

MM: It's all a bit 'holier-than-thou' sometimes, isn't it? Yes I agree, I was doing a project with Glasgow Museums … [mumbles]… I'm giving you this as well.

LV: Wow, thank you!

MM: I did this this project with Glasgow Museums called 'Behind the Scenes of the Fair' with [unintelligible – introduces new person – 'Tara Beall'] She's doing a PhD… She was working for the Museum Services in Glasgow, and Glasgow has got a huge Museum Service, they've got The People's Palace, Kelvingrove, Riverside, St Mungo's, Scotland Street School and the Mackintosh Museum, it's a big thing, one of the biggest non-national museum services in Europe, really quite forward thinking sometimes especially on social issues, in the past anyway… And her job was to really think about the museums, not just to think of the objects, but also – how do you engage with the outside, how do you transform things, and how do you deal with hidden histories, how do you deal with the hidden. That's [that description] doing her a massive disservice in terms of what her thesis was about [jokes].

So she was doing some work with Riverside [Museum] and Riverside were right by some showman's yards, just across the water and she was like [unintelligible] – who do I talk to about this? – … If anybody has a question about show-people in Glasgow they talk to me, it's just the way it happens. They talk to me about that. So we ended up talking. I was a bit cagey about it, not because it's my thing but because I'm just careful about [?]. But she talked me round and she came up with the idea of co-production or co-creation in the museum and we'll do it this way: It was a really innovative co-production approach where we set up a group for a year, of half travellers, and half museum people. We met regularly, like every week [?]. That was an undertaking in itself – getting that to happen! I got travellers and she got the museum people and we did a lot of stuff together. And it wasn't [?] very genuinely co-productive in that sense. There was a lot of direction coming from Riverside, actually more from the travellers, they had an agenda, because they're not represented – they live in this [unintelligible] old Glaswegians, [unintelligible]. It culminated an event, which was a 'living' fair at

Christmas in December in Glasgow, which was in the open air, near the river, it was windy. And that was – to me – it was a giant illustration. It told you something [unintelligible].

There was a lot of co–production and it's interesting in terms of legacies to come out of that: The winter fair, the winter living exhibit, it continues as an annual event and it was taken on by travellers, by us, which was great and they want to do it as a good-will thing and they've taken on [unintelligible] so they can understand how museums work and there's a permanent display being co-designed right now. So lot's of co-everything. But the authorial voice is still important. Even there.

Tara and I had to step in and to direct and then step out again, so it's that sort of manoeuvre you do all the time. I wouldn't say it was absolutely pure co-production. There were points when it was and points when it wasn't. I would say 'splashes' of that sometimes, but these four [unintelligible – does he mean the dialectograms?] are collaborative, not co-production. There is bits where it's close, it's almost there. But I never worry….

LV: No, I don't think you should.

MM: I don't want it to be, I'm comfortable with that.

LV: I mean, I don't know but I imagine that your participants wouldn't want it to be in a way, they want to work with you because they trust your work and they want to be part of what you bring, right?

MM: Absolutely. I'm also quite connected with anthropological thinking right now due to the thesis. The University of Aberdeen was probably the most 'hippy' of all anthropological departments… [laughter] They're out there!

And they had a go at me – not they didn't have a go, but they tested me sometimes about the mutuality… [unintelligible] You know – How mutual is that? You're designing [deciding] the drawing anyway, you're coming with a place [for them] then, you're setting ideas… And I'm like: no… well, YES! Cause I've got the thing that I do, like everyone does, you know…

I love some of that anthropological thinking and the way that anthropologists problematise things and are much more about being in the place and learning from the site. [Name] has an extended master class on that, which I'm all for! But I'm also unapologetic that people on that site have their own agenda and their own desires and their own interests, and I'm just interested in seeing an interesting thing come about and having someone who knows how to draw [unintelligible] and I'm less and less apologetic for that. There's a big effort in anthropology towards, you know, anthropologists drawing their own stuff and being not schooled or you know art schooled as it were. Okay. I think anyone who wants to draw should, but I'm also not going to apologise for having –

LV: But it gives you affordances, I think. Skills help you do things.

MM: Yes, it's like being a plumber.
I can deal with that. You've got a complex environment [?], and I can find my way around that graphically and we'll do that. Let's do that, you know and that can happen then.

LV: And it's silly to pretend that anybody can do that because they can't.

MM: Yes exactly.

LV: And you can.

MM: Because other people have lives, I spent most of my teenage years drawing comics in a dark room, so I have all these skills that come from that and I put them at people's disposal to some extent, but also I want to see [unintelligible]. I want to see it looking nice and I want to see it having a crafted element and all that, so as I said--.

LV: It goes with this whole social engagement thing, where there's such a rejection of aesthetics;

almost as if aesthetic is a dirty word and it's all about process. What are your thoughts on aesthetics? The look I mean. It is a look…

MM: Yes, there's an aesthetic there…[unintelligible]. I'm good, I'm all fine with that. I think it does create something that people can engage with.

The aesthetic here is, as you can see, there is an architectural side to it, but also, it is very comic, this cartoony-ness, but again that's something I'm perfectly comfortable with. And it's a bit messy, and there's a [unintelligible] to it, there are all these aesthetic elements that are speaking to people and bringing them into it. I suppose my short answer is that I'm fine with aesthetics. They are there we all have them, we're all into it, we all like aesthetics.

LV: We all like it, and do you know what else I think, it's that every active aesthetic renunciation just ends up creating it's own aesthetic. Like conceptual art, in the end there's a conceptual art look isn't it.

MM: Yes exactly, go to any gallery in [unintellible] two weeks ago and you would have seen it – it's boring, it's mannerist, it's tedious actually, if people were honest about it.

People, if you go and talk to them, ethnographically, they've got an aesthetic, they've got certain styles of lampshade and sometimes you might think it's tasteless and you might think it's the best thing you've ever seen. People have aesthetics we talk through aesthetics, we communicate through them, so why would you renounce it? I can get the conceptual experiment within a contained artwork, that you might want to try and renounce that. I can get why…

LV: That's impossible ultimately, isn't it because you'll always create a different kind of look, which is, I don't know – plywood!

MM: And it's impossible from the other directions. It's also impossible to not be affected in some way. I can see the conceptual desire to challenge it, to problematize it. But I don't get why you'd pretend to not have one, if you do. And it's like Bishop said – there's so pure documentation, which is… because of this bizarre belief that you can renounce aesthetics.

I have an aesthetic. The aesthetic is developed over time, it's designed to help people grasp on to and it's here, I mean Stephen Walker [he means Jim Walker] … [talks about an article on kitsch].

Walker, J. (2014) 'The vernacular line: Adoption and transposition of the kitsch in illustration', *Journal of Illustration* 1: 1, pp. 29–40.

I have an aesthetic it's based on my drawing style and what happens when you do something this way and I am fine with it.

LV: I completely agree because I think it's much more honest, rather than pretending that there can't be one [that one doesn't adopt a particular style].

MM: And again with this [Riverside Museum 'Living Fair'] there was an element, we didn't want to set an aesthetic, which is fine, but we wanted it to have one. This is just a booklet, that was part of the event, obviously fairground style. The aesthetic did become about the fair and objects. The aesthetics of the event was very much an actual fair, because this is what it's like, there's a reality to it. But that wasn't us setting it. We were opening it up and we were saying we're not going to set an aesthetic rather we're going to manage a process of dealing with an aesthetic and doing it together. And it was quite interesting with the permanent display that we are developing just now in the Riverside, because the Riverside is quite minimalist, it's got style. The curator actually loved it, but the designer [?], she's like, immaculately dressed you know. She's got a designer thing you know and she was a little bit taken aback by this ramshackle element of, 'let's put some more lights over here let's have a big sort of…'. But she's been very good, it's been about trying to come together on that. There's different aesthetics out there and we're going to try and collaborate to bring them together to something that works in a single thing, where people say something.

I'm all for that. I'm all for openness to other aesthetics. I do try and honour something of the aesthetics of a place even in a minor way. I was looking at some of their aesthetic features and I was adopting some of the lettering, and I was [unintelligible]. In some ways I was just documenting that aesthetic and …. [unintelligible] that there are other aesthetics apart from mine. But I'm never going to pretend that I don't have one [aesthetic] because I totally do.

LV: I believe that as illustrators, or people from a graphics tradition, it's easier for us because we just kind of go like… of course we have an aesthetic…I'm not being very articulate right now but – of course we have an aesthetic and of course there's an outcome, of course there's an object at the end that is crafted and we don't have a problem with that as much as I think people within the fine art camps sometimes get really...

MM: They can get very very uptight about that thing. God Love 'em yes [laughs].
No it's true I think that we come from that illustrative tradition so yes, let's do something with that.

LV: And I think as we were saying earlier this becomes like a door and becomes a focal point and the process slips around it and the process is very important but it's not all about the process, because then it just falls apart, I think and becomes close to nothing very quickly. If you have a joy in this thing as a kind of focal point for everyone to look towards, and in your case an actual site, I think the other things cluster around it in a much more natural way.

MM: Yes, and it creates landmarks and geographical positions almost for people to walk around. One thing I talked about is 'things' a lot. That came quite late in my research but it really helped crystallise it. And probably [unintelligible] away from the 'thing'- model, but look at it! It's very [unintelligible] design philosophy and guys like [name] – they have been using the 'thing' idea, but it comes from Latour. Bruno Latour writes about the social-material thing. He took it from the old socio-material assembly, which is like a place. You came to the place and you engaged with arguments and their agendas and it got dealt with there. And then, off you went.

And he took that further to – it could be a designed – 'thing'. Let's design things, where people come together at a given place around something and they share [unintelligible] they raise those issues and they might decide to deal with it or not. That's where a lot of this thing-design in Denmark and Sweden has went [?]. It's interesting. It's got its flaws like any model has. I do think of dialectograms as 'things' in a way because they do create a place. They do create an opportunity to talk and to argue and then something does get designed from it. There is something very specific about it, it is more specific than many other design processes, but it doesn't mean other things can't happen around it.

I think they way I've presented the thesis is – the *Piershill* was a 'thing'. It didn't need to be at the start, but it was by the end because it's not just the drawing was created, but it was other creations around it, other outcomes around it. The drawing wasn't the only factor there, but it was a factor that allowed people to—

LV: It was like a driving factor, isn't it?

MM: Yes. Another term you use in a lot of this, was 'concern'. It becomes a 'concern' for all of us and you're concerned about the drawing. And through that other concerns and issues came up and it just sort of happened.

LV: So Latour calls that 'concern'?

MM: I think he would. Certainly Ehn does. Björgvinsson and Ehn. If you can't find the article, let me know. I'll send it to you.

Björgvinsson, E., Ehn, P., & Hillgren, P. (2012) 'Design Things and Design Thinking: Contemporary Participatory Design Challenges', *Design Issues*: volume 28, Number 2, Summer 2012.

They call it 'concern' – a 'shared concern'. I'm pretty sure Latour uses that too….

I think that was helpful for me in just finding a way of explaining it. Although I do think probably the same model doesn't entirely work for me, or anyone actually. It offers a way to start thinking about the relationship between objects, artefacts, and a process. Because actually we're all employing it [?]. The thing-idea is something that gets around it and says: It's not just about the artefacts, or how the artefacts come about, how you get these artefacts, or where are they coming from. Is it just something you have in your head and you start with and you just make people want to do it, or is it going to be something that people come up with or there's a connection to. I think that gets around a lot of issues in some ways.

LV: Another thing that I've been thinking about is, when you look at the participation model and design, it's very instrumentalised, that I find in the research and it is the design, I don't know about a bike rack or design a better system for or water irrigation. The participatory, the conversational phase is very much at the service of then creating products or a solution effectually. In the fine art practice, it's all just about the process and it's all just about the convivial moments which replaces the objects, and are the actual art objects are evil, and it's all about that particular moment.

But I think with this kind of work, it's somewhere in between. Because it is not so that your conversations with the participants are not so you can design a better community centre here. But it's also not just about the conversation, it's kind of pictorial, kind of capturing of it. I think it's this really interesting in between these things, in between how it's really instrumentalised within design and really kind of unsatisfactory lose within fine arts.

MM: It is in-between, it's illustration. But I do think illustration is…..**.** as design it doesn't quite fit and as fine arts it doesn't quite fit. I think that's the joy about illustration. The hardest question I had was, it wasn't any of this other stuff, because I was fine with all that. It was: 'Define illustration!' Oh, Jesus wept! I struggled and [unintelligible]. That was the only part of it that was difficult. And it was down to an external anthropologist, [unintelligible].

LV: How did you answer?

MM: I fudged it here, because it just changes in your head. I think it was something along the lines of… Illustration is a clarification and explanation of giving pre-existing knowledge….
And then there's all the stuff about the ideal reader that Hoogslag talks about, which..hmm… it's good, it's actually a very good metaphor. The metaphor I came up with in my thesis, which would probably get torn apart if anyone looks at it closely. I said okay, it's philosophically [?] turned into a text, temporarily, for you to read and visualise. And I would say, 'yes' – a kind of social text. I identified a social text and I engaged with that…

LV: As a temporary thing.

MM**:** As a temporary thing, yes.
Because things change [?], immediately, as soon as I go away. That social text isn't fixed. I say, 'Here's a text, I'm going to create something with you [?], with these people, I'm going to make a drawing, and in 10 seconds it will all be changed and possibly changed by even the process.' That's how I sort of get around it in that sense.

I also think it's inherently collaborative and that's another thing to point out. [unintelligible….]. [Illustration…] Communication needs to happen and we're often between different disciplines and different constituencies. Your job as an illustrator is to get in between that and find a way through. So they're not satisfactory explanations.

Illustration, as you know, it needs to be slippery. I don't think any illustrations can be too defined. It has to be able to [unintelligible] three other things. And I suppose when you're illustrating something you're creating temporarily a place or a site, or something [unintelligible] that is then going to change.

LV: It's like this brief crossover moment when things come together and immediately, already, they are disbanding.

MM: You know the way I think of it as. The way it helped me was to go back to the fairground idea. Everything of fair comes to a place, you go very different families coming together from different parts of the country. They'll come to Glasgow, or wherever the hell it is. For that week, it will become a new thing. It'll become a place. The meaning of it will change and things will come through that and [unintelligible].

And for illustrators – what does that mean? You go from place, to place, to place, you come with your own baggage, and your own expertise, and knowledge and your own 'poachings' from other disciplines and then you try to meld it together and you try [unintelligible].

And that's kind of what even these are. These are temporary, they look very solid, but they're also very temporary. This isn't here anymore, that's not here anymore. *A Showman's Yard*'s changed several times since that's been done. I don't know. That's a terribly long-winded answer. I can't help it because illustration is an in-between thing. And that's its strength.

LV: But that is its strength. But I think we all could do with a bit more, being able to articulate that strength. That wasn't meant to be a dig at you at all, because I can't articulate it either, but I think if we were able to articulate it a bit better….

MM: That's why this is good. Meeting other people researching it, having research happening – ever! How difficult was it to get any illustration [unintelligible] Really hard! You know that's going to be a process to go through, for a [our?] generation. We're there! It's for us to take it! It's up to us to take that. It won't happen and it shouldn't – to any one person saying, 'This is it.' It's got to be….. the days of Steven Heller telling what illustration is are gone. Yes. Thank God for that.

We've all got to argue it out and get there and get a literature canon. Even your thesis will be a step towards that, what you accomplish, what I accomplish. We'll get there, but it's not going to be a small thing to handle. I think that gives us an opportunity to do that without a single figure….. If we can avoid that.

LV: I think it's really nice, because there is no single figure…

MM: Exactly. If we can avoid that…. Because who cares about illustration, apart from us.
[laughter]
I think that's why I like it. That's where I feel at home there. I'm a marginalist. I'm always in the margins. It's much more interesting there and illustration is marginal, let's be honest.

LV: It's kind of scary and exciting because it's so little literature. So we can just be like 'Just take that thing from over there and that thing from over there, and then put it together and then you've got a big mess.' And then you're trying to figure it out. Lots of the time, I'm thinking, 'Am I allowed to do that?' [laughter] There's nobody saying I'm not.

MM: No, no there really isn't. But then you realise that's what they've been doing with other disciplines. It's not always strange, you know gluing together, it's just being able to pick it up along the way. You've got more departments… with more institutional weight behind it now. But some of the stuff you read – it's so thin. There's just a few buzz-words in that. There's no real depth or scholarship. There's a lot of this kind of stuff out there, I find at the moment. Also some great stuff going on, stuff that I really admire. But, yes, it's like I can't believe that I, too, I think. And I even design. I did… I've done… I mean are you in the design department?

LV: Yes, for graphic communication design.

MM: Right. At the GSA, I was asked to be part of a MDes symposium. They said – do a poster, and present on it. So I did a poster [unintelligible]. It was quite in depth, but also, quite nice. I go in there and there were all these flow charts and serious things. They haven't even got text – they have code!

LV: Flowcharts of what?

MM: I don't know. I listened to some of the things and the presentations made it clear: It was often about 'stakeholder engagement' and design process flows and all that sort of stuff.

LV: They're always trying to 'science it up' in a way.

MM: Yes, and you're not a scientist at all. You're not a scientist, just give up.

LV: Is that kind of lack self-confidence or something.

MM: Yes, it got to be a flow chart. The people were being very nice to me. They probably thought: 'What has he got there?!' It was a nice day, but I thought, 'Jesus, I'm not a designer!' But it was good for that. My second supervisor Gordon Hush was the product design head. And to be fair to them, they sometimes have to [use flow charts in product design]. He was great actually. He was an old-fashioned Marxist. [short anecdote about this person]. But he thought it was good I came, because they [other attendees] were seeing another way of looking at design.
But some design, it has convinced itself, it is an industrial science.

[Unintelligible], but all the stuff they were doing, was taking away from the flowcharts. Really, the point that was raised was – why don't you just really tell us about the process? Clearly it does not relate to that flowchart, because that flowchart would just be a complete mess, given what you've just said.

LV: Exactly. As soon as you got out, and try to do [what is on] the flowchart, it all falls apart.

MM: Exactly. Yes. That [what is he pointing to?] flow chart is honest [laughter]… It's not really readable…

LV: And with stuff like this [what are we referring to here? A chaotic, layered part of MM's work?]] illustration embraces the unreadable and makes the best use of it, and also makes it look pretty without being afraid of it.

MM: Yes, that's the thing. That's what illustration is for – making things beautiful even when [even when we can't read texts?]. [Unintelligible] – that's the comic side, I think. Even when text [unintelligible] it is an image of sorts. That's what we do! We take that idea of 'reading', but reading that you can just engage with [?] and then have a relationship with another text.

It's a connective thing – it connects things, that don't seem to connect. That's what we're really good at. We still have a lot to do, obviously, but that's our state [?]. I think we should avoid going too far down the design route or the fine art route. [crosstalk] We should be comfortable about the weird state that we're in…

LV: That's what I mean! That we need to articulate that a little bit more to ourselves or it's just a matter of confidence. Because it is a great place to be, I think we should try to do anything else. There is this whole sense of illustration being somehow diminished. And illustrators often think of themselves as somehow diminished.

MM: [joke about Steven Heller]
I think it's interesting reading some of the more old school illustration writing and how narrow it is. It's all about the spot [illustration] and the loss of editorial and the loss of editorial real estate [?] and all that kind of stuff. Okay, yes, that's definitely a pressing issue but, really? Is that all there is? And by saying that then, illustration just becomes a dead form. We are killing it! By our description!

I don't think illustration ever has just been about editorial real estate – never!
Again – about me – I grew up around illustration in the sense of [unintelligible], often ripped off from the latest horror film that [unintelligible]. It was an illustrative process. There was stuff happening and there were people communicating often in [unintelligible] ways, in that sense.

Illustration goes beyond editorial real estate! It always has done! We know it's shit, in editorial – that's why we are doing all these other things, that's why we're branching out. I think we should be honest

about the fact that we can. And actually we have these skills that come from dealing with that paid editorial space perhaps, or tight commercial spaces, that are actually serving us really well for going out there and getting new opportunities or finding new ways of doing what we do, that doesn't involve surrendering to the designer-author thing. You can get illustration to be the thing, that really helps to pull certain things together and I guess to get some agendas [?] together.

LV: It is also interesting what Catrin Morgan says. How we are so hung up on thinking about that illustration something that illustrators do. Her catch-phrases is, that 'Most illustrations aren't made by illustrators.'. She's just looking at how images are used more broadly, in visual culture and internet culture. How images function and flow in networks and how they are re-appropriated in different ways, how they're mixed with texts in different ways and how this with image-text relationship can be much more nuanced and complicated and interesting than we often imagine they are.

MM: Yes. Have you seen that daft site where they have classic paintings, usually pre 17th century, because of the coyright. And you can put [unintelligible] on them, and create memes. It's really funny. And you are almost illustrating the word. [crosstalk]
It's just a throw-away thing, but illustration is everywhere – if you look at it [that way]. People are using it all over Facebook – if you could monetise it… somebody would get rich! Some of us, not all of us!

LV: But I think illustration as a discipline – we should also be talking about those things!

MM: Yes, of it just a social practice as a way of socialising. People just socialise with illustration. We should tell that! Actually, we have never been more graphic than we are now! The graphic culture is everywhere! And we kind of seem still to be sitting there worrying about…. [LV: editorial] And me thinks, maybe we should stop worrying about that.

LV: Many, not all, but many illustration departments are quite conservative.

[there follows a bit of a rant about conservative approaches to illustration, as well as commercial work and the decreasing pay rates in that sector]

…

MM: What's been interesting with this stuff [dialectograms] as well: It starts itself of as self-initiated, non-commercial stuff, for my own interest. Now it's like, all what people want me to do is a dialectogram! No one wants my other stuff any more. It's okay. Actually it means other stuff we used to do for money, is now the stuff I do for leisure [laughs]. And this stuff [dialectograms] has become more of what I do. The tension that I have is that these are not commercially….time-scaled. With commercial illustration you have a deadline, you do it in as little time as you can and all that kind of stuff. That's the difference [with the dialectogram]: You have to spend time, you have to go deep to make it, give it the quality. You have to make it messy and open-ended. So, it doesn't lend itself to commercialism, and yet at the same time that's now my main way to make money. Which is really weird. So what I have to do is work out a system of dealing with that.

And be honest about it. What you have to say: Look, you have to think of it as a project, not a drawing. Thinking of it as a project would be best, and this is what it will cost, and this is why it costs that. You should go and have a wee think about that and come back. Sometimes they do and sometimes they don't. Some of them think I can just do it on a weekend!

LV: I think it's lunch time, if I may buy you lunch?

Interview with Hefin Jones

First interview, 15.April 2016, Shoreditch, London

Transcript

LV: Your project was never meant to happen, was it? There was never going to be a space station.

[Throughout the interview I keep incorrectly calling the proposed idea 'space station'. The actual proposal was for an astronaut training center.]

HJ: Exactly. It was using that as a catalyst to get them thinking about other big possibilities. Using that initial big idea, to then think, okay, what if think about the chip shop or the youth center in a different way. How can be begin to imagine different things?
I think that's important as well – when you are going in with a big idea, which you are trying to use as a catalyst, to be clear that it is just that. Especially in places like [inaudible], that are quite poor communities. There is an ethical issue here – young kids in youth centers who think they are going to benefit from this thing – the implications of that. So being very clear with them from the outset.

LV: I've written some questions, but maybe I'll just jump in with things as they come up in conversation. You mentioned that the community that you worked with was economically quite weak. Was it important for the project to work with a community like that?

HJ: Yes, there was a certain set of conditions: historical, economic…. The idea was it has a mining industry there, it was such a big industry – so make it big again. Another one was the area that I worked in has one of the lowest voting population in all of the UK, like 52% turnout or something. That was important. That shaped the process of creating the manifesto with the youths, the idea that they could come together in a democratic way around an issue. So those different things informed parts of the process.

LV: That's really interesting. So do you think your project stands for a kind of utopian model? Are you trying to teach people something?

HJ: I think there is an element of critical consciousness, I guess. So getting people to really be aware of issues that may exist within the community. Take them through a process – the manifesto one for example – the kids in the youth center wrote a six-point manifesto about who could use this astronaut training center, who [inaudible]. You replace the idea of the training center with funding by a local council, and you get the idea that again – they could come round in a democratic way to apply that to a different process. Getting them to that point is tricky, there is only so much you can do. But having that initial thing, will hopefully go on to [inaudible].

LV: So there was a kind of impulse to teach, in a way.

HJ: I don't think "to teach". Part of it is just revealing connections between people and allowing them to….. I see it more as a facilitating role, rather than a teaching role. The knowledge and the skills already exist there. I'm not actually bringing anything to them. All I'm doing is connecting this person to this person and creating an activity in between. So – like the Welsh historian and the kids. It was her talking about this historic charter, this manifesto that was created by the chartists, this social and political movement, talking to her about that – and then talking about how we do it with the youths, is how that idea came about. It was very much a collaborative thing. Using her knowledge I was able to shape an activity, which then involved the youths. A lot of it is trying to look at what kinds of resources exist in the area. And just, bringing people together then. Finding and creating a forum, where you can bring people together.

Coming back to this idea of image making as part of the process: one of the [inaudible] meetings was really interesting: again: just bringing people together. So there was an ex-miner, a scuba-diver, the property developer and a mining surveyor. A group of people getting together. The activity was to take the original plan for the colliery building that would show where the flats would go, and then using tape and pen and drawing over it – using an additive process. Using what is known as a basis, and then thinking – how would this work as an astronaut training center? And then that snowballed and they were starting to think: we need an educational bit, we can have our own silicon valley research center in there for example. That was really important I think, for that process. Just bringing different people together.

LV: So it's the relationships that you think are primary in your work.

HJ: Yeah

LV: And how would you describe those relationships? Was it for example important to you that everybody gets on?

HJ: Not necessarily.

LV: Where there tensions?

HJ: Yeah, definitely. Like in one of the final meetings of the project, where I got the historian Elin Jones to facilitate a group meeting with the choir, the youths, the property developer, there were a lot of people going. That bringing together of people reveals a whole new set of issues. The choir had a weird dynamic around them having a meeting, which was being facilitated by a woman. Because the whole history of something like this, you know mining, it being founded on this idea of masculinity and the mining industry. Then there was also another thing about the youths and their ideas not being engaged with and supported by the older generation.

LV: And how much did you then interfere with those tensions?

HJ: You just have to explore them in a way. You have to be quite responsive to them. Setting up a meeting like that and expecting it to go in one way – it's almost like you are rigging it, you might as well get actors involved. The tensions should be allowed room. People should be allowed to be unpredictable. And quite often in participatory design projects or art projects are geared towards a positive outcome.

LV: But that's also historically very specific. There are other historical examples where people created projects that were divisive and disruptive and oppressive. It's really only in the last 10 years that everything is supposed to be happy-clappy.

HJ: But I think it's good, you know, to have positive outcomes. But then there are so many projects which are….. There is no funding for such projects. They want positive outputs, they want measured impact and positivity in many ways. So you do end up with projects, which lose many of the behaviors and characters that make up these people and the communities – that should be used as a factors when designing or creating such activities.

LV: So you didn't set out to create tension, but when tension arose…

HJ: …you respond to it, you creative some activities from that.

LV: You also worked with the actual property developer. What was his role like? How did he interact with everybody?

HJ: In the final meeting he was very accommodating, and he said things like: 'We can all come together and talk about this and make it happen.'

LV: What, make the space station happen?

HJ: Yeah, you know!?

LV: But he wasn't serious? Making the space station happen?

HJ: That's the odd thing. As project went on, although it was introduced as a fictional thing, it started to manifest itself in different ways with different people. People then started to think, this might be a feasible thing. And I myself as well, I started to think, okay, there is a genuine enthusiasm behind this from the people. And that was a nice thing, how much people decided to take it on. When we had the youths doing the manifesto he was talking with them, he was really…. Really it made the project, having someone like that, that was pivotal in making it happen. With all projects, having one person that gives the initial point of contact, who may or not be part of the community, having that person…

LV: Was he Welsh? Where was he from?

HJ: He was originally from Crystal Palace, South London, he's been a property developer there…. He was originally a lawyer, then he was a property developer, then his friends bought a whole lot of [inaudible] collieries, when the mines shut, and sold him that site there, which he's been developing into flats, so then he moved to [inaudible].

LV: So there was no antagonism between him and the rest of the community.

HJ: No, that was the nice thing, when I finally did bring everyone together, people were really engaged with him, there wasn't this idea that he was someone from afar. And I think that's just down to him as well, and the way that he was engaging with other people in the community. In that meeting he was just talking enthusiastically.

LV: From what you say it sounds like people got quite invested in this idea of the space station. So how then did you end the project? How did you wrap it up?

HJ: In the film the group meeting comes before the final, but it actually came as one of the last things, when we got everyone together. So that was one of the main ways in which I closed it: a meeting in which people would discuss the value of engaging with big ideas. It has some people saying, it's healthy to do that. Again, it revealed another whole new set of things. Ian, the scuba-diver saying it's healthy to do it, that perhaps they'd become quite stifled as communities, it's good for your health to think of interesting ideas and to be imaginative.

It's not a perfect project in any way. I struggled for a while to think about how I might wrap it up.

LV: So you didn't have a plan…

HJ: [inaudible] …..people being quite responsive, I could have ended up in a town where nobody wanted to speak with me.

LV: That would have been a different kind of project.

HJ: That would have been a completely different project, exactly!

The way I finished it off, yeah, this meeting came about. But what is now, is that I'm still in contact with the people there, and all the work is being moved to a museum in the town, which is a coal-mining museum. It will be in the domain of the people who made the project. For me that's nice. But then again, do I then use this exhibition as an opportunity to then think further about different aspects of the area, to use that as a platform to involve other younger people to imagine their own things?

LV: Did the property developer then go ahead and build the flats as planned?

HJ: I don't know yet! That was another strange thing about that: It was such an ambitious project that he was going to do, it was millions of pounds, to actually build the flats. I don't know, he got all the plans made… That might have been an interesting element: Was he looking at me and thinking: 'This guy is going to take it off my hands and build a space center!'

(Laughter)

LV: Let's go back to the beginning! What was your aim, when you initially started? What did you want to achieve?

HJ: The aim was to go as close to the possibility of it becoming a reality. Working with people along the way, to really involve as many different people who are chasing an impossible goal.

LV: Was it almost to take an idea and push it? And see how far you can push it?

HJ: Yeah, just really pursue it. Take that as a goal and see: How far can we actually get?

LV: Because it was an unrealistic idea… How do you think that impacted? If you'd come up with a much more conventional and realistic proposal…..

HJ: I think there would have been much more of an economic consideration, for getting involved, as to, why they were getting involved. Like what does he want from me to build his football pitch? It needed to be absurd. It needed to be the most ridiculous goal to work towards, so they didn't think I wanted them for a few bags of cement or something, to help me actually make this thing. It was really about engaging in a conversation about something really impossible and having that dialogue.

LV: Do you think the project was a success? And if so, how do you know? What is your criteria?

HJ: I think my criteria for it working would be that many people are invested in it, in terms of their time and also allowing themselves to be a bit more free, a bit more playful. Getting to know people, and involving them in a process that was absurd.

Because it's made up of so many different bits – you've got the manifesto making, you've got Paul, the property developer, who then DJs, you've got the suba diving with the youths – so, it's a trick y one. I don't really know how to evaluate.

For me, one of the other things, was that final feedback meeting, it was a couple of weeks after the main activities had taken place – getting feedback then, was really nice. The volunteer from the youth center saying that the kids hadn't stopped talking about when they went gone scuba-diving. Just getting them to think a bit differently about taking action within their own area.

It's definitely weird – there's no metrics. It's like a metric-diffusing project.

LV: Do you know Claire Bishop? She writes about participatory fine art practices. Her main point that she keeps returning back to is evaluative criteria. People doing participatory projects claim that they are artists, but then the criteria they apply is ethical criteria. If it's reached many people, if it's done the most good, then it's a success. And she this, that is not creative, artistic criteria. And she thinks those 2 sets of criteria can't be reconciled. People don't measure themselves against other social projects, they measure themselves against other art projects, but then the way they evaluate their work is in ethical terms, rather than on art's terms. It's an interesting conundrum.

HJ: It becomes more design, in some ways. You are concerned in the project with notions of function. So if we can think of function: Do they allow to let people think bigger? How many people did it involve? For example, when I was working in service design, I was showing the people I was working with projects I was interested over lunch. So I showed one person Jeremy Deller's *Battle of Orgreave*, and they would just go to me: "But what was the impact?" That's the jarring aspect of that there…. "What's the impact?" Some people need to engage in projects that way. They can only see it in terms of metrics, which I try to stay away from. There are certain funding bodies, which will evaluate…. the after

project evaluative processes scare me, you know! It's good to be able to do that, but the kind of work I do and I want to be doing, the people I reach, how do you measure it's been a success?

LV: I don't know! That's why I was wondering about your aims. What were you hoping for? And aims don't have to be measurable aims. I like what you were saying about how far an idea can be pushed with a particular group of people….
What I also like about Jeremy Deller's *BOO,* it sounded a bit similar to you, he set this project in motion, and then at one point he was talking to someone and saying: "I feel like I've slightly lost control over it." You teeter on the brink of initiating it, creating this framework, but them letting it go. And then it becomes its own beast.

HJ: Yes, I think it's really important to plan that into a project, to allow room for that. The ends of project of projects are really….. The criticism of participatory projects is often when it ends – what happens? But I think ways around it is to be absolutely clear from the beginning. To give people enough structure, so that if they do want to act upon something they have the tools to do so.

Do you know Thomas Hirschorn's project *Gramsci Monument*? I read an article, w someone went back to the place where the project happened and talked to some of the people there, and them feeling quite helpless: "This thing came and went. When it was there, gun crime went down, and loads of people had something to do, and [inaudible]. And they were asking for blueprints or something, and wanted to get people to do it. [?] ….

LV: But I think it's also really interesting and strange that in a way you expect an artist to become the social worker. Is that your job? I don't know! It is now almost being made the job of the community artist, the participatory artist, to mop up where politics have failed. Is that our job? It is being made our job?

HJ: Lots of these projects and grass-routes organisations ironically come about….

LV: …. through political failings!

HJ: Exactly!

LV: And then we are expected to fix it!

HJ: There is a lot more expectation on people doing these projects, than if there was Local Authority leading this project. It's a weird place to be in.

LV: How did you fund it? Did anybody get paid? And in an ideal scenario – would you have paid any of the people you were working with?

HJ: It was funded by the Design Museum. I probably didn't take home any money. When I was involving people, I'd always organize transport to come to a meeting. But then again I had people who really helped the project, like for example the volunteer from the youth center, he was taking the kids, giving them lifts up to wherever we were going. He was really invested in the project and he was prepared to do so.

LV: I think Thomas Hirschorn pays his people. It changes the relationship, it makes it something else. At least partially he pays them.

HJ: Does he?
I would if I was him. Because they are building something. They were laboring over a structure, which, you know, events were programmed on it.

LV: I don't think one is better than the other. It just changes the nature of the project. If people aren't being paid, you are kind of saying to them that you will benefit in some way, by nature of them being in this project, you are offering them something, that you believe is good for them or of value to them. And

in the other model you are saying 'This is mine. And I am going to pay you to contribute to my thing.'

HJ: If you are not paying, expressing to people the value of the project, articulating that, is quite tricky as well. When people aren't from arts backgrounds, getting them to engage in a workshop where they are going to talk about planning a space center or whatever, that can be like…"Wot?" It's building up to that I guess.

To be honest, though, the more work I find myself doing, especially now, the Ilford (?) project I'm doing, understanding different community groups and cultural practices. I think generally people are open to anybody showing interest in those things. Whether it's boxing, to archeology societies, to skaters down at the skate-park. Generally people are interested in people finding out what their cultural practice is. As long as you don't get them to be out of their way, I think it works alright.

If people were building something for example….. Imagine Francis Alys paying everybody to pick up a shovel to move that sand across the mountain…

LV: Did he?

HJ: No.
It would make it into something else. That can be an interesting factor in it. If you were to pay someone… I would only pay someone if paying them was an interesting part of the project. What that would say about someone…

LV: The economic relation then becomes part of the project.

HJ: Exactly.
So if a group were only willing to meet with another group is they paid. That is revealing in itself.

LV: Or – there are various art project, where artists have been able to pay people, people who are very marginal, such as asylum seekers or very low paid workers, so an artist was able to pay them more than they might get on the dole. But then that is what the piece becomes about. It becomes about the economic relations in the society that it's based in.

HJ: As well, when I spoke to a service designer, they would give people [??pens or??] vouchers for attending workshops on healthcare in the area. But that was much more of a focus group, so I can understand that. Yeah, that's a different thing all together then, isn't it? They're giving an opinion that will not directly influence things. It's just a focus group–y kind of thing….

LV: A question about your role about degrees of authorship. The idea of the space station – you developed that?

HJ: Yes.

LV: I personally think that's a good think, because as a group to come up with a good idea is difficult. So how would you describe your role in terms of authorship within this project?

HJ: So there was the initial idea, which was informed by a really bad sketch. So I took that…. Definitely the authorship is shared or lies with many people I met along the way. The first thing I did was set a meeting with the curator of the coal mining museum. With him we mapped out potential places that would be suitable for this, where it would work. And then it just went from there. The final plan that was drawn over the original plan – that was created by the people in the workshop. I just sat back and observed it. They were the people that were thinking of the technical aspects of it. It was just giving a prompt of an idea, and then letting people go with it.

I actually don't really like doing projects under my name…. The more I am doing participatory projects, the more I realize that I rely on a big network of people, on the delivery of the projects, like film-makers for example. So I am planning to start a studio-name. I think it's quite narcissistic to talk about

participatory projects with a name, single person attached to it. And also I'd been more willing to talk about projects in the future if its about a group of people that I've worked with coming together to do something. It's weird to name one person….

LV: Yes, I try to think of the analogy of film-making. In film you also have the director whose name is the 'top' name, but then it's so obviously a collaborative project. But maybe it's different because you're from a design background… I don't know.

HJ: After doing a couple of projects I've realized it's a strange thing. The authorship thing – it's just purely trying to facilitate connections between people, and that's how I try to [???].

LV: What role do you think aesthetics play in your work, if any at all? The look of things….

HJ: I think it's very considered, with all the many different aspects of it. For example there was an acid house poster that was made, which responded to Paul – the property developer's – as a result of the project he started thinking this could be used as a acid house [???] venue. It was looking at the archive of rave posters and the aesthetics of that, which informed something, which responded to the grove of his idea.

LV: And who designed that poster? Did you do it?

HJ: Yes, I did that. It was one of the only things I designed in the whole thing. But that's kind of the point, I guess: to give materials that can be used by people that can then… It's weird. Having a rough idea of an aesthetic of something and giving people the tools to be able to realize something that will kind of look something like what I'd intended to start with. But also during that process allowing them freedom. So, the taping over the original plan, I wanted to use the tape in that process, because it's a physical thing, it was a process of – not destroying something, but drawing maybe would have……

LV: So by providing materials you give an impulse in a certain direction, but then again – it's that balance of providing something and ….

HJ:… allowing enough room within that process.
Everything is considered before. For example the DJ set with Paul – visually having the vast space on the inside and then him on his own, almost as if he's playing to the entire colliery, with the lasers. There's a kind a vision for how something will look, and how it will be performed. And then there's a negotiation for the collaboration with the person who's involved, to push that idea, to figure out how that would be progressed or developed. So – bringing that idea to Paul, calling him up, telling him about it, and him being quite enthused and saying "I'll bring my vinyls, I could be doing this at the same time, this could go there…." It's definitely a collaborative thing.

LV: So how do you see the relationship between the documentary video…. Well, so you've got the documentary video, and then you've got…. I don't want to call it "the project" because it's all part of the project, but then you've got all the events, and social interactions and the documentation.
I understand that in the overall project your emphasis is on the social relations and the events, it's not on the video.

HJ: I think the film provides an anchor-point for the other artifacts. So the idea would be that you'd engage with the film and then the other artifacts become a process afterwards, to see what was part of these…. You see these artifacts, and in the film you are able to see the processes, which created them. So that's the way in which the film serves its purpose in relation to the artifacts, and really allows you to see tensions, you see the whole conversation, the dialogue, everything that led up to its creation. And so – you have this flat image, but behind it is this really rich story.

LV: But the film is for a slightly different audience as well, isn't it? Because all the social relations and activities unfolded in Wales. And. as far as I understand, the primary audience for the film is us, here in London. Isn't it? This is another thing I was thinking about – you are engaging with so many different audiences in your project. So I was also wondering how you manage all these different kinds of publics and groups.

HJ: Ideally it would have been exhibited first at that place near the town. I think the film – I've sent it to some of the people involved in the project since, and they've been really positive about it, in terms of it serving as a way to see how people can be encouraged to be imaginative, to think bigger.
It is weird – where you put it. For example people in the Design Museum, how you read that. It's an interesting thing.

People may begin to think 'Okay, let's support this town to help make this thing happen.' That's the feedback I got from some of the people. Strangers, as well as people I know have been saying it. They say, like "This thing – there's this idea – there are these people – they're enthused about it. How can we support them to make it happen?"

And then – how it's read in a place near to the town would be: We engaged in this idea, also – I'd be interested to show it to some of the people who had negative initial responses to the project. The MP for example. I may have to take his audio out of the film before I show it.

LV: [laughter] What does he say?

HJ: Well, he just hates it! So I had half an hour meeting with him and 2mins into the meeting he got up and said: "I don't have time for your ideas. Get out! You're not part of my community." Going on a mad one! He freaked out.

Then you've got that, who's the local authority, who's somebody who should be accepting or engaging in the ideas, which are grown from the community and involved in the community, who's going against it. And then you've got the flipside of that which is the community trying to make something happen.
I'd be interested to see him watching it. It might be interesting to film that. Just him, losing his mind, also be like: "Yeah, he's working with all these people... So torn! As a politician I should be into this, but as a person I'm not."

LV: So you also showed the film to the participants as well?

HJ: Yeah, I wanted to have a screening of it. But I just sent it to them via email, via vimeo. The historian – she was the one who suggested that we could show it at the coal-mining museum at the town. She has links. So I'm working with her and the coal-mining museum to figure out how we can exhibit it. So that would be a nice thing.

LV: And all the objects – are they also at the coal-mining museum? Or have you got them?

HJ: I've got them. They'll be going there soon – like the prints and stuff.
The only thing that's part of the exhibition which I'm not….. there was a model, a 3D model of what it would be like. And that created mainly for the exhibition to show how it would be… that was informed by the diagram that was drawn by the community.

LV: This diagram? [In Design Museum publication.] No, this is YOUR diagram, right?

HJ: yeah, that was the very initial one. That was drawn by my dad. I called him up and told him about the idea. And he was 'Alright…' He's an art teacher for years, so he's open to anything. So he was like: 'Alright, yeah, you could do this…' And then he just sketched that and sent it to me.

LV: Great! That's useful to have a dad like that!
I'm also thinking of using images. How did you use this image? Did you use this image when you approached people initially?

HJ: Yes! Very initially….
So, I took copies of that to the coal-mining museum, and they gave them [whom?] pens and they drew over that…. that was the first thing. Then, through a series of drawings and negotiations with different people became what was the final plan that you see in the main thing. It went through several iterations with people who knew what they were talking about.

But I was like showing this to people in pubs and stuff, ex-miners sitting at the bar with their Bitter, trying to get their input on it…

LV: Again – it's like a focus point, isn't it?

HJ: Yeah, it's tricky. Someone else you could speak to as well who's doing an interesting project is another lecturer at Goldsmiths called Jimmy Loizeau.

And he's done a project called 'Illegal Redesign of Rhil'. It's a seaside town in North Wales. What he wants to do is get people to imagine a new and crazy possibility for it. He wants to take an aspect of history and then with people there project their own desires, create plans with people, for what could be new big ideas.

LV: So in contrast to you, where you proposed an idea, he's asking people…

HJ: Exactly, but the difficult thing he's finding was structuring an activity which allowed people to do that.

LV: It's VERY difficult to get people to do that. And we're used to art school environments! And even in those environments people struggle.

HJ: Exactly! So he was finding was that it was tricky. And then he was over-compensating by himself. Designing on behalf of the participant. Really giving them too much impetus for their ideas…. We've talked about many different ways to do that. Is it an additive thing? Do you take, like, one postcard, one spectacle activity, whatever, and then a drawing that pulls the two things together. It's creating methods, which allow people to think about new possibilities for your area. How you structure that is quite tricky.

LV: It's key! If you say to someone: "Come up with an idea NOW!" it's, like, no!

HJ: Exactly! So I think it's about creating a formula to be able to do that. That workshop I run at Goldsmith: It's about taking an industry from the yellow pages and then imagining a new industry that grows out from that in a crazy context. So the context could be like: underwater, in the sky, underground, or in space. So you take that and find people associated with that – so for example underground miners, water – it could be scuba divers, and then, a material culture associated with that, so scuba pants or whatever. Then you take the current industry, which is yellow pages, so it could be a plumber, so you take the blow-torch, the copper piping, the radiator… And then you take the blow-torch and you take the oxygen [?] tank and then you merge the two together and you get some crazy invention. And that is the process which I've used before which again…..

LV: You're leading people through the process…. but it needs it!

HJ: It's how you do that… Exactly! It needs it! Is it taking an aspect of the history of an area and then running an activity and designing something new that grows out of that… And I think it's fine to do that! But it's about what that project's about, isn't it? So – is it about using history as a launch pad for thinking about new possibilities, or is it…..

LV: If, say, somebody perhaps had made a different decision at some point in history, so then you'd have an alternative branch of how time might go…

HJ: Exactly! How it might have gone!
Jimmy's work is to do with some of that. It's taking historical things in Rhil, and what would happen if you just pushed them a bit further. Rhil itself was a testing ground for crazy ideas, historically, they had racing seals, it was a really crazy place, they had a monorail kind of thing. And you need to push those things a bit further. What if you had a monorail which was a transport city, combined with a rollercoaster. …

LV: … or put it underground…

HJ: Yeah, so there's loads of things…. But getting people to think really crazily is tricky.

LV: Yes, you need to give them methods because most people, once they stop being a child, they are never asked to do those things.

HJ: Exactly. So I think drawing and additive processes, so – taking something that exists and drawing onto it, or adding stuff to what exists.

LV: You have to give them a framework and a scaffolding to help people...

HJ: … otherwise they're just completely lost.
With the school during the Cosmic Colliery project – I gave everyone an image of the pithead structure. You know, the metal thing on top of the mine, the metal thing with the wheel. I gave them an image of that and said; 'Okay, astronaut training center, go!' And they were drawing on top of that [….??], zero gravity underwear, another one, in the water tank, they had a shark, …Having something as a basis to add on to. Having an aim.
Like Thomas Hirschorn, he's go a structure: location, people, output and time. So, where's this taking place, who's involved, what's going to be the output activity, and how long is it going on for? And I was trying to rip that off for my project, I was just using that as a structure, to plan activities.

LV: So, apart from Thomas Hirschorn, Jeremy Deller, and you also mentioned Jimmy Loizeau, are there any other practitioners or pieces that you look towards or relate your practice to?

HJ: So there's, Jasleen Kaur. How did I meet her? – at a talk in Glasgow. So she does really interesting work that it about definitely what I'm interested in doing in the future, which is … meeting point between different cultural practices, or different cultures, so finding mid-points. So she did a piece of work recently for the Jerwood Gallery thingy…. and it was about her brother …. in a traditional Sikh family, and her brother finding a tension in that and him being involved in drugs and alcohol. And his negotiation between that and his traditional family life. And she created 2 lovely artifacts when she did that. So there was….

LV: So does it come from product design?

HJ: No, they were more like sculptural. So there were these terracotta-tiled lamps which [???] in an improvised way, so you have candles inside. So you make [???}. And then she combined that with this idea of her brother being influenced by modern life and so instead of it being candlelight it was this chrome plated touchlight, which was on this very traditional thing, so it was like…

LV: And how does that relate to your practice? It sounds quite distant…

HJ: So this idea of crossing over between different kinds of cultural practices…. The space campaign project – it was about plumbing and the space suit. If you think about like, space exploration as being its own thing – that as its own culture is involved with all sorts of things – like, superstars, or the cutting edge of technology, or it's the most advanced you could go with technological ambition. And then you've got plumbing, which is the everyday, it's something, which is so familiar to us, we're close to it as a technology. So can you use that technology… Finding a meeting point …

LV: So it's about putting things together.

HJ: Yeah. Especially there is this project that I'm doing now in Ilford finding different cultural groups…

LV: In Elephant, did you say?

HJ: In Ilford. So it's finding different cultural groups that exist in Ilford, because there's a growing divide between the north and the south of the borough. And finding opportunities for them to create new artifacts, or performances or whatever… that grows out of, that is a kind of mutation of the things, as a way to build empathy, or create an interaction between the groups. So that's the direction of it.
So I just met Jasleen and she's doing interesting work.

Who else?

LV: You don't relate your work at all to theatre of performance?

HJ: No. There's a really good book by Stephen Duncombe, which is called 'Progressive Politics in an age of Fantasy' . He was involved with Occupy Wall Street and all sorts of different social movements. And in that book he begins to articulate how you can create social movements by hijacking the methods used by right-wing politics to create spectacles. So for example, George Bush giving a talk on an aircraft boat carrier, and the way it is filmed – you've got the plane in the background, you've got the flag, you've got him, and that's a constructed image. How we might begin to think about constructing such images to achieve other goals… So it's not about progressive politics saying no, it's about saying yes, and offering up an alternative.

So in the space suit: I'm not saying: Boohoo, why aren't ordinary people allowed to go to space, like that sort of crap. It's saying: This is a subtle hint towards hwo we might come together collectively to achieve that, using our own skills, using our own resources.

LV: So in a way your project is about modeling an alternative social possibility or utopia?

HJ: I don't think …. It's dangerous to use the word utopia.

LV: Okay, so do you see your work as a model for potentially positive social change?

HJ: Yeah.
The bit that summarizes the Cosmic Colliery project for me is the manifesto meeting. The moment where you've got the youths saying that robbers and terrorists shouldn't be allowed access to the center, and then through discussion amongst themselves, me coming round and them saying: 'Yes, people should be given a chance to change their attitude.' for example, and creating less of a divide between different groups of people or cultures is crating a level of interaction which prevents prejudice. – that is the goal for me. The kids were from 11 – 23, that sort of age. That, for me, was a positive thing that came out of that. Them coming around and having a more mature, or more open attitude towards the other.

LV: Last question: Would you do anything differently if you did it again?

HJ: mmm….
I think I would have screened the film in the town as a way to reflect on it. I think screening it, mainly because of time it really wasn't possible, but screening it, and then having their reflection on it. Structuring a conversation that responded to the film, giving a few prompts, that would have been really interesting for me. Along the way…
I think – they can only go one way…
I tried to stop being, having any…. what's the word, regret.
Having regrets in projects, it's just… especially these types of projects …. you just have to think it only could have only gone a certain way…

Of course, the more I do these projects, the more I'm gonna know about how I structure them, how [???], you've got to constantly be in touch with people, you've got to manage expectations, that's one way I would probably do the project differently is I would have more of a constant dialogue about expectations with the people involved. Because that again could bring interesting things out …

LV: It was interesting what you said earlier: You were clear that you weren't going to do it. But you are now talking about managing expectations… But it sounded like people started believing themselves that they COULD do it? And that sounds like a really interesting aspect of it.

HJ: Yeah, exactly. I think that then presents an opportunity to think about, okay, not only the space center, but can we begin to think about other possibilities….

Those kids I worked with, for example, if they had any ideas as a result or part of the project, could that

then be the next part of the project? The people involved supporting one of their visions. Instead of it being a space center, it's now the youths wanting to achieve this. Can we come around collectively to support and realize that.

LV: We're back at on the topic of legacy and blah blah blah.

HJ: For a while I did have worries about how I was, what people thought about me coming and doing the project and being so present and then not. But then you just have to think: 'I've told them that that would lead up to this exhibition. After that, I don't know what's gonna happen.' They know the temporary nature of this project, they know that's how it's going to be, so I can't really beat myself up for…

LV: No! I think it's an interesting problem, or an interesting question. I think it's interesting how it gets handled now that it's a stick that people get beaten with. Like – have you done your legacy-bit properly? It's what we were talking about earlier: Is that my job to become a social worker, or politician? I'm an artist or designer.

HJ: I think it should be planned definitely. You should consider how you are leaving people. Maybe some other people want to do different projects in the same area and they might be more skeptical to be open to a new person doing a project, if someone's gone before and they're: 'Hang on a sec! They promised us this, they delivered part of it and left.' So there's also thinking about how other people might engage with those groups.

LV: So you gotta leave them in a good state! [laughter]

HJ: Yeah [laughter], you've got to leave them in a good place, otherwise they're gonna be staying well clear of any mention of an art or design project. They'd be freaking out and running the other way.

[discussion of video link, chat about acquaintances we have in common, arrangements going to Wales, Museum: The Winding House Museum in New Tredegar]

HJ: We just went to pubs! Me and Libany [?], who is a filmmaker, we just went to pubs and talked to people, we just got lifts everywhere, ok – [??] is gonna cover my shift, you've got to meet this person! – driving us around! Like a pub-crawl research.

LV: Is that how you first started meeting people?

HJ: Yeah! So we'd like go down for week trips at a time. We'd go for a week and plan to meet a few people in that week and then in between those days we'd just organize pub visits.

LV: And just start talking to people, it's great!

[discussion about Wales trip]

Second interview, 11.July 2016, Brockley, London

LV: So you met up with BBC Wales?

HJ: There's this person who works for the BBC called Hanah Lloyd, she a researcher and archivist and she heard about the project and with me together she submitted a proposal to make this 20min radio documentary. As part of that I gave all the names and numbers of the people in the project and she called them and set up meetings. And then we went there and met with them on different days. So Lee and Gareth came together, and then I was with Elin, Ian, Ken and the kids at the club.

So Hannah, the producer, called up beforehand, and was speaking to them over the phone. She was saying stuff like: 'What was your initial response to the project?' And Ken was quite honest, he was

like: 'I thought he was crazy! I though the was coocoo! I thought there was something wrong with his head!' And then he was like: 'The more he spoke about it…' And then, because I was also working with lots of different people, and showing lots of enthusiasm for different parts of the town and different cultures, and then…. I think the important thing for me that came out of it – a lot of people understood it to be this opportunity for the younger people to be able to think big. And it's not that this project made something big, it just gave them an opportunity to be able to sit back and to create their own opportunities, to create their own ideas.

So what was interesting when we met with the kids… Initially they were like: uuuh, – I think with them it's like, when you speak with them, just ask them what they do here, get them to show you around, get comfortable with them and then, maybe sit down, and you can record them that way…

We were just talking about what they, we were asking them what they do , like, listen to music, …. And I was like: 'An ideas you've had recently?' And they just took turns talking about how they might expand or change the youth center in accordance to their interests. And I was like: 'New idea!' – and they were coming up with ideas on the spot, how to do that, who would do this, who would do that….

LV: Was this your first encounter with them?

HJ: This was the last one. Having a chat with them about new ideas they've had…
And that for me… maybe I'm drawing too much of a parallel, but I thought it was really nice, this idea that they were starting to think of things they could do, but maybe not completely contextless. It was going to be in the youth center, they were going to brand it, and they were gong to do this to it, and keep it at the core of the place. And, oh yes, the youths were like: 'The swimming pool up the road is closing, so we can do that there, we can do scuba here, and we can do like a dance [pod?] here, and one of them is into music, so we could run a music workshop… And they were just nattering with each other about it. So that was nice, you know…

This idea of…. with the youths…. the idea of, like, they were just challenging these things, narratives [?? …about the youth center and mixing things up…??] – so that was good!

So I'm trying to chat with them about the […??? with the grown ups at the center?] so they regularly have those sessions, so they might have, every Tuesday, like half an hour just to do some stuff, scan drawings, and send them… And then we'd start an ideas dialogue…

LV: Oh, that's great!

HJ: Even with them, if you can get them to draw some stuff, you could even…. If you gave them some locations and … it depends on how much they want to do that…they probably would do it…

LV: [thinking about my own trip] So I could even set some activity with them…

HJ: yeah, I think so….

LV: So [….??] in the last encounter they were talking about expanding the youth centre?

HJ: With that, they are going to draw that, and put it in the scanner and send it to me.
And then Ken – it was good chatting to him. He was like: 'I'll be honest', he wasn't so much into the film and stuff, but he just liked the involvement with the kids. He thought it was great for them, as an opportunity for a project for them…

LV: What was his point of criticism with the film?

HJ: No, he was just like, you know, 'not my kind of thing'. But the kids were loving it, because they were in it. They were like 'it's me! it's me!' He's not like he doesn't care, he's just like – whatever. So he saw himself more like a go-between…
I've been thinking about roles within the project. I think it's tricky when you start…. Initially I went in cos

it was quite technical… We're going to make this thing, we're gonna need these different skills…

LV: Almost engineering skills?

HJ: Yeah, but in general: 'What can you contribute?' Towards the end it became like a contributing mind-set or attitude. That's what it's about – having an attitude to give towards something…. So that was nice.

Ian Raymond's great, the scuba diver. What was nice, was, this kind of rhetoric I had after the project about my learnings from it. It being about the youth of the area, and it being a catalyst for ideas. That was, without knowing…. obviously they were part of this project. They were repeating some of those things as well…. so that was good.

LV: When you met with them now, with this BBC program, did you hear anything that was unexpected, from them?

HJ: ermmmh, yeah…. let me have a think.
Well, if with like, I think, Lee, and Gareth as well, Lee, was like: 'I only ever saw it as a project that was an idea catalyst thing…' He kind of got it as the main thing – cool. Because he was quite involved with the pragmatic side of it, with the technical… how you might do this. It was interesting to see how from the start he already knew it was this idea of an activity and ambition.

LV: Isn't that how you presented it?

HJ: Yeah, definitely….
But, like Ian, for example, still actually thinks it's a good idea. He was like, if there's a big pot of money somewhere, he was saying, it would be great. I think there's still lots of readings into it that people actually engage with the idea…That was probably for him more, because he's a scuba diver, that he thinks it would be great. Because it made his scuba diving fantasy…

LV: [laughter..] And Gareth?

HJ: Gareth….it's kind of tricky, because he's …. I think the project functions more for people in the area, trying to get them out into an interesting mind set, to challenge them, to move beyond …. their identity, which is important to them, ex-mining communities, who are starting to form new identities … and what that would be. So he is not from the town. He was mainly brought in for expertise. So he's the only external non-colliery person. So he's probably in the same place as he was in the project, in terms of the reflective thinking…

LV: When you first worked on the project, how did you actually pull in all these people? Did it just happen organically?

HJ: Yeah, exactly!
The first person I got in touch with was Lee. I went to the big pit coal museum. And the curator was like – you gotta meet Lee, because he produced all these big plans. And luckily he happened to swing by that day, by the coal mining museum, which was brilliant, and he helped me search for potential collieries that would be suitable. And then we came across Penalta, in Ystrad Mynach, and then we hit that town and then we met different people…

[music problem]

And then I got in touch with Paul – you know what's happened to this place now?! I've just learned – he's selling it! He's not developing it, because apparently what happened, I spoke with Ian, is that, he bought it initially, and he had Welsh government funding. And then he had it invested, like 5 people, and then the Welsh government pulled out their funding and then his investors left, and he was just left alone with this multi-million development project, …

LV: And then you came [laughter]!

HJ: And he was like… mh – is he gonna buy it?
Maybe that's why he has not been getting back [to me].
He was always super chatty, even after the project, maybe he doesn't want to… Maybe he's in a bit of a tricky place…
Also – it would be interesting to think about what the project was for him. Maybe it was a way for him to forget about all the shit that was going on. You know what I mean – 'I'm just gong to DJ today'…

LV: Well, he didn't reply to my email.

HJ: Yeah, well, he was supposed to go…, I spoke to Ian, and Ian had never met him before but they came together in the last [???]. Ian and his wife were supposed to go for a meal with Paul and his wife, after the project. But it never came right in the end.

LV: But is Paul based in London?

HJ: No, he lives nearby, in a place called Crosshands, so not far. But his mum lives in London.

LV: But he's a Londoner originally?

HJ: Yeah, he's from Crystal Palace. He used to do pirate radio in Crystal Palace, DJ Old Kent Road.

LV: He sounds like a cool guy!

HJ: He is a cool guy! He used to do, like, djing, and then he became a lawyer, for a bit, he hated it, and then he started doing property. He's a super smart guy, but also a bit wild…

LV: So he sold it now?

HJ: No, it's on auction, for like 500 grand.

LV: Is that all?

HJ: Yeah, he must have spent more than that….
But I know he bought it for cheap, because his friend sold it to him.

LV: 500 grand is not a lot.

HJ: Yeah, but, oh my god – it needs a lot! A million! It's in such a state!

LV: Is it completely derelict?

HJ: Yeah, there are holes in the roof, kids keep braking in, knocking the bricks through, so you've got big windows. The kids knock a brick through and they climb through and set fires… swaying from the thing…

Because he had all the winding gear in there – you'd have huge motors that were pulling the wire that would lift and load the cages. So you've got these really deep things, almost like the height of this roof, where all the oil was, were the engine was sitting… So if you were alone and fell in there, you couldn't climb out….. It's so weird in there. Not a good place for kids to play about.

LV: And I'm sure that as an owner you'd be responsible for security…

HJ: I know, yeah!
Little kids there … when we were there, he was always running after them…

We didn't do that – but it would be good this idea of existing and new narratives for places – I think

that's cool. Elin was talking about it. She's so familiar with the place – she used to go there all the time as a kid… And she said, the first time [???] switched… That doesn't have to be that… It's the place I've always known to be that, could be something else!

Ken as well, he's someone who worked there….
Ken was also, during the project, when he gave the kids a lift up to the colliery for the workshop, he hadn't been there, since he'd worked down the pit. And he was like: 'If I could and I was healthy and it opened, I'd work again tomorrow.

LV: So he loved it.

HJ: Yes, some people are still well into it. So Lee is like, you gotta make sure you don't get Lee too much into this…. sometimes he has this perception of people in the valleys as victims, or something. Like 'they don't help themselves'. Just because he's from a mining family, he's the first one to go to a university, he's very much like his own, motivated person.

LV: Does he see himself to be a victim?

HJ: No, he feels like some people play the victim in these ex mining communities. Like 'I'm in an ex-mining community, I can't help myself out of my situation.' But, you know, you can explore that with him. But he's very much the kind of …. well, he used to be Labour, but now he's more….. it's interesting that shift within the valleys! These places that were Labour for hundreds of years. And recently, now, they've gone, like, Tory.

LV: They've gone Tory! Rather than UKIP or something.

HJ: Yeah. So that was a political shift.

LV: What was Lee's involvement in the project? What did he do?

HJ: He helped me find the place – Penalta Colliery and….

LV: You said he was doing quite technical….

HJ: Yes, he was originally a mining surveyor. So he would draw all the… Now he works for a big water company. Using some of those skills. Since then… he's been making these massive maps, of the underground networks of where all the mine workings are.

LV: That sounds fascinating.

HJ: You know in the exhibition there were pictures on a map? He did the map. He makes maps for different collieries. Which show you the topology of the ground, the above, and underground, where the mining networks go. Because they go for miles…. You've got the pithead structures, where everyone goes down and then sometimes you have to walk for 45min, to an hour to get to the front, [???], sometimes they go really, really …

LV: Walk underground?

HJ: Yeah, for ages! Walk an hour, before you start work.

LV: So at Penalta colliery, do all these underground networks still exist?

HJ: Yeah. Well, they are all flooded now, which is why Lee and Gareth work together. Coz they are developing a project, which is trying to use the warm water in the abandoned mining network for sustainable ground-source heating. So it's almost like an abundant source of green energy. You take the water from the mining…. things, and it's at perfect temperature, and then it goes through a heat exchange, and that can go into radiators and everything. They've done it in the Netherlands, and

they're trying to get it working in the valleys… They can tell you about that project. Because that again, it's something new, and they're trying to make it happen. So he'll talk his socks off about that! [laughter] He'll send you reports and everything….

LV: So when you initially met these people it was a bit awkward at first? Or was that your feeling….?

HJ: I mean, it's always hard, isn't it! It was so hard explaining what the project is over the phone. "We're going to convert Penalta colliery into an astronaut training centre".

LV: I meant more when you met them now, for the BBC program.

HJ: Oh! No! It was completely fine! Yeah, it was much better than I thought! I thought it was going to be a bit awkward.

LV: Why did you think it was going to be awkward?

HJ: I don't know… Cos I was so much present, and then I wasn't. And then, it's
been a while. I felt a bit strange, but as soon as we were chatting, it was like I'd never been away. And they were fine, yeah, they were cool. It was a really good thing to do. I don't know why it was in my head, they were going to….. hate me or something…. not 'hate me', that's the wrong thing to say. Like, …. you don't know how that sits. But, it was really good, it was awesome. It was great to have a reflection on it.

LV: And was it this BBC encounter, also with the kids that brought on this idea that you've now got to continue working with the kids in that way?

HJ: I always wanted to do that. Like, that's where I wanted the project to end, that's why I wanted it to carry on. Let's now get them to generate ideas and we're gonna get everyone to support them in pushing these ideas forward.

LV: To use this energy that you've created and channel it.

HJ: Exactly! And I think it's still there, so we're just gonna try and start a dialogue about ideas at the moment. So that would be the next step, I think.

Remember that project I told you about before – 'The Redesign of Rhyl'? With that artist Jimmy Loizeau? He was trying to get people in the town to generate new visions for Rhyl. So, super-ambitious. Really crazy. Roller-coasters through towns, and whatever. But he never found a way to get people to do it. You know, it's hard to get someone to go 'Imagine!'

So that's where I'm at now with the kids: They've engaged with a really crazy idea, so now when I go to them and say; Okay, if I were to present locations, like – this bit of blank space is not used near the youth center…. here you go! And then they have to respond to that with ideas, in response to the context of the location. And I think because they have already collectively engaged with the process, I think now they're good.

And I know now their roles as well! So there's Ben. He was the one in the film who was, like, he spoke a bit more maturely. Like he was saying 'We could use this money and it would benefit the council, which would then go into the community [???].' So he wasn't actually as good at generating ideas, so when you go to him for ideas he's like 'Errm, don't know.' But what he's really good at, was when I was like: What I want you to do now, Ben – is like, go to each person with their idea and work out how you would make it happen. So with this idea I'd get in touch with the local authority, and we could also do this, this and this. He's a pragmatic kind of thinker.

LV: A project-manager type of person. Perfect!

HJ: Yeah! So that was Ben, he's more of a project manager-mind. And the other guys get more 'woohoo woohoo' So that's cool. It might be worth trying something out with them, like a workshop. A little thing.

[discussion of my registration talk, conference, PhD, meeting people in Wales]

HJ: Many people in the area have a personal relationship to the colliery, with their kids, or their grandparents working there. Asking if there was a shift in how they thought about the place – and at what point that was?

LV: I might try and think of a way to ask that is less suggestive, maybe.

HJ: Yeah, definitely.
If there was at all a shift….

LV: I'll try to see if there's a good way of asking that.

HJ: Yeah, you are going on Monday?

[further chat about scheduling visits.]

Interview with project participant: Elin Jones, local historian

Interview on 18.July 2016, at her home, Ystrad Mynach

[Missing the first few minutes of the interview, as recording device malfunctioned.]

EJ: I was very interested [in Hefin's project] because not only did my grandfather found the Boys' Club in Ystrad Mynach, but my father had been the lodge [?] secretary of the union in the colliery. So I'd grown up with the colliery, and I'd also grown up with the Boys' Club, because my grandfather and my uncle with whom [?] were always going to the Boys Club. And, you know, it was the Boys Club! No girls! [laughter] And then I went down to meet Hefin and I realized that he was the son of somebody I used to teach with, and for whom I'd actually made a cot quilt, when he was but a bump! [laughter] And [to] see him now in all his glory, as a young man was quite something! It was all down to the quilt [laughter] I think myself.
But no, it was lovely.

And I was fascinated by his project. Because one of the other things I do, is I have acted as a consultant over the last 20 years to the Welsh assembly government. Working on the history curriculum. And it's a concern to me, that some schools in Wales teach so little history of the locality, or history of Wales, and there is a tendency to forget about the legacy of the pits except as a disadvantage. And I thought this was a fascinating opportunity to look at a positive spin on these very important buildings, whose importance in the [community?] was huge, in the fairly recent past. And has vanished now entirely. So they are spoil heaps, greened over, and made into very pleasant parks for the community, and the buildings moulder, as you may have seen already when you went to Penalta.

So I thought this was fascinating. I thought it was also totally whacky, I got to say. I have to say, the more I talked to Hefin, the more off the wall it seemed [laughter]. But then when …. I went to the club a couple of times and met him and met the kids involved and so on, and when I saw the children's enthusiasm for it, it really changed my mind. I thought – gosh – yes – he's giving them a sense of pride in their past, and a sense of ownership of their past, and also a sense of the infinite possibilities of the built environment. But he was considering a different way of looking at the past, which really engaged me. And it's the way in which it combines the future, and combines something very different, the astronaut side of it, and I was entirely taken over by the project – as I think happens to all of us who work with Henfin eventually.

LV: Yes! I do wonder how he pitched this idea to people round here, because it is so whacky. But it sounded like he did win a lot of people over.

EJ: Oh yes, he did. I was very doubtful, as you can imagine, but he made a very powerful point. That it was only really, for me anyway, my own ideas about the past that were holding me back. That if I saw the pit and the shafts, especially, in a different light, in a different way, then there was nothing really there to stop us playing with this built environment, apart from questions of safety, and so on, but it is there as a huge potential. And it was clearly what the kids saw as well. But what was also very engaging is how the young people from the club were so fired up with a pride in this amazing place that was part of their heritage. And I thought that was wonderful.

I did get a bit worried that I thought that [because] this is a student project, there is unlikely to be a future to it. And I thought that that was possibly, I did think it was definitely a disadvantage to the project, because there was no actual follow up. And I think it's a pity to engage young people with enthusiasm and then to watch it fade, because there is no follow-through.

LV: Yes, that was actually one of my questions about… Well, it's always difficult with these projects, about how best to round them off. How do you finish a project like Hefin's?

EJ: I don't know! I mean, I'm used to doing projects where you have a specific outcome, you got a specification, you meet the criteria, and that's it. I'm not used to this sort of open ended community engagement. Most often, the ones I have been involved with, they also will have some sort of final product, which will give a sense of closure. But I don't know what the final product is for this.

LV: Well, as far as I understand, for him it was the exhibition that happened in London…

EJ: Yes, of course!

LV: …he made he film, which I think he screened here. I'm not sure. Was there a kind of event where he showed the film…?

EJ: There may well have been. But I couldn't go to it.

LV: And I think he's trying to move some of the objects he made to a local museum?

EJ: Yes, he is.

LV: The Winding House Museum?

EJ: Yes, The Winding House Museum in Tredegar.

LV: So would you say, the fact that you weren't so sure about the ending point was one of the drawbacks of the project?

EJ: Yes I would, I would. However I have got [?] faith in Hefin, because I think he is a young man with vision and energy, an exceptionally persuasive young man. And I think therefore those three factors will help him to perhaps achieve a closure and an outcome, which other people perhaps would not have anticipated or foreseen. So I'm willing to hold my judgement on this and say – although I am concerned that there was no follow-through for the young people and no clear outcome, yet again there may be. And I would trust Hefin to achieve something with the local museum, which is very much a museum for this area. Have you been there yet? It's based in another old colliery. And therefore it would be a very appropriate idea to bring a vision the future, a vision of possibilities, to a place that is essentially encapsulating the past.

LV: So, what was your role in the project? What did you do?

EJ: I'm not perfectly certain really, you'll have to ask him! Erm, I was there as president of the club, so it was that involvement. I was there I think possibly because of my father's involvement with the colliery, and because I have been a teacher in this area I've been an education officer with the national museum, involved with history and archaeology, it may be that sort of professional expertise. Hefin said that at one meeting I spoke very inspiringly, but you'll have to talk to Hefin about that, because I have

no recollection of doing so [laughter].

LV: In the documentary film that he made, that I saw, I did see a meeting that was chaired by you.

EJ: Oh did I chair it, did I?

LV: Well, you were speaking in front of a group of people. You looked in charge, anyway [laughter]!

EJ: It's being a teacher, you know [laughter]!

LV: And also in the film, it also showed one person, or maybe it was more than one person leaving the room. Was there any tension amongst people that you can recall?

EJ: I don't remember. No! I tell you what did happen. The meeting overran in time. And there were people who couldn't stay, because they had committed themselves elsewhere. I think it was meant to finish at 6, and some of the children's parents came to fetch them at 6, this is what I remember, that's always a difficulty.

LV: You mentioned earlier that you… Did I hear you correctly in saying that the project might have helped you think about the area in a different way?

EJ: Oh yes, no, definitely! Because all my background is in history, so I deal almost exclusively with the past. So it was very challenging and engaging to think about the present and the future – especially! And think about it in a new way. Not yet another industrial museum that isn't going to be a runner, or yet more blocks of flats or houses built on the site, but to find a way of using the site with imagination. To engage young people with a vision of their future, which may well be with journeys to the space station, or whatever!

LV: So you mentioned the lack of a definite finishing point…

EJ: …outcome…

LV: … as a possible drawback. What would you say would be the strong aspect of the project?

EJ: The sense of infinite possibility, which Hefin could convey. Why not think about the old pit in a totally different way!? Why not? And why not look in a positive way, really, at all the different obstacles, and all the different people who would be involved in this. So, at the meeting which I assumed was filmed, we had the guy who owned the pit at the time, and so on and so forth. As well as local residents, people who had worked in the pit, and so on – and it was very inspiring, I thought, that we could have such a wide range of people, with all their different experiences, it's a part of our mindset, the buildings and the park that's there now, and the new houses built around it. And the new school of course, built in the shadow of the pit. But we think of it as being something of the past. And to see it as having a potential for the future was very engaging and very challenging. And it was something totally new to me, and I think to everybody who got involved in the project. They'd never thought of it in those terms, which is always good for us!

LV: Do you think the project has left an impact on people?

EJ: I'm not aware that it has. It had an impact on me, in the sense that I will take a party of industrial geologist round to the site in September and I will be talking about the project and I will be hoping to link it with a new exhibition that Hefin can bring about in the Winding House. I am also involved with a competition for schools, where we look at heritage and the teaching of the history and heritage of Wales and I would very much would encourage local schools to enter that competition, using the pit and using its possibilities for a future competition entry. So to keep that alive in people's minds as not a disadvantage, not a huge problem, but a potential. Something of benefit and a potential [in its mere existence ?].

LV: Everybody, as a group, you were working towards a goal that had a significant element of fantasy in it.

EJ: Oh yes! And also some great solid concrete stuff, which was Hefin's exhibition and his work for college. We knew it was part of his dissertation. *[Was it? I thought this was after he completed his degree??]*

LV: Do you think people struggled with that? That there was this goal, which was kind of fantastical?

EJ: I think they did. I think the younger children did. According to Piaget their capacity for abstract thinking isn't yet …. But because young people today live in a world that has a great deal more fantasy in it, and integrated into their lives on their phones and their Playstations, than I did ever, in my generation. I think it was quite possible, that the older ones amongst them, certainly, could hold two ideas in their head at the same time: The pit as it is, the pit as it might be and no reason why it shouldn't be like that.

LV: It looked to me that Hefin with his personality just managed to get most of the people on board.

EJ: Oh yeah, it is fascinating to watch him. And he reminds me of the [???] the poets and the shape-changers, the druids of the iron age celts, with their ability for magic and things to change their shape. Do you know this?

LV: Not really, but I think I know what you mean.

EJ: I'm trying to think where I have examples. They would have abstract patterns, which, when you looked at them in a certain way they would turn to animals' faces. And I think there's a bit of that about Hefin. That he can change the shape of things in your mind. And the Welsh word for poet 'prydydd' means 'shape changer'. And I see Hefin as having that gift. And I think he changed the shape of Penalta under our eyes. We looked at it in one way, and he helped us look at it in another way, and that goes back 2-, 3-, 4000 years [laughter].

LV: What do you think is it about his personality that enables him to do that?

EJ: He's got an understanding of people and how to approach them. He's got a very clear vision and a very original vision. But what he also has, is an ability to see what's holding people back from sharing his vision. And it's his ability then, to convey through words his vision in a way that appeals to you – at whatever level you're at. He would appeal to me because of my interest in the past and my personal connections with the pit and with the club and so on, and indeed with him. But he would then move me on in discussions.

LV: But it's also that you moved him on! From what I understand it was you who suggested…. In the film that I saw you were talking about the history of the Chartists. And he took on that idea, the idea of the charter. He said: How would you do a charter today? And you said: Well, there would be a workshop and everybody would be involved. And then you said nobody who was born in the previous century should be allowed to do it. And then he ran the workshop with the kids and they wrote a manifesto, so you moved him on as well.

EJ: Well, that's a corporation, isn't it? It's a really powerful thing to do, because that's how you get goof outcomes.

LV: So he did come with a strong vision, but my sense is also that he had a real openness.

EJ: Yes, well, that's the thing. And I think that's where I say, well, he has this vision, but he understands where you are. And he can go to meet you and move you on. To share a vision,…. And maybe his own vision will change as you walk side by side towards it.

LV: That's a very powerful gift to have, isn't it.

EJ: Oh gosh, yes. Well, they were powerful men, these poets! These old poets! They could rhyme you to death! [laughter] And they would threaten to do so, sometimes. This was my PhD, on that medieval poetry.

LV: So you spent 15 years, shifting shapes yourself perhaps?

EJ: Oh no, I just wrote my thesis. [laughter] I left the shape-shifting to my poet.

LV: Do you know what's happening now with the site? Because as far as I understand, this guy, I think his name is Paul, Hefin told me he's trying to sell it again?

EJ: He's trying to sell it. It went to auction last year in October. But what the outcome of that auction was I don't know. The place is clearly fallen into rack and ruin. So it's not good.

LV: But he had these plans drawn up for flats…

EJ: I know he did, I know.

LV: So he gave that up?

EJ: I don't think he had the money to do it. I think that hit the recession really. I think it was 2008/ 2009 that those plans were put forward. And then, you know, everything fell apart.

LV: He seemed quite enthusiastic.

EJ: He was very enthusiastic, and I think he also would have gone for anything that gave value to the buildings that he owned. And it did give value to the buildings he owned, but visionary value, not monetary value, I'm afraid.

LV: It did look like at one stage he was thinking 'Maybe this crazy designer guy will take the problem off my hands?'

EJ: Yeah, I don't think that was a runner. [laughter]
Yes, but he did have some wonderful ideas for what is a wonderful building. And indeed a listed building.

LV: Yes, it's beautiful.

EJ: It <u>was</u> beautiful and it <u>could be</u> beautiful. But it shouldn't be beautiful in the way that we have always thought about these things. But they are hugely expensive to maintain.

LV: Okay, thank you so much…. [etc] Everybody seems to be really positive about the project.

EJ: Yes, it was a great experience. And if we have some kind of outcome in the valley, in the Winding House – that will be excellent.

LV: Yes, I think Hefin is really worried about that. When I spoke to him about the project he sounded quite conflicted about the ending.

EJ: Yes, I think that is the problem. And that is the problem with any student project. I worked with some students at Westminster University, or was it City University? something like that – doing films, when I was working in the museum. And they were great guys, but they were doing their films for college, rather than commercially. So if they finished what the college required of them, they were finished. That's not quite how I saw it, I have to say. Because I had commissioned them to do a film for <u>me</u>. And they were very good, but they were doing it then in their own time, and it was massively over-budget for them, we were all doing each other favours….

LV: I think Hefin said he's working now again with the kids from the club.

EJ: Oh good!

LV: Drawing up ideas for something more realisable. I'm not sure exactly what.

EJ: Oh, I'm so pleased! I'd be interested to hear more about that.

LV: Yes, he's very concerned about the finishing off….

EJ: Yes, he will be. He's a very intelligent young man, and he was very well aware of what he is doing. As he should be, of course, it would be irresponsible not to be. But he didn't lose sight of his concerns for the community or the young people involved. Not all students in his situation will remember that not everybody else is as keen for them to get their degree as they are themselves. And that the people you are working with are not just means to an end. They are human beings…. and he's got that! He understands that, which is a big strength.

Interview with project participant: Gareth Farr, hydrologist

Interview on 18. July 2016, at the British Geological Survey, Cardiff

LV: […]
So I was wondering how you first heard about Hefin's project, how did it reach you?

GF: Well, we heard about Hefin's project direct from Hefin, actually. Cause he called us and was asking strange questions about designing underground space training centers. Direct contact first.

LV: And what was your first impression when you heard from him?

GF: Well,…… initially I thought this is a silly idea. But, luckily, funnily enough I did an Art Foundation. I was going to do Fine Art in university, but I changed to Geology, for some reason. So at least I had a bit of an understanding what it was. When you phone places, you can phone the wrong person, and that will be it. But I got it, and my boss was supportive, because it was a cool idea. And we'd also been working in the South Wales coalfield, at the same time, so it was good timing, basically.

LV: So do you think if you hadn't had an art Foundation, you would have maybe not got into it in the way you did.

GF: Well, maybe, maybe not, who knows! It really does depend on the enthusiasm of the person who picks up the phone or the email. And that's the way it is, everywhere.

LV: It sounded like Hefin was quite good at creating this network of people.

GF: Oh, he did. He's a good facilitator actually. He could probably make a good amount of money facilitating these things. [laughter] He did manage to get everyone together under a common aim.

LV: And that common aim – there was an element of fantasy in that common aim. What was it like working towards a goal that had fantasy as a constitutive element?

GF: That's an interesting one! I think we were totally fine that. Because sometimes even the science we do here may have a goal that might almost seem like fantasy, or a huge dream. But if you don't at least take those first steps then it may simply not happen anyway. So we do things here that are really quite ambitious. So the project I was doing on the coalfields, was seeing how all the leftover water can be used in ground-source heating.

LV: Yes, Hefin was telling me about this. That sounds amazing.

GF: And in reality there's only a few sites. But it is possible, that you can have thousands upon thousands of homes, that's possible. But will it ever happen?

LV: Who knows!

GF: Who knows! But it is possible. And with Hefin's thing as well: it is possible. Would it ever happen? Probably not! But it is possible, possibly!

LV: So it sounds like you were already used to working on those 'projecting-yourself-into-the –future' type projects.

GF: Yes, with big ideas. Although, Hefin's of course is more 'blue sky thinking' and it would never, ever really happen. You could still enjoy the possibility that it could happen.

LV: Watching the documentary film he made – it looks like there where points in the project where people started to believe in it?

GF: Yeah, I think that some people got it and others….. did get it but maybe they didn't quite get it? So there was maybe a different level of understanding of what exactly was trying to be achieved, across the board.

LV: What do you think was trying to be achieved? How would you characterize the aim?

GF: Well I think Hefin's aim was mainly to encourage people to think big. That's my short summary. But perhaps just bringing people together, having fun, engaging with different skill sets, and so on. Maybe some of the older people didn't quite get it to start with, and then they did. But it wasn't an age thing, it could have been … I'm not saying 'The old people didn't get it.' But….

LV: Do you think it was… What do you think were the successful elements of the project? And what do you think were the less successful elements? Were there any less successful elements?

GF: I guess that's for Hefin to answer from his point of view. But from my point of view, I've made contacts with some of the mine surveyors who have worked on the project. So I've made some new contacts, and that's cool. I've managed to get my work out to them, and they've managed to …. so we've made links and contacts within the project group, and that's always a cool thing.

LV: Do you think there were parts of the project that maybe weren't so successful?

GF: ……. From my point of view, no, I think we quite enjoyed most of it. I'm still waiting for Hefin to send me some photos. Hefin – I'm waiting for photos!!

LV: You know, I asked him that, I said to him…. And he said 'I don't know what he means.' He said he's seen you since and you didn't mention anything…. that's what he told me.

GF: Oh yeah, I was, yeah…. If I had one point – because we put quite a bit of work in, we created some fantasy geology maps. Did you see those?

LV: I think I saw…. Have you got them here?

GF: I can print some out.
All I wanted was some feedback from the show they did in London, just so that I can feed that back to the people who contributed. That was the only bit I'm waiting for. It's not a criticism, because we have millions of things to do.

LV: You said that for you there were new contacts that came out of this, so that's great. Do you think there was any lasting – or any kind of impact on the groups of people that Hefin worked with?

GF: Yeah….. I think so. Certainly the building developer was interested in using the mine-water as a heating. Because he has a huge building to develop into apartments…

LV: Do you know what it happening there? Hefin said he thinks Paul is now selling the site?

GF: Possibly, these things will go quite slowly, and I guess your value of a property up there is limited,

and your renovation costs could be quite high. Although it's not a bad area, if you were business-minded, you'd have to weigh up the pros and cons…
But certainly there are contacts like that, that you make, that are quite good. But across the board, it was interesting. It was interesting for me to hang out with some of the old people who actually worked there, And they were talking about how the site operated, so there is a passing on of knowledge, knowledge sharing.

LV: So you learned more about the area.

GF: Yeah, definitely! And as time goes on, the people that worked the mines, become less and less. So it's good to get that first hand knowledge from them.

LV: What I really enjoyed about the project was that he linked a part of the history, to an idea about the future, and the idea of going to outer space to the idea of going underground. So it's a really nice linking….

GF: Yes, that was a fun element from the children as well! Because that's just fun, and that's topical always [?], isn't it? Weirdly, I didn't see how the kids reacted to it, other than the ones that were there on that open day thing. But I'm sure they got on with the concept quicker, than some of the adults [who] were getting bogged down in technicalities.

LV: As far as I understand Hefin tied everything up with this meeting that everybody attended, that was chaired by the historian? Is that right? Were you there?

GF: I was, well….. The last thing I went to was – Hefin had planned an outdoor meeting between myself, some of the surveyors, the engineers, the scuba divers, the kids…. and he held it outside underneath the pit head and the winding wheel, at Penalta Colliery, which was ambitious, because it could pour down with rain, but it was actually quite a nice day. And there were some historians there as well, I think. Yes, that was really good. I liked being on site.

LV: And that was the meeting where you were drawing on the plans?

GF: Yeah. And that was fun. It was fun to be on site, doing that.

LV: What was your role in the project?

GF: I think I was just adding a bit of science know-how, as to the general location and the science of, or the geology behind the area. Because that sort of underpins what they wanted to do. But I enjoyed getting involved in just drawing on the plan and seeing what you could put where – where you could put a training center, and where you could put a decompression pool, you know, that's just fanciful thinking, but I enjoyed that bit.

LV: Yes, it looked really fun on the film. It looked like you were all sitting around the table and you were all joining in, with those coloured tapes…

GF: Yes! But I'd use coloured pens next time, I think. The tape was a bit sticky…. but it looked good!

LV: [laughter] yes, it looked great.
So, how much time do you think you spent on the project. To what extent were you involved?

GF: I don't think it was massively time consuming for me. I think between me and my colleagues it was a few days' work in there, for sure. Because we created a special bespoke digital geology map for Hefin to display at his show. And we did another few bits and bobs. But it wasn't too onerous for us, which was nice. Because if things are too onerous, then they stop…. and you don't do them again. So it was a good level.

LV: And that final meeting that took place, that I think was chaired by Elin Jones, the historian, where you there? It was indoors….

GF: No, I wasn't at the indoor one, no. I was at the outdoor one. And then he may have held an additional indoor one, which, no, I didn't go to that one.

LV: Okay. Did you notice if there were any tension in the project? Or did everyone just kind of get on with it?

GF: Generally I think people got on. I think the only bit, and this is not a fault of Hefin's I don't think, is from what I saw that some people did struggle to grasp the concept, that it was a concept. Not everyone, most people I think got it, but there were still some that were getting bogged down, in, you know….. but that was more their problem for not listening to what it's actually about. I think it was explained a lot of times.

LV: I was really curious about how he ended the project. And I think Hefin himself was a bit worried if he ended it in a good way. It is kind of difficult to end a project like that, because it is this fantasy, this big idea that pulls everybody together, and then at some point….

GF: …it stops. Yeah, I suppose for him: He had this final show in London, he had this final dissemination, which I wasn't at, but he also had this outdoor event, under the pit head, and that was the one I was at. And I thought that was good…. That's it really, isn't it: I mean, how do you end something like this? Do you even end it? Should it be an end? Should it just a phase 1? So why bother ending it?

LV: [laughter] I guess you end it cos the money runs out…

GF: Yeah, you do, for sure.

LV: His funding finished…. He had the show to prepare…. So there has to be….

GF: … You have to have a tangible output at the end. And I'm sure he's got enough to show for that, but in science we do similar things. When you finish a report, like I finish today, at the end there'll be recommendations. So, you know, we've got as far as we can, however, if money becomes available, we would recommend doing this…. Which I guess is probably what Hefin wants with this. This is 'Phase 1'.

LV: I think he's actually working with the kids now. I don't know exactly how, I'll find out later, but remotely, somehow, they are developing ideas for their youth centre. So, that's really nice! It's almost like he's showed [them] a method, of coming up with ideas, generating ideas, and now they are trying to apply it to something else.

GF: Yeah, that's cool…
I saw Hefin the other week. Because we went down to BBC Radio Wales and we did some stuff there for a show they're gonna do. I think we'll only be a small part of it, but it will be cool.

LV: Yes, that's also really nice, that that's come out of it.

GF: Yeah, it was good that bit. And I think in Wales it might be easier to get a show on something like this. Especially because it is a bit novel.

LV: Yes, it's very unusual.

GF: Yeah. I think it was good! I'd happily work with Hefin again. It would be fun. He's pretty chilled out. I'd like to, yeah, it would be good!

Interview with project participant: Ken Pritchard, youth club worker

Interview on18.July 2016, at the Ystrad Mynach Boys and Girls Club

LV: Maybe you can tell me again, I know we've just talked about it, but just for the record – how you first heard about the project and what you thought when you first heard about it.

KP: Hefin came to the boys' club itself and introduced himself. Told me that he's got a project called the 'Cosmic Colliery' project. I was a little bit interested, because I worked in Penalta Colliery for 20-odd years. So I thought is it to do with Penalta, he said, well, it will be! So I said: "How can I help you?" And then he started going into what his plans were. And I got to be perfectly honest, I thought he was a bit on the mad side. Cos some of these ideas, I thought – no – I've come into a comic! or something. 'Cosmic…' nooo! But then he was chatting and the more we were chatting to him, the more you realized how serious he was about this project. So I started to get interested. Of course he asked me: 'Do you think any children would be interest?' So I got half a dozen, 6, 7, children interest.

LV: How did you get the kids interested?

KP: I came down, and like I say, I talk to them every single night of the week, I'm here every night of the week. And I told them it's about 'Cosmopolitan Cosmonauts'. Things that you can do, things that you can think about! Of course! You mention something new to these kids and "I'm interested!", "Yeah, I'm interested!". They all wanna talk about that! It's a pity they weren't all here today, because S. and B. they are clever people.

So, then I introduced him to Elin Jones. And lo and behold! Elin knew exactly who he was because she's nursed him as a baby.

LV: Yes, she told me about that! That's hilarious!

HJ: So we was chopsing and talking about that upstairs in the committee room upstairs, in the memorabilia room. And they started talking Welsh, and I said, look, I am needed downstairs, so you have to excuse me.

LV: Do you speak Welsh?

KP: Lo and behold, no. It's one of my great dismays that I cannot speak fluent Welsh. Because I'd love to be able to help my granddaughter who goes to Welsh school, and I can't. I can't understand… I can understand certain words of Welsh, but not…. I'm very disappointed Welshman, that I can't speak my own language. But yeah.

It started to get more interesting, especially when Elin Jones started to take an interest. Cos, like I said, she is a superwoman. So then he asked me, could I get children up to Penalta pit, and I said yeah, that's about all I can. So I was really, I was more or less on the periphery of all of this, I was just supplying the children [laughter]. So got them up to Penalta, fetch them home, arrange from them to go to the swimming baths in [???], but Elin just bought a mini bus for us, so that was handy for me.

So… the choir, I went over there and listened. And it was interesting, It was all very interesting, because over there, there was people over there, who I thought they had money, the way they were talking, they had money, 'I could possible push this project further along'. Obviously it was a big need for a big money investment, if it was to go ahead. And it seemed… it seemed that there was other people, who were keen on this, especially Paul who was the guy that bought all this property, in Penalta.

Then everything seemed to go quiet, after the meeting in the choir room. Everything seemed to die down. Until I had another email off him, when he showed us the film and all that. And I showed the children the film on a television. And, 'til we met him, then, a fortnight ago with a lady from the BBC.

LV: So what do you think about how the project ended?

KP: I was a little disappointed and I think all these kids was as well. Because J. and a couple other kids they were making cakes, walking round the houses selling these cakes and they raised 50 pound towards this wonderful project that they was into. And the money, I said, I'll put it in the safe for a year, and I completely forgot all about it, until Hefin came here and I said, J., don't forget you've got money in here, mate, and he goes, I don't know, it's about 50 pound, I thought, it was whatever it was. And it's still in a round bowl, I guess. I think I took some of the change out and changed it into notes, because we wanted some of the change.
So, yes, it's in the safe.
But Hefin then said to them: 'Look, if you need to buy anything to think of another project, interesting, use it!'
Because obviously it is a drop in the ocean as far as this project would be concerned [Cosmic Colliery].
But yeah…
I wasn't actually disappointed, because he kept in touch. Whether it is ever going to go any further or not, personally, I doubt it, but it would be nice, especially if it came to Wales. If this sort of thing came into Wales, and we had an astronaut training center here, I think Wales would be put back on the map.

I know the Welsh team did it for us a fortnight ago against Portugal… [Worldcup]

LV: Yeah, you did pretty well!

KP: Yeah, we did!
But yes, something like this! Fancy having the Russians and all these people coming over here, for to train! It would be a hell of an achievement for Hefin, you know!

LV: What do you think was the most successful part of the whole project?

KP: Me, personally? Listening to that music. That Jonathan Whatley [?] … he wrote, or he wrote the words to it, or he done something to this music, and he conducted it, and he conducted the choir singing it, and I thought it was excellent! I really did!

LV: It's a local choir, isn't it?

KP: Yes! Aye! It's the Ystrad Mynach Male Voice Choir.

LV: Where you in touch with the choir before?

KP: I was through Jonathan Whatley. Jonathan Whatley used to be a music teacher in this club. He used to teach them all music, with the old brass band, what's the name… And he's an excellent teacher – I got to give him credit where it's due, Jonathan.

Yeah, but everything has gone quiet now since that day. Until they came with the BBC and interviewed – well, Elin, they were more interested, because she's a super intelligent woman. Especially when she talks about history. She's a real historian. And we're so proud to have her as our president.

LV: What do you think was the most successful part of the project for the kids?

KP: Me, personally, no, it was the kids that made it successful I think. In my point of view, when I'm club leader, these kids have been here for a long time and they are my priority. So anything they can get involved with, and they seem to take it into their heart, that's to me, I do it a bit of [??] myself, sort of thing. I'm proud of them!

LV: Do you think the project left any impact on the kids in the club?

KP: I think it did, like J., she's so excited about things. Like I said, she went out and made all these

cakes and different things, running round houses, selling these cakes and she make 50 quid!
And she was so excited and full of it! 'Can we do more?' – so I said: 'Listen, don't do more until you hear from Hefin.' Because we don't know how far down the road this is going to go. Cos he did ask them about ways of raising money. That's one of the last things I can remember him saying over in the chapel, where the choir were. She took it to heart, and she would! If I said to her we need to raise some money for the boys club, what can you do? 'Oh I'll think of something!' She will, she would! She'd go to her house and tell her mum 'We gonna make more cakes!'

Yeah they'd all help! All these kids would help! If they had a way of getting in on something, yeah, they'd all want to be in on it. They are a pretty good bunch.

LV: So, I just got a drawing, which is of a skate park. Do you think, is this, the fact that the kids are speaking about having a skate park now, is that a result of having worked with Hefin on the 'Cosmic Colliery' idea? Or would they have done this anyway?

KP: he put into their heads the ideas of you making ideas, of this is the way forward. And they work, because like you say, they're all talking "Wouldn't it be nice if we had the skate park? This is what we need!" and they do ramps and all that, they're talking about it.

Where I am in this club there is no ground. It is not feasible whatsoever. There is a possibility, and it's an outside possibility, that we could do something with some of them ramps, in our main hall. It's possible, but there again, then, unless we can actually pull them up on chains, where can we put it all?

LV: To store it, you mean?

KP: Yeah, we are really, really pushed for storage. If the kids tell me they want this in the club, I'll get it for them. I would get it for them. They wanted these [computers], so we got it for 'em. 'Can we have keyboards?' So we got keyboards. Set of drums. Guitars. We got it for them, we got 'em. If they want it I can get it for them. It's their club, it's not my club, It's their club. They think I own this club! I don't!

[more chat about the club, club volunteers, death of his brother, his wife, his son]

LV: You were saying earlier, you worked at the colliery. So, it has now obviously closed down, and then Hefin comes along with his crazy idea… Did that make you think differently about the colliery?

KP: Oh no, oh no. When I gone up and down them shafts for 20 odd years, no, it don't make you think no different. But when he talk about comradeship, which Hefin was talking about, that's what colliery work is about. You can't have enemies underground. You couldn't afford to have enemies underground. Everybody would look out for everybody else. I mean it was a dangerous place! But you know, when you had people…. they'd watch your back and you'd be watching theirs. It was that comradeship, which is what Hefin was talking about as far as this Cosmic Colliery – he was talking about. It was how to get along with each other. And I thought: this is how I like to think, this is me [???], our kids can get along with each other, It [???], and whatever [???] but I'm still working on her. She's very much a loner, and I've been for 3 months, I'm getting to her a little bit, quietly, but you can't force…. I don't believe in forcing a child to do anything. Encourage them to do everything, but don't force them to do nothing. They work, they work with a few other kids here. You see them, they are wallflowers, they only here because mum was going out, play Bingo or whatever what. They go drop them off here at half past 5, pick them up at 9 o'clock. We used to finish at 9. That was it. We were just a cheap form of babysitter, this club was.

Yeah, we got out of that rut of being babysitters, by making the kids want to be here. Because the minute they started to want to be here…. [etc etc.]
It's a pound a week (per child).
They are deprived areas. But still, some of them won't pay a pound.
Trip. – children will only pay 5 pounds, but they get them back in the form of a McDonald's meal.

[…]

LV: Just to get back to Hefin's project briefly, you were mainly just facilitating it with the kids.

KP: More or less, yeah. Some were afraid to come, which was the club – take em upstairs, if there…

LV: Did Hefin use this place here to work with the kids as well?

KP: Yeah, he did for a while. Just to have a chat to them. But I wasn't involved, cos I, normally, I'm surprised I'm still here now – somebody will be screaming 'Where's Ken!? I need Ken! I want this, I want that!' So it's nice to have a sit down and do nothing, to be honest! But yeah, he used the club, interviewed the children, he talked with the children, and then pressed on with his ideas. He gave them all badges, I've still got mine in the drawer. He gave me one as well, an embroidered one. He made embroidered ones as well, didn't he? Cosmic Colliery Badges! He also had ordinary badges, didn't he?

So yes, he kept them involved up until the last, when I was saying, the day the choir, was the time that we've actually seen him. Until he sent me email and showing me the link and then the film and all that. And I showed the kids then and of course they were back into it then!
'We done this! We want to do that…!' And then when he came to see 'em, yeah – they thought he was great! They thought he was great, when he came to see 'em. They didn't think he was so mad then, the second time! Because the ideas…

We give 'em things to think about, so they can think for themselves. Ideas for themselves. So in that way, to me, I was super, it was….. Putting ideas into the kids heads, is what it's all about. Let these kids do things for themselves! Or as a group, most will work as a group. And they're good at it too. It was nice to see, nice to see!

LV: Was it an inspiring project do you think?

KP: I think it was for the children! I wasn't so inspired. Although I enjoyed it, I enjoyed listening, and enjoyed that music. I didn't think he was so mad. He was really into it. He had his heart and soul into that. or it seemed as he did to me. So therefore I couldn't fault him. I couldn't fault the project that he had. In all honesty, I think that if we win the whole thing, if it did happen for him, really think he could, he worked hard with this, he worked really hard on it.

LV: And it looked to me like he got lots of different types of people involved… Like, he got you guys involved, he got the choir involved, he got geologists, involved, he got the scuba divers involved…

KP: Uhh, he did! In all fairness he worked really hard! I'd love to see him have the success of actually getting it on the ground. I would really like to. Like you say, they were part of that, in a little way…. Yeah! I was pleased for him! I was more pleased for my club and all my kids! I call 'em "my" kids, they are my kids. [???] anyway.

LV: Great, thank you!

Interview with project participant: Ian Raymond (scuba diving instructor)

Interview on 18. July 2016, at Ye Olde Royal Oak Pub, Ystrad Mynach

LV: […]
How did you hear about the project, and what did you first think, when you heard about the project?

IR: It was basically a phone call from Hefin…

LV: Directly to you?

IR: Directly to me. I understand he got my name from another arena from the Scuba Diving Fraternity. It could have been a local supplier or indeed the British BSAC Club website, because our club is registered on there and I'm named as a point of contact. The initial response on the phone was 'What?! Cosmic Colliery?! What on earth is that?!' So I was intrigued, very intrigued. I've volunteered for similar activities in the past. Once Hefin explained what his intentions were, how he'd like to approach it, the people he was engaging with….

LV: How did he explain his intentions? How did he describe it to you?

IR: From memory, it's a while back…. Basically he was looking just for bringing communities together. An opportunity to pull activities and people in the local arena who are already doing something in society, for example the local youth club, ex-miners, who are often retired now, and left at home, and don't often get a chance to come and integrate into the wider community. I lived on the doorstep of a disused mine that is partially still standing. Penallta was the mine, and he used that as the theme of his project for Cosmic Colliery. So having been brought up in the area, fully understand how society around here is fragmented and people don't engage anymore like they used to… – and I remember the days when we all knew everybody in the local arena… – I was quite intrigued to be part of that, and hopefully re-establish some community links that I may have lost.

LV: And did you re-establish those community links?

IR: Most definitely, yeah! I got to meet a few business people, who were working in the immediate area. I'd seen them around, but didn't know who they were. Didn't know where they fitted into the equation of the community. That was quite nice. Some of the links I still have, since Hefin moved on to other things, and some I've lost. Purely because a lot of the people I've met don't live in the immediate area. But some of the children that were engaged with the project, particularly the introduction to scuba diving, I've seen them and they shout across the street to me. So it's quite nice to have some recognition back in the community and it's nice [to be] recognising others as well.

LV: What do you think prompted you to get involved? Was it just intrigue, as you said earlier? Because it's a kind of fantasy project, in a way!

IR: Definitely, yeah! But it's not beyond reality. These things do happen somewhere! When I started scuba diving 22, 23 years ago, I never thought I'd become an instructor and then teach a whole raft of different people from different cultures, with different abilities, over the last 20 years. I never thought that would happen. It's only by taking a chance with these opportunities, you learn something – every time! You meet people from huge array of backgrounds. That, to me, is fascinating. And you feel you become part of the community again. And that, to me was important.

LV: What do you think was it about Hefin that he managed to get people on board? As you say, it's a very unusual idea.

IR: He's easy to engage with. I don't know whether it's his Welsh accent, or what. I think that helps a little bit. He has a natural warming aura, if you like, when you meet him personally, his voice is calming and soothing, he explains things very simplistically and very clearly, and he's open as well to answer any questions you might have, whether they are difficult or easy. I just felt he was a natural, easy chap to get on with. Plus the intrigue, it was on my doorstep,… I just felt I could contribute something to what he was looking for.

LV: So did he come to you with a specific idea of what your contribution could be?

IR: Yes, the scuba diving. And the fact that scuba diving is a means of teaching astronauts their skills.

LV: Did you know that?

IR: Yes, yeah, yeah. Through the scuba diving training, when you get to certain levels, particularly of expertise, they explain to you how it came about, what the history of it, how the equipment has been developed, scuba diving in the water, as well as, almost, diving in space… The development and

research they've gone hand in hand, with the technical side of the equipment that we use. So I was fully aware of that.

LV: How much time… what was your investment in the project?

IR: I think it was pretty much an afternoon, and the initial meeting. That's where we met on site. We had a tour of some of the old buildings and the winding wheels, we had an explanation about the vision, that had been created somewhere. I don't know whether it was Hefin's vision, or an idea that was put to him from somewhere else, about using the shafts for diving tunnels, and the likes. So, that took a bit of time. We had miners invited to the meeting as well, we had geologists there, we had the hydrologist guy, I think there was an architect there, we had the building developer there that owned the site, as it currently stands. The afternoon was very interesting, getting to know the people, having a little bit of a tour of the site, and then it was a case of 'Use your imagination, guys!'. There were quite a few children there from the local youth centre. We had lots of pens and papers, blank sheets of paper, and a huge table. 'Use your imagination! What do you think we can do with this site? Bearing in mind that we're thinking of an astronaut / cosmonaut training centre…' And basically, all of us, I think it was like having a classroom of 13 to 15-year-olds, our imaginations were just going crazy! And people were drawing some amazing ideas down on paper, and then we were discussing: 'Yes, that could work, no that couldn't work from an engineering point of view, that might not work, but we could do this instead,…' And I think he seemed to have pulled together the right mix of people, which was impressive for a first meeting. Well, it was my first meeting. So I was very impressed by that. Needless to say the afternoon went beyond the initial intention, because we were so engrossed in what we were doing, we didn't want to stop, basically. That lead on nicely then, to a nice question from Hefin: 'Would I be prepared, if he could arrange a local pool session, to bring the scuba diving equipment, because we demonstrated the scuba diving equipment on site, explained what it did, how it could be used in this training school, and who would be best placed to use it, who needed to be trained to used it, how we would go about it and that lead neatly into his question. 'How could I say no, Hefin!'

LV: So initially you were brought on as a scuba diving expert?

IR: In a round-about way, yes!

LV: And then afterwards you were asked to do the session with the kids.

IR: Yes. It seemed to be a natural stepping-stone. Whether he had that in mind prior, I have no idea! But the timing couldn't have been better, the question was asked, at the perfect moment. I couldn't exactly say no. The children were there, looking at me… [laughter]

LV: He played that well! [laughter]

IR: So, of course I will.
Again, it was an opportunity to share knowledge and skills. A lot of children in those situations, particularly from the youth club here in Ystrad, wouldn't normally have access to… So I said: 'By all means, we will do that!' Another colleague of mine, Robert then helped with the practical pool session… And we had lots of fun, getting the children to put the equipment on, they were finding it really difficult, and they were saying: 'Oh, I can't wait to get in the pool!' So they were anxious to get in the pool. And I was saying: 'No, no, no! Training has to take a natural progression.' So just like you learn in school. And the children were so responsive, it was just a really good experience! And I think Hefin enjoyed it as much as the children! It was rewards all round!

LV: What do you think were the most successful parts of the project, and were there any parts of the project that you think maybe didn't work so well?

IR: I had an interview with a lady from BBC Radio Wales and Hefin the other week and my response to her was that I felt that everything that I was involved with was very successful. The main reason, it pulled people, as I said, together in the community that wouldn't normally be pulled together. The biggest thing I felt came out of it was – as adults, we tend to become very blinkered in our way through life, because we have to do certain things by rules, we work, by rules. And in those environments

you tend to lose the opportunity to use your imagination. We had free reign on our imagination. And I think, that was the biggest thing, that I got out of it. Seeing, not just myself, but the other people that participated, having a free reign on their imagination, and coming up with the most amazing ideas. That are – and potentially could be realistic. If the funding was there, and the right circumstances arose… It's not beyond reality. And I thought it was gonna be some crazy project, where people's imagination would run riot. But they didn't. They were very practical, logistical, and – could happen in reality! I was just blown away by that. It was incredible. And even the older generation as well, you could see, as the afternoon was going on, their imagination was starting to run away with themselves, they were letting themselves go, and talking about things, where they never imagined they would having these kinds of conversations! Training astronauts! In an old pit! Unheard of! But it's not beyond reality. And the environment to me, was perfect for those kind of conditions! You could make it clinical, and then you could progress, then using different parts of the mine, to be cold, hostile, and a very uncomfortable environment, which astronauts need to learn and understand how to deal with things in space. So it was just amazing! A good experience!

LV: You said earlier that you grew up really close to Penallta?

IR: Yes, most of the valleys around here – there were six key valleys, and there were over 600 mines. So, growing up as a young child, the mines were still operating. And I've seen the environment going through a state of extreme hustle and bustle – industrialisation, loads of support industries, many people in work, working hard, long hours, not really much quality of life. And then, over the years, as the mines were closing down, our environments were getting cleaned up a little bit. And now, you only have to look around, we've got some amazing countryside and landscape! Whereas 40, 50 years ago it was grey! It was dismal! A lot of steam and smut in the air. We haven't got that anymore! We've gone to the complete opposite end of the spectrum in the environment!

LV: So you think it's got better?

IR: From a health point of view it's certainly got better. But sadly we've lost a lot of work, and a lot of reasonably well-paid jobs along the way as well. And it's the support industries that went with, not just the mines, but the docks as well. Because we're close to Cardiff and Newport. I've seen it go from hard work, a lot of people in work, to quite a lot of people out of work, and environment that nobody was really interested in, it was becoming desolate, run down, all the old industrial buildings were just left in a state of decay, but now thankfully through a regeneration programme it's becoming a nice environment and a healthy environment to be. But – no work.

So – Cosmic Colliery – could have brought plenty of jobs! [laughter]

LV: Do you think Hefin's project makes you think differently about the mines? Do you see them differently now?

IR: Erm… I probably do, without realising it, I probably do. I know from…. I love architecture, anyway. And some of our old pit buildings are absolutely works of art. And to see them go into a state of decay, and left in a state of decay, to me it's pretty [?foul?], it's very wrong. But at the other end of the spectrum they're very expensive to renovate and put back in their former glory, if you like. The Penallta site that was part of the Cosmic Colliery project, was destined for apartments and modular housing inside them. I believe two of the buildings, out of three, maybe four of the buildings, two of them have been turned into housing accommodation, and they have done an amazing job. But I believe that funding has been pulled for the larger part of the project.

LV: Oh really? From what I understand the property developer, I think his name is Paul, he's pulled out? Or he's trying to sell?

IR: Yeah, a lot of people that he was hoping would get into business with him have pulled out, including the Welsh government. Which is an absolute shame. So renovating anything old is very costly and very time consuming and it's almost a job of passion. But if you haven't got the backing, with the strongest will in the world….

LV: And it's the heritage as well. It feels so valuable!

IR: Definitely! We should never let our children and future generations forget what built this area and how it came about.

LV: And this is one of the things that I thought that was really fantastic about Hefin's project. Because it took the history of this place and put it into the future….

IR: … a future context. Yeah! That was probably the most fascinating part of the project. When it was explained to me what he would like to do.

LV: I don't know if you know how Hefin finished it off? What is your sense of how it came to an end and what the ending was like?

IR: Well I wasn't too sure. At the last meeting I had with him, which was very brief, with this lady from the BBC Radio Wales, and the impression I got, was that it was still ongoing. He was clearly following through with further work. How it affected his studies, I have no idea. I've not had a chance to have that dialogue with him. I'd like to think that we'd keep in touch, that we'd meet up in future years, have a beer maybe, and find out exactly where he took it and what benefits he got out of it as well. I only knew it was part of research work that he was doing, and it was specifically about bringing the community together, with these bright ideas, and trying to reinvigorate the imagination, particularly from a younger generation, with the support from the older generation. Cos it's their environment now, really! 10, 15 years, when we retire – it will be them taking over. It will be nice to see them have a really good, strong foot as to where they want to go, what they want to do, what they like to see invested in, and what they can indeed bring into the country.

LV: And do you think Hefin might have helped in that way? To open up people's….

IR: Definitely!

LV: Do you think there's a lasting impact in what he did?

IR: Yes! He's created vision that I think some of us wouldn't have had. And he stimulated, in my case, probably an already stifled consideration for the future. Certain months, you just get up and go through the motions. You get up, you go to work, you come home, you have food. You get up, you go to work,…. And you…

LV: You get stuck.

IR: Yeah, definitely! So, from that point of view, I think he's broadened horizons, without a doubt. And the conversations we had – we talked about America and the why are all the space centres in America – due to the investment in the main, but equally Britain subscribes a lot to the space programme. Britain also used to subscribe quite a bit to marine research. I don't know what the situation is there now. A lot of our maritime industries have gone into a sad state of decline in recent years. And they rely on private research companies and vessels, which is a real shame. So, we know very little about what's under water, I think we know what's up there more than what's down below….

LV: This is closer…. [laughter]

IR: Yes, definitely! [laughter] Not always easier to deal with, but closer.

LV: I'm not sure I have any other questions…. perhaps….. there was a kind of ambiguity there [in the project]. Is it real? Is it fantasy? It's both things in a way.

IR: If we didn't have fantasy, we wouldn't achieve anything in life, would we? So you have to have some kind of dream, some kind of vision, some kind of foresight, forethought, in order to go anywhere. And that to me was the best part of the project. It did stimulate us to think outside of the norm, which is to me, very healthy. Because around here, we do have a lot of traditional ways and mannerisms, and

some people fortunately have travelled, and have seen other cultures, and other things in society. And a lot of people haven't. And given the opportunity, personally, through the youth club, I thought that was fantastic. And I know from local activities, that doesn't tend to happen.

LV: Do you think it helped that Hefin is Welsh? He's not directly from here. So he's both an outsider and a local.

IR: I think there are certain environments around here, if you are an outsider, it's not always easy to integrate. Again, that's very much a traditional thing with closed communities. Our communities are not closed anymore, we're far more flexible and we travel far more, more than what we ever did before. So anyone coming in, with the right attitude, the right mannerism, would have achieved something similar. I couldn't say it would be exactly the same. It's probably when you go home as well, you find a bit more of a welcoming environments, than probably coming here today, a strange environment….

LV: Everybody has been super-nice to me here!

IR: Oh that's lovely! That's really nice to hear! But it does make a difference. If there is some communality there. It helps with interactions, definitely.

LV: You were saying earlier, you can get a bit closed off, if you do the same thing every day. Sometimes I feel it takes somebody new to come in, to kind of set something off…

IR: …re-spark something…

LV: Yes, spark something off.

IR: Definitely! And Hefin certainly did that with the project. But I also think, the other people he invited to the project – he clearly did his homework – I don't know how much selection went on with regards to who he targeted, why he targeted them, there probably was an element of selection there, I'm guessing.

LV: I think it might have been self-selecting as well. If you call somebody up and say 'I want to plan an astronaut training centre.' I imagine open-minded people will say 'yes, brilliant!', people who are a bit more closed-minded will just put the phone down. So you will never get to work with those people. So you end up with a group of people who are open to the idea, and who are open-minded and enthusiastic people…. I guess.

IR: Well, he certainly opened our minds up! [laughter]
There were two, I can't remember their names, there were two elderly gentlemen there, they were retired miners, actually from Penallta pits, and you could see their eyes light up and a smile come upon their face when they stood on the site, that they once worked. And you could see, and gather from the way they spoke about the past, their jobs, their environment, there was pure passion there. And there was an element of passion and camaraderie that I have not experienced, cos I have not worked in that kind of environment. And it was very strong. The way they talked about their fellow miners and colleagues from days gone by. And how sad they were to see the buildings, which were once pristine and absolute works of art now in a state of decay. So you saw the smiles, and the lifted spirit, and then you saw the pain as well. And they probably experienced emotions, particularly on the first meeting that we had on site that they hadn't had, maybe before, maybe not for a long time. And that in itself – that's all about being human. And it's often healthy to have those emotions and those links re-established from time to time. So that was really good.

LV: That sounds very powerful.

IR: Definitely was. And at the same time when we had a few other gentlemen there, like the architects, or those who know about the geology etc., they were very intrigued by the disturbance, disruption to the ground, the environment and the aftermath what the mines have left, and potentially what they could now do in the future with groundwater heating and things like that. Again – it was passion! There was just passion everywhere! Which was really good! So I don't think Hefin needed to do much

stimulus, once we got going! [laughter]

LV: He just had to throw his idea in there and then step back!

Actually recently, when I spoke to him, he described a moment, which might have been the moment you described earlier, when there was a meeting and people started drawing. I think he described a meeting where he brought plans of the current colliery building, and people started drawing on top of it?

IR: Yes, that's basically the blank canvas I mentioned earlier. We had a couple of blank sheets just for raw idea. And then we actually had, almost a schematic, of the existing engineering building that's there. And then he asked a question: 'How best could we use that structure?' Immediately we went into drawing floors in there, and classrooms, and swimming pools and structures where we could suspend people in suits and things, to simulate the astronaut feeling.

LV: Yes, and Hefin did describe that moment. He said that was there moment where he felt the project was perfect, because he felt he could step out of it and it had its own momentum.

IR: And we had fun doing that as well. And everybody was involved. There was no…. I think the youngest person there might have been about 13, 15, maybe, the oldest person well in their 70ies, and everybody interacted. And nobody was excluded. And I thought that was unique. When you had these strangers, all brought together, never met before, and we just interacted.

LV: What do you think made it…

IR: I'm convinced that was Hefin. Because of the way he was with us as individuals, and then how he introduced us, and how he engaged us with the project. There was something he naturally had, I think. But I might be wrong! It might just be all of us, we're naturally sociable! [laughter]

LV: Well, it sounds like he brought the best out of everybody.

IR: I think he did. Without a doubt. I know from the brief meeting, recently as well, from the moment he walked in the room, straight away, you were re-introduced, because a couple of us hadn't met for a while, we were re-introduced, and conversation was naturally flowing amongst all parties. Again – he was the person we were all interacting through. And I think it's because of the way he is with people, it helped that situation.

One of the invitations I had, after we did the colliery site visit and the using our ideas, to come forward and discuss how they could be implemented, what the engineering issues were, the costs, etc., we had an invitation to meet with the local choir. Now I didn't even know, I've lived here for 6, nearly 7 years, I didn't even know this village had a local choir, I thought it had long disbanded. So we came down and they were doing a theme tune for his film. And that was fascinating, really, really good. It was an emotional experience. It was a haunting experience, because of the song choice that he picked, and the music. It was quite creepy. But did an amazing job! The interaction then afterwards was quite fascinating, because they were looking to recruit themselves. They were trying to share with us: 'Look, if you want to join, you're welcome to come down, you don't need to have a good voice, we'll teach you…'

LV: Have you joined?

IR: No, I haven't.

LV: You should join! It's so good to be in a choir!

IR: No, I haven't got the time!

LV: I used to be in a choir. It's so fantastic!

IR: I'm out 4, 5 nights a week. And on the weekend I'm away.

LV: Right!

[laughter]

IR: It will be nice to think that, from a scuba diving point of view, we're used to open up evenings, over a 6-week period, every year from September through to October. Unfortunately, because of to work commitments, and my fellow diving colleagues, we've not been able to keep that going. And the last 4–5 years we've not delivered at all. So the opportunity to join the Cosmic Colliery experience, it rekindled another spark I'd say, with myself and my colleague Rob, and we both came away from there, we felt good, and we gave out 2, 3 hours of our time, and that's negligible, really.

LV: Yes, so the commitment was small.

IR: Yes, definitely. And to give such satisfaction to that group of children, and Hefin obviously! I think there were 2 people there filming, you could see they wanted to have a go, but there were on the cameras, so they couldn't!

LV: I don't know if there were 2 separate sessions, because on the film I saw a session where there was a Russian [sign] language instructor on Skype?

IR: Yep. That was the same session. When I arrived at the pool, Hefin had his laptop in the swimming pool shallow end area, and the children were all sitting around talking to this gentleman, but I came in at the tail end. So I know he was teaching them some sign language, and basically it was the same language that we use to talk to each other when we're scuba diving. 'Yes', 'Up', 'Down', 'Okay', 'Not sure', 'Out of air!' It was very similar and I think that Hefin did mention that to me, actually. And that was about showing how it's all interrelated with what we do at scuba diving, and the fact that it's international. It's not different in every country. I'd have liked to have seen all of that, but I missed it unfortunately.

LV: I don't know why Hefin didn't send you the link to the film. I'll ask him to!

IR: He may have done in an email, but again, I have so many emails…. private and work-wise… sometimes I miss them. I can't even look at them…

[…]

[Talk about the exhibition at the Design Museum, Hefin's current projects.]

IR: It's a shame we can't actually work with Local Authorities and the Welsh government get appropriate funding and backing to rejuvenate that building. We have a series of aging and decaying leisure centres around here and to regenerate that type of building that it will stand for another 150, 200 years…. Yes, it's going to be a costly investment, but it will be an investment, instead of using of using modern fabric and materials like they do now, that last 30 or 40 years, that is now coming to the end of it's life… invest in that building! It's 100 years! It's big enough for an indoor pool, it's big enough to have classrooms there, it's big enough to have gymnasiums there, yes, we need housing around here, but we also need healthy lifestyle activities and facilities. And to me, there's something like 84,000 houses around here, we've got 9 or 11 leisure centres, 2 or 3 of which will possibly close in the near future, we don't know, it's on the cards I think. And that place would be a tremendous place…[?]. Even though it wouldn't be a Cosmic Colliery, it would be half way there! You'd have all the health stuff, you'd have all the training rooms, the education, the nutrition, we had nutrition rooms in there, ….. and it's not beyond reality.

LV: I haven't seen the actual site, but just from seeing it in the film – it looks so beautiful that building!

IR: It was in its day.

LV: It's in a dire state now, but it looks stunning, the architecture!

IR: When you go into the building, the immediate feeling you have: it's a cathedral! It is so big.

LV: What was that building actually used for?

IR: It had the engines that drove the winding wheels that lowered the miners up and down the pit shaft. And it had engineering workshops in there as well. But they reckoned it was so spotlessly clean… It was a typical Victorian building, with beautiful ornate tiles everywhere, with strong colours…. and they reckon it was so pristine you could actually eat food off the floor. And this was a dirty, heavy, smelly environment in its day. But in those engineering sheds and winding wheel houses – spotlessly clean. And it was only accessible to the privileged few, apparently – those that worked there.

LV: The engineers that worked there….

IR: Not anybody could go in and out of there…

LV: It's interesting, because one of things that came out of the workshop that Hefin did with the kids, was that he was discussing about who could use it, who could train as an astronaut. And one of the kids was saying: 'Definitely no robbers or criminals!' So Hefin said to them: 'Well, what if you make a stupid mistake as a young person? Should you then forever be barred?' And I thought that was really nice, because that prompted discussion amongst the kids about those kinds of social issues…

IR: Yes, it broadens your mind-set again, because you have to think differently. Yes – it does happen….

LV: … that you make a mistake….

IR: …and not often from your own cause, either. It could be somebody else's causation.

LV: I hope for you guys that something comes out of these buildings. They are such beautiful buildings, and the history you have here is so rich…

IR: It is. And it is often unnoticed, because it is not promoted through the history books through school as such. It certainly isn't promoted in our communities, because we don't have sufficient monumental museums, whereby it can be promoted, which is quite sad. They do try to restore some things, but it's not enough really.

LV: You need these big imaginative ideas, to not just have it as a museum, but something that can bring new life…

IR: Living! Something that's living!

LV: Use it for something new! And make something new out of the old! Which I think was brilliant about this project…

IR: So if you know any multi-millionaires… bring 'em down!

LV: I wish!

[laughter]

LV: The other thing I really liked was that it was about going to space, by going into the earth. So you have these two directions.

IR: Yes, both spectrums!

There are scuba diving opportunities as well. To me, it wasn't just about having this wild dream, it's a dream that could be reality, with the right investment, but it's a dream that would broaden horizons and skills of the people that we need to broaden horizons and skills of, because investment in Wales is quite limited. And unless we have Welsh people with skills going out into the wider world, it's never going to come back in. And we really do need that. I've been fortunate to have travelled, through work, and through leisure, and even though the world is a big place, it's so accessible, and yet…. things are

going to other places and not being brought here, which is very sad.

LV: Why do you think that is?

IR: It's investments, maybe. I think most of the time it's investments. We have no national industries as such, that doesn't help us. Not that national industries are the best things, but they do have a sense of community and socialism, and there's a regular turnover of a normal amount of money. When you lose that you lose an awful lot. You lose the human element, the social element, interaction, intermingling, you lose the shared knowledge, you lose visions, you lose your appetite for life I think as well. And that to me is quite sad.
And again, from this project, the engagement of this project with people, it seemed to generate an appetite, which is, again, very well needed around here. We have to stop stifling people. There are too many rules and regulations. Allow them to be entrepreneurial! Allow them to have their imagination! Allow them to look at different ways of doing things! One way isn't necessarily the best way, and is certainly not always the right way!

LV: It was also my impression that the mining industry that was so brutally shut down… my impression is that lots of people look back at that history with lots of bitterness and sadness.

IR: We still have that…

LV: And something was lost. And that's why I thought Hefin's approach was so good, because it looked back, but without the resentment or sadness…

IR: … no negativity….
And that was good.

LV: He switched it into something else.

IR: Which was very clever, isn't it. And again, we need more of that around here. Definitely.
But I think if you go down that road, and you do lots of programmes and projects like Hefin did, there comes a point where, unless that is turned into reality or partial reality, people will start disengaging…

LV: … and get cynical perhaps…

IR: Yeah. And I think there is a lot cynicism around here. There is certainly a lot of anger and bitterness from history. There's certainly an attitude towards towns and cities as well, it's almost like, we've been robbed of something. And we seem to be losing the ability to do something about it ourselves, which is very, very sad. And most of my working life, most of my friends, because of the environments we've been in, in and out of work, there's nothing steady. No regular income. So you could have a good run for a couple of months, but then you got nothing for months. You can't plan for the future, then, despite the best efforts. And if that happens to you for a number of years, it becomes very damaging. Health-wise it's damaging, age-wise – certainly – it shortens your life. So, it's about time we had some positiveness around here. Without a doubt!

LV: Do you think it was problematic? I really love Hefin's project. But, do you think it's problematic to propose something, as he did, without really being able to follow through with it?

IR: No, I don't think so, no. I think, what I got out of this was: It allowed us to have an imagination, he encouraged that. What came out of our imagination was not beyond reality. He proved that. I think it was about giving people the confidence to not be afraid to think, say, do, show something different. And to me that was the most important thing to get out. If you can give people that confidence to not be too afraid, not be too shy, bring it to the table, doesn't matter how silly you think it is, somebody one day might pick that up and do something, and [you might ?] earn a fortune out of it. So there's lots of opportunities from it. And I thought that was really good.

And certainly, again from Hefin's point of view, there's something natural in him as a character, that says 'Hey guys, you might be here now, but this is where you can go! And people have been there!

Look at these astronauts, looks at these people in the city, look at me, I'm doing my research, I'm travelling, I'm meeting people, I'm actually living, I'm having a ball!' And I think he did give a bit of that, particularly to the children. But he also gave it to us old-timers as well! I surely came away feeling good. I felt like I had contributed something, I had a little fun along the way, and that's something that probably hadn't happened for a while, and that was really good! And now I can't wait to go away diving again in September!

He re-ignited the spark in me. Come on, get off your backside! Plan something! Go and do something! And that's really helped! It's healthy to be challenging yourself I think. You don't always need some stimulus, but I think more often than not these days we look for some stimulus to help us along the way, rather than taking our own initiative.

LV: Yes, and sometimes, as you say, daily life just…

IR: …closes in on you. Sadly.

Interview with Gavin Wade, Eastside Projects

24. February 2017, East Side Projects, Birmingham

Transcript

GW = Gavin Wade
EP = Eastside Projects
LV = Luise Vormittag
Peter = Peter Nencini
James = James Langdon

LV: This is the project I was really interested in [holding the booklet *The Artist and the Engineer*].

GW: Did you know about it just when it came out? That was the end of 2013.

LV: I can't quite remember. Peter probably told me about it at some stage.

GW: It doesn't seem that long ago.

[laughter]

LV: Peter told me about it, I got a copy. The thing that really intrigued me about it is that Peter told me that you used this as a basis for discussion with people who were interested. And that is the aspect that I really wanted to know more about. How this was put to use. Also – the fact that it is called *User's Manual,* and in your organisation you stress 'usefulness' a lot: [quoting from EP literature] 'art that may be useful to society'.

GW: Yes.

LV: So that was what really peaked my interest.

GW: Good! It's 'draft #6' of our *User's Manuals*. From the very start, from the first envisioning of EP, [we were] already imagining that it is a different, new model of what a gallery can be. And if you make a new model you probably need a guide for how to use it. As soon as you realise that you have a different terminology for how people approach art. They might not think that they are meant to use it. They may think they are just meant to experience it, or it is meant to be a revered thing, [where] there is a distance. So I think the idea, that – really for me – art is a fundamental activity, it is perhaps *the* fundamental human activity… It's the first thing that you do to explain anything: the showing of something. The sharing of an idea is an exhibition process. So I think it's a real underpinning, which is an interesting link to the idea of us fixing [focusing?] on the coat of arms of a city. We're interested in symbols of principles and ways of living, ways to hold yourself or to present yourself. You know – how is something programmed. I've always been interested in my role as an artist/curator to do with that: What do we programme? How do we programme space and ideas to affect people and to change the way that people behave within space?

LV: The idea of behavioural change is quite a big one, isn't it?

GW: Yes. And that is done as an artist, not from a scientific point of view. So it's a very developed, intuitive process – intuition is a skill you develop.

LV: What kind of change do you think you have in mind?

GW: Well, the ability to look and understand that art is not an individual artefact, separated from everything else. An example might be: in 2003 I did the very first *Support Structure*-project with Céline

Condorelli, who is one of the other partners and directors of EP, – the first brief that we had was to make an exhibition work, where the public can come in and curate a show. And they would curate 30 shows in 30 days. So – how do you do that? How do you do it so what they learn from their experience, they don't just come away thinking 'the curator's job is to select things'? How do you programme them to go beyond that finding? So we built a structure that was designed to programme them to not accept that that is what a curator does, and that what a curator does is change the conditions of a space. And change the condition of existing elements and putting them together in new ways. And that that is a productive process; that is part of a conversation process. So we built a structure that was impossible to ignore, whereas [in] most galleries there's a design-element of the brief which is about pretending that you can ignore the space, that it's neutral. So you don't need to worry about the space, because the space is just there and is apolitical. And so we think that's a gross negligence of art history, that that is the way galleries are designed, that that's a lie and it's immoral [laughter]. And it's detrimental to people's understanding of being in space and making changes over time. So we made a structure on wheels that was as wide as the gallery. A wall, in six parts, that you could push around. You could make the gallery into a corridor, you could make it into a square, you could make it an independent curved structure that you can place…, and within that structure were many artworks, like 100+, that you can chose from and select. So selection is part of the process, but you have to understand that you are making a choice and that there are options, and that there are histories within that space that other people have already chosen. So it is really about programming you to understand context and your involvement in it and the multiple authorship of the space. So all those points…. individually they can be quite abstract, but if you take any of those points, then it's actually about empowering the individual and trying to say: you can't make art on your own.

LV: Yes, it's a social activity.

GW: It is social. And your investment in it can have a social product. You are contributing to it.
And then the idea stepping forward from that is then – if you make a gallery, can the gallery be an artwork? And what would make that gallery an artwork? And who are the multiple authors at the time? And what then would the underpinning principles of that be? And so then you get to a point where you need to express principles not only through the floor and the walls, and the lighting and the sound, but in writing as well. And then – you have a manual.
[laughter]

LV: So, I think this is 'draft #6'.

GW: Yes, this is 'draft #6'.

LV: But this is quite different from your previous *User's Manuals*.

GW: It is, yes.

LV: So how did this emerge?

GW: The previous *User's Manuals* were more functional *[questioning tone of voice, indicating uncertainty about word-choice 'functional']*, or more directly claimed on the mechanics of EP as an organisation and as a physical space. So the previous one was a list of verbs of things that we do.

[*LV checks recording device*]

GW: And then James Langdon, who is also one of the directors, a graphic designer, and integral to what the gallery is, integral to the art of the gallery, and the idea that if you're curating the space and creating the space is the placing together of things, positions and messages, say, – then the messaging part, the graphic design part, the thinking of that messaging is as important as everything else. So if James is going to design an invitation, a flyer, a poster then that must be as important as the commissioning of another artist coming in. So he is part of the thinking of the organisation.

And James had come across the coat of arms and was interest in that in relation to the library of Birmingham. The old Central Library was being threatened to be knocked down, and a proposal

for a new library had been made. And that was repeating the history where the previous library of Birmingham had already been knocked down on the same site where the Central Library has now, just been knocked down, has gone completely. So that triggered in him – he saw a relationship between that and what we had already been developing about reusing / recycling / upcycling elements of the gallery. We thought the gallery has an artist-curator approach to it, with this idea of multiple authorship and shared space, long-term artworks and short-term artworks. What you end up getting is a layered history – a physical archiving as gallery-making, as art-production.

So we started talking about that there is a relationship there. And what can be done with that? Is there a story that could be told? As soon as that idea was there and James thought … We started looking at the coat of arms and there are two figures on the coat of arms and the fact that they were an artist and an engineer was already surprising and felt incredibly important and overlooked. So it was something that we could reveal to people who live in our city, something that underpins everything that they do – and they don't know about it. Or they don't know about it consciously.

So – that idea of programming: It is there. It's on every street sign, it's on many bins in the city, it's on street-cleaning equipment, it's on uniforms, it's on business cards – it is everywhere. So in this subconscious programming-pushing, it's doing something. It may be hard to say exactly what that is, but it is part of the existing conditions of the city. And I suppose we realised that its full value isn't being exploited. And perhaps it's even being undermined.

Once you start analysing the coat of arms and you look at the figures: they are called the 'supporters' of the city of Birmingham, which fits also with EP thinking. But then the motto 'Forward!', feels like, to us, there is a conflict, there is a fake element to it. It's a front. The idea of 'Forward!' is an excuse or a reason or a behaviour, which allows things to happen and wipe away history. Because you are so focused on going forward it is not necessary to think about what's important to maintain. So we think that that is the equivalent of trying to make a gallery that's not neutral [*un-neutral?*]. It's almost un-neutral, it's what you expect. [?] So it almost becomes meaningless to some people and dangerous to others because it gives them a reason to knock down and erase history. So all of these principles were really exciting to us, and …

LV: And this arm with the hammer – is that part of the normal coat of arms?

GW: That's the normal part, and it's not … I can't think… it's not quite expressed in the same way. So we have interpreted that as representing power – the power of the council, or the power of the city, or the authority of the city. But I'm not sure whether it is actually intended to do that. I think it's probably still a continuation of the making, of the in-between of the engineer … but in a fairly aggressive form. So we have given that, in the story, *The Artist and the Engineer*, we gave that the symbol, as symbolising the city, or the politician – let's say the politician, the representative who is other than the artist and the engineer. So there are three parties involved in supporting the city. And then … because the arm with the hammer is on top of a crown, or a castle, you don't know whether there is supposed to be a conversation between them, or whether the supporters are supposed to be the advisors, and the hammer makes the decisions? So we take it, that there is an element of hierarchy, but we suggest in the story that there is a conversation, that there is a dialogue. Or that a dialogue is possible.

LV: Who wrote the story and why did you choose to write it in the language of a children's story?

GW: That, again, was James' idea. There is a little bit of back – and forth –

[*LV – paranoid, checks recording device again*]

GW: Because we've worked back and forth together now since 2005, …. There's a book of mine called *Has man a function in the universe?* Have you seen that?

LV: No.

GW: Shall I get that?

LV: Yes please!

GW: Because I invited a children's book illustrator to be one of the artists in that book. Jessica Spanyol.

[*GW fetches copy of book.]*
…..

GW: In fact there is a talk online, a video of James talking at Walker Art Center in America…

LV: I think I've seen that…

GW: Yes, he talks about this. So James designed this, and I curated it. And the book is an exhibition. This [*referring to copy he is holding*] is a very worn one… So the whole of the book is an exhibition space. So it's a shared space. So you have one, two, three, four different artists sharing a space…. An over-layering.

LV: Oh I see. That's great.

GW: So that's one artist on top of another artist, and that's a different artist [*pointing at page*]. So they are all sharing a space and within it there were some moments where… these illustrations where real characters from Jessica Spanyol's children's books – they are called the 'mini-bugs'. They are acting like they normally do, but it's her response to the question 'Has man have a function in the universe?' and using the form of the mini-bugs to show you what man's function is. And man's function is, from Jessica Spanyol's position, is that our role in the universe is to crash, bash and splash and smash. That is our role.

LV: [laughter] But they are also colliding with the other artists in the book as well, aren't they?

GW: Yes. So there are about 12 artists, maybe? Yes. And each artist is answering the question. And I'm weaving that together. And James is actually, on screen, putting all these things together and making that effective, making that work.

GW: And it runs, so there are a number of narratives: a bit of a novel, comic strips, Kerry James Marshall's comic strips, the page numbering system, the indexing… So Hayley Tompkins' and Sue Tompkins' proposal, in a way, is that man's function in the universe is to mess it up, is to leave marks and evidence of messing things around.

Then, Mark Titchner's, which is these big letters over the top, his offer of man's function is that we are here to witness the end of the universe.

LV: So, to bare witness.

GW: To bare witness, yes. And Carey Young's contribution is the index – so an index of what is in the book and another fictional…

LV: So it's an encyclopaedic function!

GW: Yeah! [laughter]
So each one does that role, but I think that might have contributed, and I've been interested in children book-form... I think it's a very powerful form, very reduced. Perhaps I've been interested in it because of that connection back to El Lissitzky maybe, but – I don't know if I've rationalised that. But I've re-written El Lissitzky's children's story before, *The Tale of Two Squares*, and I like that tone – the relationship between a children's story, the short, precise, suggestive, clear… in relation to manifesto writing, actually: short, to the point, but it must carry a lot with very few words.

And James, I think, is interested in that as well. So he had pitched that, and said that we should write this together. So he had the basic idea of the layering that he approached Peter with. So saying:

We make a model, and the basic story in there is that there is a blank and there is a city that makes itself blank. That builds and wipes away. As a direct relationship or parallel to the library situation in Birmingham. And in doing so you waste a lot of energy and time and learning.

LV: When you were working with Peter, had you written the text already?

GW: We had written a draft.

LV: Okay, and then he took that as the basis of his work.

GW: And then we just kept refining it. So, I guess we probably have different earlier drafts, but there were some points, which remained pretty much the same. So this area – the idea of the action, explaining the action of building and whipping away. And within that you build the characters. So the hammer becomes a character and he takes on the motto. And I think it feels like a he, feels quite masculine – the hammer.

LV: The hammer is unthinking, isn't he?

GW: Yeah, but we decided to frame the hammer not as a bad character but as a someone who is caught in the system and complies, maintains the system, keeps it going. But in a way we're suggesting that that person is actually doing a civic job, they are maintaining it. And they are good as well because they will listen and so it's not that they are fixed in that way, it's just the routine and no one has challenged it. And so they will maintain it, because it seems to be working, it seems to be okay, people get by, which is also an interesting way of looking at Birmingham. And that's a little bit of what in my mind I'm thinking about: How does the city of Birmingham achieve more? How does it get beyond how it has had to sacrifice things in the past? And it needs to understand what it has sacrificed, in order to move on and become something more impressive, more useful, more interesting, contributing more to global culture, perhaps. And there is all of that, I think. We were trying to embed it in, just in very few words. But that's a very powerful statement to say: The artist and the engineer are putting together a new city.

There was this is an exhibition across America in 2000 / 2001 called *Let's get to work*. And that title comes from a Byron Barton American children's book that's called *Machines at Work*. It's an incredible artwork, it's an amazing thing. The first time I saw it I was visiting artists in New York who had young kids. And I was picking up the books and was reading it to the kids and thought 'Oh my God, this is amazing!' Totally taken by it. What happens in that book – there is a multicultural work-force. This might be a 1960ies book. They knock down a traditional city, have lunch and then they build a modern city. That's the story. And it's told in very short…. So one double page spread would just say: 'Let's get to work.' And they'll get their tools. And then they go 'Knock down that building!' – and that's a full page. 'Knock down that building!'. You know, really simple, but it's amazingly utopian. Even though it is very American, probably comes out of a capitalist position, it still feels like a constructivist element to it, it feels like a shared socialist work as well. And I haven't looked at Byron Barton or read anything about him, actually, but this makes me think I should now. Because maybe he was a socialist in America, and was trying to feed, to programme that into children's minds.

So that's what I mean by programming, I suppose. Why we thought, If we're trying to make a *User's Manual* which tells us how to use art and why art is useful for your city, is the way that we were doing it as a list of verbs, in a functional…. Are we programming you, are we reaching the right people? So I think James' idea was brilliant – that we switch to a children's story – and we say: We haven't got the capacity to give every child in Birmingham this, but I would liked to have done that. And we tell people that, so even that as a message is a very strong message. But also then, giving it to an adult, giving it to lots of people, especially if they've got kids themselves, and say: 'Read that to your kids!' Mine were a bit too old to read it to them. I mean, I have done…. And the way I read it when I'm doing lectures, then I read it like I would read it to my kids. So I do it very warm, slow, storytelling… and it changes the atmosphere of the room. People have always responded to it very well.

LV: You've mentioned a few times the idea of 'programming' or influencing people's minds about the city. Would you say that would be one of your main aims of this publication?

GW: …..yeah, I think so…. Yeah…. Which sort of sets us up to fail.

[laughter]

But I think that's fine. I am very ambitious about things, I want EP to be ambitious. And I think James is very ambitious, and Peter is. So it's about getting very carefully and considered positions to achieve something, but also we are totally still playing and experimenting and testing things out. We don't know exactly what the results are. But as soon as we'd done it, we hoped that people would respond in a quite positive way and pick it up… and that is what happened immediately.

LV: So how did you distribute this once you had it printed?

GW: We distribute it for free within the gallery, and we did do mail-outs. But really the mail-outs were to art-world people, to spread it around the world like that. And then, when we launched it, it was our 5th birthday. So we had – we organised a dinner in here. That's when we made the space as well – *Black Pleasure* [*construction in gallery space area by Heather & Ivan Morison*] and it's the first time this space was going to be used. And we had this dinner, and we managed to invite the Leader of Birmingham to come. He actually wasn't the guest of honour. The guest of honour was Bill Drummond, the artist Bill Drummond. So we sat Bill Drummond next to the Leader of Birmingham. [laughter] – and had their dialogue going…

LV: 'Leader'… would that be the mayor?

GW: No, the Leader, the City Leader. The politicians appoint him as the Leader of the City Council. And then there is, but not the chief executive. That would be a civil servant. So the councillors are elected and then they appoint a leader. And Birmingham is interesting, because it is the biggest council in Europe. It's because it's the whole of Birmingham is one council. So really, when you are the Leader of Birmingham, it's quite big. Even though Birmingham is the second city, it's the biggest council. Which is why it has had – and maybe continues to have a politically prickly relationship with government. And hence Birmingham has been sacrificed in the past, made to shrink, made to not have any more businesses. It's been stopped and pushed from growing any more by the government.

LV: Because they don't want the council to get even bigger?

GW: Yeah. Perhaps – well, this is in the 1950s, so in the 1950s the government tried to reduce the population of Birmingham from 1.1 million to 0.9 million.

LV: How do you do that?

GW: It wouldn't allow any more business licences. So it shrunk business. And it stopped resources coming in. Because B was very successful, so it just cut it, and cut it. It sacrificed B to push people and money to the North and to Wales. But I didn't know this until 5 years ago. And prior to that point I always thought: Why didn't Birmingham grow more? Why is it so modest? Why doesn't it… And I think that is part of it. Birmingham was programmed in a way that the majority of the population don't even know. Then therefore you just accept the conditions. So its successful and it's a busy, active city with lots of different types of people and people get on okay. It's not like it's the biggest success, but it always did quite well. SO people didn't question what was really going on. But I think that's an interesting idea – that Birmingham was sacrificed for the good of other areas of the country. And that's the question then – when you know that and think of that as an idea, as a principle, and say if you look to the country now and think what is thriving and what isn't, then – is that an idea that should be applied again? So that could be a future *Manual*, where it may not be Birmingham that's sacrificed, it might be London. And so: Is London big enough to sacrifice itself? And to change? And push business out, population out, culture out, to the rest of the country? Then that's the sort of programming and the learning, where you take an idea and put it back the other way. But you can only do that, if you know what's happening.

So that again is this point: The gallery is a model for exactly that idea. We wouldn't have had that idea, unless we had tried to make a gallery that programmes people to think about context. And to apply the learning of that context to another situation. And that's what the *Manual* is, in a way, saying.

LV: Do you think you've got quite a pedagogical mission here? Do you want to….. You use the word 'programming', you don't use the word 'educating'. 'Programming' is a word from computer language, isn't it?

GW: ….yeah, I suppose…. I mean it a little bit provocatively, so it's like social programming, social conditioning. So it's blunt and sounds quite aggressive. And obviously there are terrible precedents of that happening, when it is done in a bad way. But actually it is happening all the time, and there are many positives of that happening. When you design a village, or you design a street, or design a house, you are programming the way that people live. And it is like computer programming… you are setting down options, possibilities through physical form, rather than just through gateways and openings and the opportunities of the on and offs. But in reality that's what you have: The size of where you live, of how you can own it, what you can do it, what infrastructure is available around you, is how you are programmed. Your life is controlled by all of that.

LV: So there is no free will? – We're at the big questions!

[laughter]

GW: I think there is still free will in that. And free will – it's only one part of the conditions. It's not the whole part. But you can't get away from that.

LV: So it's a conversation…

GW: Free will can't exist on its own. It doesn't exist on its own. It's still there, and I mean, maybe it's…. that's when it feels a bit weird when we're moaning, you might be moaning about the fact that you have quite a luxurious life. But in Birmingham there are incredibly rich people, there's lots of of luxury living happening in Birmingham, but it's also a very deprived city, there are massive areas of the city that aren't very well supported, that don't have good infrastructure, communities are ghettoised. So in some way without directly trying to do social work, to support those people we want to try and change the whole ethos of the city through its overall thinking. And link with other people who want to do that. And to put art as part of that process. But not… Well I have done projects that are about solving specific problems in a given social situation, but I think that that – I found that that was…. a short-term solution. So it was really about: How can an artist-run space provide a bigger way of thinking? And the facts that this is a way how we meet people and we give them this and we tell them something they don't know about Birmingham, they can go away and read it, and they can think about what that means.

It did lead to a next meeting with the Leader… so afterwards he wanted…

LV: Okay – so you had the dinner and then…

GW: We had dinner and talked about the idea and he spoke with particular people there, and then followed that up. So me and James then went for a meeting with the Leader to talk about... we genuinely are interested in rethinking the city. We would like to come up with a new identity for the city, and we'd like to change the motto, and how do you we about it? And then you begin to hit reality and the barriers… And he was really interested, but then there were…. He invited somebody else to come to that meeting, whose …. wasn't any….. there was conflict with that's person's role in the council, because that person was meant to be in charge of things like branding the city. So there was a conflict there that meant, what we're saying makes that person defunct. And that person's role – was unable really to take on what we were saying. He would become, you know, it's putting himself out of a job. So that made it quite difficult.

LV: So he was unlikely to embrace the idea.

GW: That's right. So either the Leader was doing that because he wanted to end the conversation with us? Or he's doing that because just he has to, because that's, he's hoping that we can get into that conversation… so sometimes that becomes a block, you know, personalities, and the way that you can connect with people can become so… So we just had to work out other ways of programming things. That would have been amazing to get in, and that opportunity, there's still a chance that that could

happen, but it's … that's the difficult thing about trying to work with the biggest council…

LV: Which political party is in charge in Birmingham?

GW; Labour. Now. But it's had a counter position to whatever has been in power. So when the previous Labour government was in it was a Conservative council. And then, when it switched [laughter], when it switched to the Conservatives, no…. So when it was Conservative, it was Labour. When Blair got in power, it went Conservative, when the Tories got back again in now, it went Labour. So every time, it's like… shooting itself in the foot, never allowing itself to expand.

LV: That's interesting in itself though, isn't it? Always in opposition

GW: So I think historically it's probably been more of a Labour city, but it's, yeah… that also does hinder itself. It's not going with the flow. [laughter]

LV: Was this booklet used in any other kinds of events, or was it used as the basis for any other kind of more orchestrated discussions or events that you held?

GW: Errr.. .. I think it would have been. But I can't actually remember what we…. I mean, it's been used in many of the …. many events and talks… and it's still…. And what came out of that is the current *Production Show*. So our current programme still has developed form this. It has taken time, filtered through into this whole programme, which is a two-year programme, and thinking about production and placing artists with engineers, with manufacturing, with industry. And the fact that we are sometimes the engineers as well. Me and Ruth Claxton, who is the other director and an artist, we are both good makers and thinkers about structures and forms and ways of putting materials together. So we sometimes we become the engineers for other artists. Or I'm doing something and Ruth is an engineer for me…. It's not that they are fixed positions, even that role can be variable. And now we have Hardeep Pandhal as part of the exhibition, and his engineer is his mum, and she is knitting and embroidering for him. So it is quite a broad idea of what the engineer is and that's also part of the beauty of the project. And we are doing an evolving show, working through production processes and asking questions about: How is production useful for art? And how is it useful for the city? How is it useful for making the gallery? And then we're …. Some of the projects are happening here in the gallery, and some of them are happening in the city, and some of them are happening outside of the city, or outside of the country, so we have…

LV: What have you got happening in the city?

GW: So, I mean, probably the biggest thing we have happening in the city is the Birmingham Big Art Project. And that is a 2 million pound permanent commission for the centre of Birmingham, and that is for Eastside City Park, where HS2, beside the station where HS2 will be. So we are commissioning agents for that. So we bring the artists in. We are developing the way that the city is commissioning art. So we have written parts of the public art strategy, and we managed to get in some of our phrasing and our language into that, and some of the ambitions and aims. Written a public art strategy, written parts of the cultural strategy with the city now, all after this! That led to me being invited to co-write the city…

LV: So you got other entry points.

GW: Yes. And that wasn't me chasing it, they just asked me to come.

LV: So people were maybe more open.

GW: I was genuinely saying, we don't ask the council for any money. We were genuinely saying: Use us! We are the supporters. Use us and we will do it. We are happy to do that. That's part of what the gallery should be. We should raise enough funding and still be sustainable in a way to be able to still contribute to the city, so it doesn't need to pay us money if they're strapped for cash. I think it should invest more in art, but we would make good use of that… And I can… I've written a whole other text that came out of that as well… which is in my new book… [laughter] So I would ask you to see if you are interested in getting a copy of my new book.

LV: Yes! What is it called?

GW: *Ucycle this book!* And James has designed it.

LV: And do you sell it here?

GW: It's not out yet. So this is the Kickstarter Campaign… that's part of the cover of the book, let's find the full cover…. This is all on Twitter. So that's the cover of the book….

LV: I think I have glanced at that at some point, yes it doesn't look completely unfamiliar... Stay in the EU...

GW: Yes, that's from my tweets, my pinned tweet for a while. But now, the text that's in the book … If you go on Kickstarter, I'm asking everybody to pledge some support…

LV: Absolutely, I will.

GW: We've made it past 4000.

LV: Great, how much do you need?

GW: 7500. And we've got 9 days to get the last bit. So we really do need your support. [laughter]

LV: How long did it need to get the 4000?

GW: That must have been 20 days.

LV: Okay, so it has to accelerate now.

GW: Yeah, but it's common with Kickstarter that in the last week you get as many as in the first part.

LV: So are you self-publishing this?

GW: No it's Bookworks. It's just… So this is by Bookworks, who have done the Kickstarter. It just affects what happens….

LV: And then you get a copy… So you kind of buy a copy…

GW: Yes, you can just buy a copy, there's a special offer copy, you can buy the signed copy, or a book with the print, or a book with a hand-coloured print, and on and on... there are lots of different version. We've had an amazing response already to get to the 4000.

But within that one of the texts is called …… let me find it…… I'll get it on my computer. Because I used *The Artist and the Engineer* within the text. So it's called *City of a 1000 artworks: How to revive a city*. It's a TEDx talk that I did, and there's a video of it online as well?
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yp-HoBahhLo

LV: Where did you give the talk?

GW: University of Birmingham.
So this is James doing the square span. Which is a type-setting format devised by Herbert Bayer from the Bauhaus. So he's one of my heroes. And James then found the system and has updated the Herbert Bayer system to do my writing.

LV: So what is the system?

GW: So the system is: 'Home is where the heart is.'

LV: So it's like mini-columns.

GW: But what is the heart of art? Yeah, it's about constructing very short sentences. So it's actually very similar to the children's book writing. And it's partly James saying… I started writing these very short, and shorter and shorter and shorter. And he is saying: This was the perfect form. This system was designed for ultra-short texts. So there is ones…. There is 26 texts. It's like my writings from the last 12 years.

LV: So it's a collection of your writing.

GW: Yeah… that's al the texts…. And this one…. *City of 1000 artworks*… 253… [*looking at computer*] So within it is the story that I retell the story of El Lissitzky's children's story. I interview El Lissitzky as one of the texts. Do you know El Lissitzky?

LV: Yes.

GW: So I interview him by a show where I had…. Erm….. so….. I did an exhibition called *Abstract Cabinet Show*, after El Lissitzky's *Abstract Cabinet*. And I asked probably about 25 artists in it. And I asked each of them to be El Lissitsky and answer each of the questions as El Lissitzky.

[laughter]

LV: I was wondering how you would have interviewed him! I was like – I'm sure he's dead!

GW: So I'm channelling El Lissitzky through all these other people!
There's a 5-act structure that I've developed for writing that is used for this. So I've got 5 bits of paper out on the floor. And I pick one up and do Act 1. And then I pick the next one and do Act 2, and work through…

LV: Sorry, explain that again! I didn't quite follow…

GW: So lay the 5 Acts across the stage. So I walk on the stage, put down 5 things. Then walk to the first, pick it up, and read Act 1. I read that. I put that down. And I pick up the next one… And just that action to going up and down, makes peoples eyes go up and down, so they are nodding in agreement. An old advertising trick! That's another programming….

[laughter]

LV: So if you get people to nod, does the motion of nodding make them feel more affirmative?

GW: That's right! That's what happens in advertising.

LV: Seriously?

GW: Yes, your body movement, your bodily motion, affects so much of how you think…

LV: I know the power-poses thing, Do you know that? It's one of the most watched TED Talks [*explains the talk*].

[laughter]

GW: What I tend to do is… I do this… like I'm getting ready to do a race….which is probably similar.

In this I introduce EP, and then I introduce the coat of arms and then talk about what that means, the idea that we have an action for 'Forward!' that we can say 'Forward!', but there is no action for 'Layered!'. So you have to invent one. Which is then encouraging people to be creative. …

LV: 'Forward!' is a lot simpler, isn't it? Because 'Layered' is complex, a lot more nuanced.

GW: Much more complex! So it's asking people to do something, that's quite hard, because there isn't already a given way to physically express 'Layered!' – the only thing I could thing I could think of is dance moves… or actions like this….

LV: There's a kind of techno move, isn't there….?

GW: Which could really connect some people!
So then I'm saying a message of like: You're the second largest city – act like it! Do certain things! Then, what I do, I say our city is gonna change. Then I explain what we should do to make Birmingham an art city. I give a break-down, I use the budget of Birmingham and break down budget and what it is spent on. And explain that you don't just give money to art. You say that the departments of Birmingham are art, and the people are art, art and the economy. So this text directly extends this into a new version of Birmingham's budget. And it's the way that it politically acts, and it says that… what I worked out is that 1% of the budget is spent on culture. And that if… that that won't make a difference. That's already proven, it won't make a difference. I speculate that if you increase it to 10%, then everyone in the world will pay attention to Birmingham, because we'll be spending 3.26 billion over 10 years on art. And that at would be embedded into schools, the bin-men, everything in the city must be thought of as art. And if you do that, our city will change into something totally special.

LV: But it sounds like, what you are saying here is that we don't need an art department, but that every other department should be infused with art.

GW: Yes, which is what I think should happen in school as well. I don't think you should have art classes. I think you should have art and maths, art and physical education, art and geography, art and religious education. Art isn't a separate thing; it is part of everything else. And if you do that, you completely change our education system and you connect everybody to the opportunities of being creative. You separate things, and you programme their minds, that art is a separate thing.

LV: So would you think of art as a particular thinking method, or a doing method?

GW; Both – that's what's amazing about it: It's thinking and doing together. It embeds that action.

LV: So it's a method rather than a subject…

GW: Yes…. I think you would still do a history of art, and a theory of art… But art isn't history and isn't theory. It is exhibition. That's why you can do exhibition and maths, exhibition and physical education. Everything is about your body and how you do things and how you present, interpret and place that in context. So art and maths would be much better than just 'maths', because maths isn't real – it's just theory. But if you do art and maths – then you turn theory into practice…. [laughter]…. It's massive, it would change everything, but you could totally do, everybody would just need to think about, and focus on it…

So that's in there…. And it just runs through as a 'as if'…. And then in the future and this has happened and this is what the future looks like….

LV: So it's speculative.

GW: But the theme of that TEDx…

LV: This is how you did the TEDx, with the 5 papers?

GW: Yes, so in the video you can see me doing it. So this is pretty much the script, maybe been slightly tweaked. And in 2025 we've made the 1000th artwork, the 1000th artwork of Birmingham. Birmingham is known as the city of 1000 trades. Birmingham isn't known for any one trade. It was all trades. It is the centre of the industrial revolution in the world, intellectual centre as well as the production centre. And it's lost that energy and power to be as formidable as that. So this is claiming back, again, programming in, that we claim [*indecipherable*] that we are all… So it's totally a speculative political

vision through art, which only comes because of that. So this Keith [?? *indecipherable*] drawing, that I keep using – but that's the first time it's printed.

LV: Great, I'll definitely support that!

Just briefly coming back to this [*The Artist and the Engineer* booklet]: What role do you think aesthetics play in this particular publication? You used, as we already talked about, the children's book language, and then you used Peter's work, which has a particular aesthetic. How did you make those decisions about how it appears?

GW: So, James was switching his thinking to … that the way he wanted to work as a designer was as much through art-directing as traditional graphic design and typographic elements, which is really also a way of [*indecipherable*] a manual for EP, because to do those actions it's a collaborative process, and that we're involved in it. We become shared co-authors with the artist or illustrator, in Peter's case. I think I probably…. was, I mean, there were lots of choices…. Originally the text was going to be on top of the images. And James kept experimenting with that, until we just reached a point where we thought the text and the images weren't adding up to more, they were actually taking away from each other. So we tried out some other versions and both of us just agreed: this really worked. And it is a format that's there in children's book. I don't think there was a specific children's book that we were referencing. But we felt that it still had, that it still carried this simplicity, but the images are so complex in themselves… we were trying to reduce… Maybe our language is still slightly too fancy! [laughter] It might not be simple enough. The word 'announcement' might slightly too long a word. So we were looking at all of that, and that switch from the above to the one angled movement… [*reference to changing photographic vantage point in the documentation of Peter Nencini's models*]

The aesthetic [*indecipherable*] of the things, the facts, although the images stop there, the publication, the idea of it as a book, continues, and we allow the text to continue to another page. That the text isn't just a bit of an explanation. This is still the work, this is still part of what makes it the book. It carries on on the back as if there is an extra little conversation happening on the back.

In this case James is really leading this. I'm brought in to co-write and to think about getting that story right, which is my strength. And I'm really totally confident in James and Peter to…. And also waiting in a really anticipating and excited way to see what they do….

[laughter]

So that typeface is one that we commissioned, called Specta. And we've been using it for a while. We decided it should be the EP typeface….

LV: And who designed that?

GW: Erm, someone asked that on Twitter the other day. I'll look on James' and then I'll find it… erm….

LV: I think it's a name that's a little bit difficult to pronounce for English speakers.

GW: Radim Pe**š**ko.

LV: Yes!

GW: So Radim, where is he based? I think in Holland. And he has designed a couple of things with James.

LV: Yes, he's quite a well-known type designer.

GW: Yes, he's really great. I think that might be just available. After a while they make it available to others as well. My new book is the last use of Specta. It's like a final bye-bye to Specta.

LV: Why are you coming to an end of the use of Specta?

GW: Because Peter has designed a new typeface for us.

LV: Oh – has he?

GW: Yeah, which is part of *Production Show*.

LV: Oh yes, because he was dragging in big letters, wasn't he?

GW: Yes, did you see on the front of the building there's a new letter 'E'? It sticks out the front of the gallery, and Peter designed that. So that was the next step after this, we thought how can we carry that through, who can Peter work with? And he started designing a typeface called Make Do. So Make Do, we've used probably about 6 or 7 draft version. There is still not a complete version, he's still doing it. Eventually it will be released on An Endless Supply Foundry, who are young designers here in Birmingham. And they were some of our first volunteers. So that's…yeah, it's all intertwined and layered….. [laughter]…. I suppose you just keep going though and it should support more activity…

LV: How many copies of this [*The Artist and the Engineer*] did you initially print? Do you remember?

GW: I think it was either 4- or 5000. And we've got through most of them. We've now got to a point where it's no longer free in the gallery. For 3 years we managed to keep it free. We probably mailed 1000. And then we distributed 3000 since. Maybe we've got 500 left, something like that. Which is still quite good.

LV: And you distribute it through the gallery…. You don't for example make contact with a school and run a project with a school…

GW: No, I've taken it to some schools and done some talks at some schools about it, but only 2 or 3 of them. Not in any focused way. We looked at it…. We had that ambition earlier on, and we had to really look at our capacity, and we realised that we didn't have it. So what we decided to do was, we realised there was an art teacher course at Birmingham City University, who we partner with. So every year the new art teachers come and we give them the talk, and we give them copies. We thought that was actually the way we can programme future art teachers, then we can change things. But you need to also do government and councils at the same time. It needs to be top and bottom of that hierarchical system, and then hopefully you are asking kids and parents to get involved. So I mean it's there. It's could be done, in another format, or… But we haven't done it directly. But it would be yeah…. It would be a challenge….

LV: You were saying earlier, something else: You mentioned the word 'model'. I don't know if I remember correctly, but you were suggesting that EP could act as a model for a different way of thinking about art. Did I hear that right?

GW: Yes, which continues…..We, technically, we are an artist run space, but we are a public gallery as well funded by the Arts Council as a national portfolio organisation. So what we did…. Most artist run spaces are formed early on in artists' careers, so they do it as a way of surviving and a way of trying to make their names, and then – that falls away. So it's a stop-gap until you become more successful…. But we openly at EP quite a way into our careers, like I'd been practicing as an artist-curator for 13 years, and already had quite a big network. So I was able to started it from a very thoughtful position, at least having the luxury of being able to think about it in a variety of ways. So I could look at what are the successful things about artist run spaces? So it might be that the people who found it and run it are contributing in an art as an accepted form [??], so you as an artist running space you make art within that space. There is a strength and power to that.

You move that to a museum, that does not exist in a museum. If you run it – that's like a total no-no. If you are a museum director that you're making your work in the museum, that's very frowned upon. But what is brilliant about museums are their ability to review and rethink artefacts and moments in art-making and remaking the art by reusing the museum long term. The long-term-ness of it is really interesting. But most artist run spaces never do that.

And then you have commercial galleries, commercial galleries also are seen as another form of art, they are lots of brilliant things about it, they work with the same artists lots of times. They give an artist the chance to rethink and redo and to change, and support careers of artist. So could we take the best bit from that?

And then you are starting to form a new model that's borrowing from all these different forms and doing things. And then you borrow from graphic design, you borrow from architecture, and then you start to thinking about city planning and policy making.

The model of our gallery as an artwork, which might be based on El Lissitzky's actions 100 years ago, but we are able to do it in this way:
Okay, we're gonna make a front door handle and we're gonna spend money on a front door handle, can we commission an artist to make a front door handle? If we're gonna want to make a new public space – then what is the process and the method of doing that? So I think that constitutes a new model that is based on many reference points. And we declare our references: In our very first *User's Manual* it shows 3 reference and we carry that through to the 5th one. And then we add new references over times.

And sometimes that's physical:
So the new plinth system that's in the gallery – all the different plinths. That's using the sockets in the gallery floor. The sockets were drilled in the floor in 2011 to accommodate a mobile wall system that we borrowed physically from Vienna. So we borrowed the Secession mobile wall system and had that shipped over. And the Vienna Secession is the oldest artist run space in the world.

LV: Is it an artist run space? I'm Austrian, but I didn't know that.

GW: Yeah, it was created by Gustav Klimt and his contemporaries as a new model.

LV: But is it still run by artists?

GW: The board are artists. But it's very different to our model, because the board are artists, but then there's a professional team who deliver the programme. But the board who decides….

LV: It doesn't feel like an artist run space.

GW: Not at all, but it actually is, technically it is, but…. Yeah. There's a range of artist run spaces. Very powerful. Gustav Klimt and they obviously at a moment of power they said: We break away. We no longer want this past way of working. We are going to make this new model of gallery. And we are doing the same in effect. But just, again, using the bits that we like. So that was a nod to a reference to really borrow the walls, bring them here, use them in the show, make a show called *Narrative Show*, which we build, and we drill and we make new walls. And then I made replicas, they are there in that room, are the exact versions but with some slight modifications, which is part of making *Painting Show* in 2011-12.

And then now this new plinth system has come out of that history. So me asking a question: How are we going to make the next exhibition? Suddenly realising: If I just take that element that's programmed in that way and the shapes in the floor which are made by Samara Scott and you build them together, then you can make a totally new plinth system that comes from these histories of the space – it just tells me what to do next!

[laughter]

LV: So you are in conversation with the space?

GW: Yes, in conversation.

LV: Have you made another *User's Manual* since this?

GW: No, but we are going to Kunsthal Aarhus in May, and we are going there to make new *Users' Manuals*. So we have been planning them for a while, but we haven't crystalized them. We are looking to make animations. So using this bit [script?] and developing it further and make an animation about production, an animation about display, an animation about policy and within that art-directing and writing and building in all the different learnings from these stories. So we are using some bits of the old style and the new style, and I don't know what else…

LV: So it won't be paper-form any more? It will be screen based?

GW: I think we will do paper as well. We will do a version. But we are lucky enough to have… we are thinking about it and James is working on it a little bit. And then Kunsthal Aarhus invited us for a commission. Four organisations from around the world go there for a week and make publications and make a new exhibition – and with a really good budget, so the whole team can go. So we are all going to work in the gallery and make a new *Users' Manuals*. So it's totally on-going. I guess we've just been really busy. But there's lots of new learning that we need to get out now. So it's time. And we are just asking question about what format is. But we think animation, and then we can use Twitter and we can use all the different digital platforms. And then maybe put a screen on the front of the gallery? And rip down our billboard, after 7 years. The day after EU referendum in disgust and outrage we smashed up the only billboard in the city that wasn't controlled by the advertising companies. We bit off our nose! [laughter]

So we might put a new video screen up to show the animations as well.

LV: Are you dependent on European funding?

GW: No, but it will happen, it will happen. We have had some European funding but not loads.

Consent form samples

Walking the Elephant, project information sheet for participants, English

Consent for participation:
Recorriendo Elephant / Walking the Elephant

Workshop:

Saturday 1.July 2017
Walworth Festival – Liverpool Grove

Overview:

This project is a collaboration between Latin Elephant, the organisation promoting the inclusion of migrants and minority ethnic groups in processes of urban change in London, and Luise Vormittag, PhD student at LCC, UAL. The aim is to assist Latin Elephant in consultation activities on current uses and routes of the Elephant & Castle shopping centre (the space to be developed as EC Town); and to assist Luise in producing a case study for her PhD thesis.

The workshop focuses on mapping routes of participants across the shopping centre and surrounding areas of EC through the use of maps, overlays and annotation. Participants can retain individual outputs produced at the workshop and receive a copy of collective outputs at a later date.

Luise Vormittag, London, 1.July 2017
Research student, London College of Communication, UAL

I can be contacted via l.vormittag@arts.ac.uk
University of the Arts London Research Management Administration can be contacted via researchdegrees@arts.ac.uk or +44 (0) 20 7514 2120

Latin Elephant can be contacted on info@latinelephant.org

Walking the Elephant, consent form, English

Consent:

I, _____ *(insert name)*, agree to participate in the workshop described above.

1. I have been given sufficient information about the project and my participation is voluntary.
2. I have the right to withdraw before the production of final outputs.
3. I understand that I will be credited for my contribution in the following way:

   @ participant name / Luise Vormittag / Latin Elephant / Part of Recorriendo Elephant, Walking the Elephant 2017

4. I understand that the copyright for my contribution will be shared equally between myself, Latin Elephant and Luise Vormittag and I give permission to Latin Elephant and Luise Vormittag to retain and use copies of my images / recordings across all online and print media, and public exhibitions.

Options:

1. I wish to stay anonymous as a participant in this project.
   Yes ☐ No☐
2. I wish to use the pseudonym _____ for this project.
   Yes ☐ No☐
3. I am happy to be photographed during my participation and for these photographs to be used in the same way as my contribution described above.
   Yes ☐ No☐
4. I wish to receive copies of collective outputs produced at this workshop.
   Yes ☐ No☐
   If yes: I wish to be contacted via email: _____ *(email address)*
   Or
   I wish to be contacted via post: _____

   _____ *(postal address)*

Additional arrangements:

_____

_____

_____

I understand the procedures described above and agree to participate in this project.

_____

Signature, Date, Place

Walking the Elephant, project information sheet for participants, Spanish

Consentimiento de participación:
Recorriendo Elephant / Walking the Elephant

Taller:

Sabado, 1. Julio 2017
Walworth Festival, Liverpool Grove

Resumen:

Este projecto es parte de una colaboración entre Latin Elephant (una organización que promueve la participación e inclusion de migrantes y grupos étnicos en procesos de cambios urbanos en Londres) y Luise Vormittag (estudiante de doctorado en LCC, UAL). El objetivo es ayudar a Latin Elephant en actividades de asistencia para saber los actuales usos y rutas que tiene el Mercado de Elephant and Castle (espacio que será desarrollado por EC Town) y también asistir a Luise en producir un análisis de investigación para su tesis de doctorado.

El taller se enfocará en mapear las rutas de los participantes a lo largo del Mercado y sus alrededores, utilizando mapas, collages y anotaciones. Los participantes pueden quedarse con el material producido en el taller y recibir una copia de los mapas realizados por todos en otro dia.

Luise Vormittag, London, 1.Julio 2017
Estudiante de doctorado, London College of Communication, UAL

Contacto:
Luise Vormittag
l.vormittag@arts.ac.uk

University of the Arts London Research Management Administration
researchdegrees@arts.ac.uk ó +44 (0) 20 7514 2120

Latin Elephant
info@latinelephant.org

Walking the Elephant, consent form, Spanish

Consentimiento:

Yo, _____ *(nombre)* acepto a participar en el taller descrito anteriormente.

1. Obtuve la información suficiente de este projecto y mi participación es voluntaria.
2. Tengo derecho a abandonar el projecto antes de la producción final de imágenes.
3. Entiendo que voy a ser acreditada/o para mi contribución de la siguiente manera:

   @ Nombre del Participante / Luise Vormittag / Latin Elephant / Part of Recorriendo Elephant, Walking the Elephant 2017

4. Entiendo que los derechos de autor de mi contribución serán compartidos por igual entre mi, Latin Elephant y Luise Vormittag y doy permiso a Latin Elephant y Luise Vormittag para conservar y usar copias de mis imágenes / grabaciones en todos los medios impresos y en línea y en exposiciones publicas.

Opcional:

1. Deseo permanecer anónimo en este projecto.
   Sí ☐ No ☐

2. Deseo usar el pseudónimo _____ para este projecto.
   Sí ☐ No ☐

3. Me pueden fotografiar durante la participación y aquellas fotografías pueden ser usadas bajo los mismo créditos mencionados anteriormente.
   Sí ☐ No ☐

4. Deseo recibir copias de las imágenes colectivas que serán producidas en este taller:
   Sí ☐ No ☐
   Si ha elegido sí: Perfiero ser contactado por email _____
   Ó
   Prefiero ser contactado por correo postal_____

   _____

Otras sugerencias:

_____

_____

_____

Entiendo el procedimiento descrito anteriormente y acepto participar a este projecto.

_____

Firma, Fecha, Lugar

Write Women into History, double sided A4 printed sheet, delivered with art materials

Project information side

Consent for publication: HOWL – printed booklet

Writing Group meetings:
Wednesdays 14:00 – 16:30 online via Zoom
6, 13, 27 January 2021 // 10, 24 February 2021 // 10, 24 March 2021

OVERVIEW

The purpose of the writing group is to support women who identify as feminists, are over the age of 50 and who either live(d), work(ed) or socialise(d) in Hackney to write about their lives and to document their encounters with the women's liberation movement during the 60s, 70s and 80s. The group is led and facilitated by Gail Chester and Celia Burgess-Macey (writing facilitators) and Luise Vormittag (arts facilitator and designer). The project is supported by the City & Hackney Carers Centre (hackneycarers.org.uk) and funded by the Lottery Community Fund via Connect Hackney (connecthackney.org.uk).

The activities of the writing group will result in two outputs. One of them is a printed booklet with a small selection of writing from group members as well as some visual elements. **This consent form refers to this printed publication.**

The other output is a body of written contributions for the HOWL website. There will be a separate consent process for this.

PRINTED BOOKLET

Luise Vormittag (arts facilitator and designer) is in charge of assembling and producing the printed booklet.
It is anticipated that the booklet will:

- Between A5 and A4 in size
- Have approximately 50-60 pages
- Be printed using the "riso" printing process with a local, East London print workshop
- Be single colour (black & white) on the interior with a more colourful cover
- Be bound either with 'perfect binging', saddle stich or staples
- Be printed in an edition of between 50 – 100 copies

The exact production details are dependent on ongoing price-negotiations with the printers and will be communicated to the group as soon as these details have become available.

Each participtating group member will have 3 pages to use as they wish. This can be used to publish writing (approx 850 words), which can be accompanied by photos or scans of visual documents or artefacts. If group members choose to include images on their pages this will reduce the number of words that can be published.

Each participating group member will receive a free copy of the publication. The remaining print run will be distributed via the HOWL network and local outlets such as "Pages of Hackney" (bookshop) and the Hackney Museum.

The booklet will also be published as a digital PDF for free download on the HOWL website. Group members will all receive a copy of the PDF file, and are free to distribute this through their networks.

COVER ILLUSTRATION

The visual arts session (on 10 February 2021) will result in group members producing artwork that will be assembled by Luise Vormittag to an overall illustration. It is the intention that this image will become a key feature of the printed publication – in all likelihood the cover image. Details of this process will be explained during the session to the participating group members.

Luise Vormittag (arts facilitator) is currently undertaking a pratice-led PhD that investigates the possibility of collaborative illustration projects contributing to a sense of community. This consent form will also ask for your consent for Luise to use the project's outputs in the context of her PhD.

Gail Chester gailchester@blueyonder.co.uk
Celia Burgess-Macey cburgessmacey@gmail.com
Luise Vormittag l.vormittag@arts.ac.uk

London, 2. February 2021

Consent form side

Consent WRITTEN CONTRIBUTION:

I, _____(insert name), agree that a selection of my writing will be published in the booklet described on the attached information sheet.

	Tick to agree
1. I have been given sufficient information about the project.	☐
2. My participation is voluntary.	☐
3. It will be my responsibility to select and edit my own piece of writing for inclusion in the publication by 24. March 2021.	☐
4. I understand that I can indicate on my submission how I want to be credited for my contribution: I have the option to use my real name or a pseudonym.	☐
5. I understand that I retain the copyright for my contribution.	☐
6. If I opt to use images on the pages allocated to me, it is my responsibility to obtain these images and (if necessary) permission to reproduce them in the publication.	☐
7. I understand that the City & Hackney Carers Centre may use selected excerpts of my written and visual work to publicise the project. This may appear on CHCC's social media, in CHCC's annual report, and on monitoring returns sent do the project funder. When excerpting every effort will be made to maintain the integrity of my contribution.	☐
8. I have the right to withdraw before the publication is sent to print.	☐

_____
Signature, Date, Place

Consent COVER ILLUSTRATION:

I, _____(insert name), agree to take part in the visual arts session on 10 Feb 2021. I understand that the artwork produced during this session will become part of a collaborative illustration assembled by Luise Vormittag. This illustration will form a key feature of the printed publication.

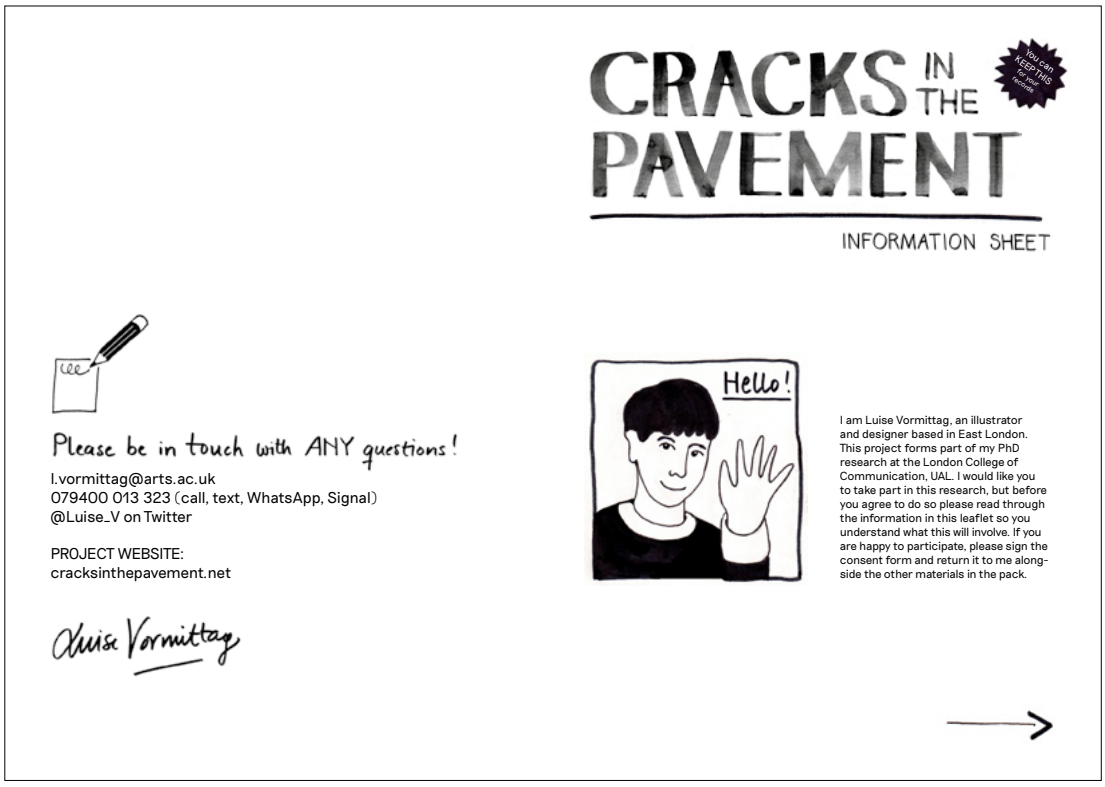
	Tick to agree
1. I have been given sufficient information about the project.	☐
2. My participation is voluntary.	☐
3. It is my responsibility to select outputs from the session on 10 Feb. and to return these selected outputs in the stamped return envelope provided.	☐
4. I understand that I will indicate on my submission how I want to be credited for my contribution: I have the option to use my real name or a pseudonym.	☐
5. I understand that in addition to being used as part of the printed HOWL publication, Luise Vormittag will use and exhibit the illustration as part of her research, which might include but is not limited to online and print publication, publication via exhibition and via audio-visual presentations. She will always endeavour to retain the integrity of my contribution. She will use the following wording to credit the work: *© participant name 1, participant name 2 etc. / Luise Vormittag / part of HOWL publication, 2021*	☐
6. Likewise – City & Hackney Carers Centre, HOWL and group members also have the right to exhibit the artwork to promote the project and its outputs, as long as they also use the above wording to credit the work.	☐

_____
Signature, Date, Place

Cracks in the Pavement, project information sheet:

A4 folded down to A5 to result in a 4-page leaflet

Pages 4 & 1



CRACKS IN THE PAVEMENT

You can KEEP THIS for your records

INFORMATION SHEET

Please be in touch with ANY questions!

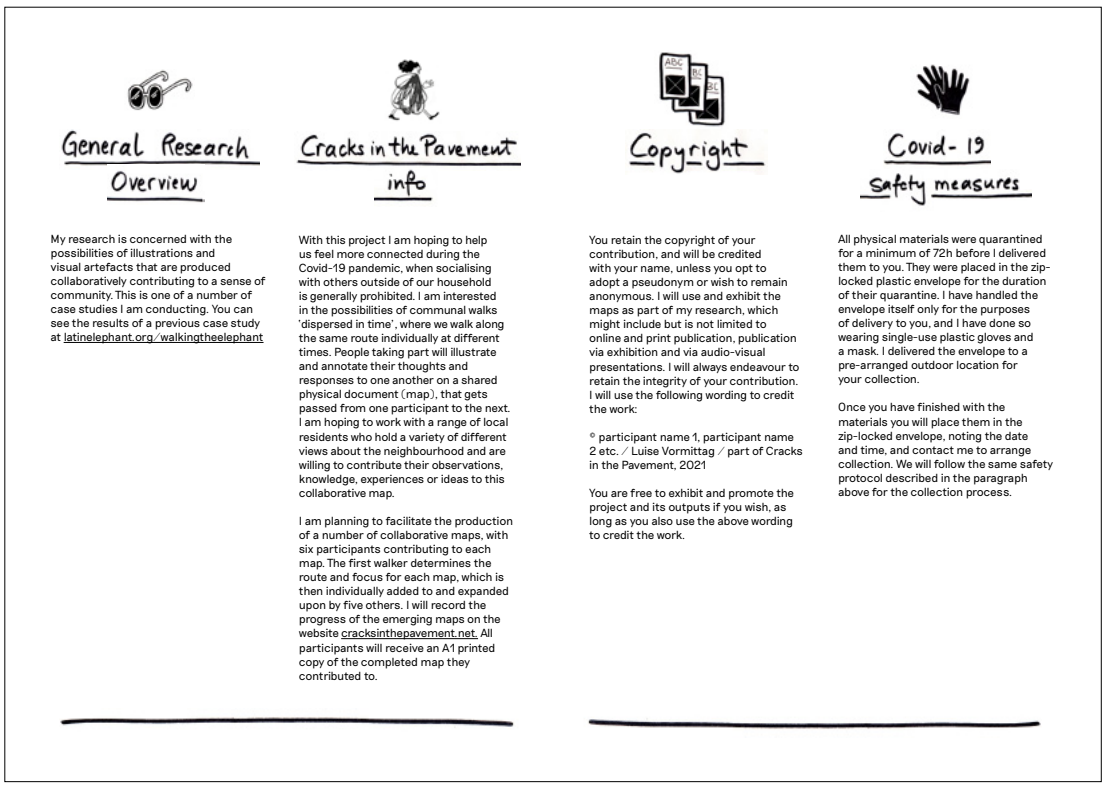
l.vormittag@arts.ac.uk
079400 013 323 (call, text, WhatsApp, Signal)
@Luise_V on Twitter

PROJECT WEBSITE:
cracksinthepavement.net

Luise Vormittag

I am Luise Vormittag, an illustrator and designer based in East London. This project forms part of my PhD research at the London College of Communication, UAL. I would like you to take part in this research, but before you agree to do so please read through the information in this leaflet so you understand what this will involve. If you are happy to participate, please sign the consent form and return it to me alongside the other materials in the pack.

Pages 2 & 3



General Research Overview

My research is concerned with the possibilities of illustrations and visual artefacts that are produced collaboratively contributing to a sense of community. This is one of a number of case studies I am conducting. You can see the results of a previous case study at latinelephant.org/walkingtheelephant

Cracks in the Pavement info

With this project I am hoping to help us feel more connected during the Covid-19 pandemic, when socialising with others outside of our household is generally prohibited. I am interested in the possibilities of communal walks 'dispersed in time', where we walk along the same route individually at different times. People taking part will illustrate and annotate their thoughts and responses to one another on a shared physical document (map), that gets passed from one participant to the next. I am hoping to work with a range of local residents who hold a variety of different views about the neighbourhood and are willing to contribute their observations, knowledge, experiences or ideas to this collaborative map.

I am planning to facilitate the production of a number of collaborative maps, with six participants contributing to each map. The first walker determines the route and focus for each map, which is then individually added to and expanded upon by five others. I will record the progress of the emerging maps on the website cracksinthepavement.net. All participants will receive an A1 printed copy of the completed map they contributed to.

Copyright

You retain the copyright of your contribution, and will be credited with your name, unless you opt to adopt a pseudonym or wish to remain anonymous. I will use and exhibit the maps as part of my research, which might include but is not limited to online and print publication, publication via exhibition and via audio-visual presentations. I will always endeavour to retain the integrity of your contribution. I will use the following wording to credit the work:

© participant name 1, participant name 2 etc. / Luise Vormittag / part of Cracks in the Pavement, 2021

You are free to exhibit and promote the project and its outputs if you wish, as long as you also use the above wording to credit the work.

Covid-19 Safety measures

All physical materials were quarantined for a minimum of 72h before I delivered them to you. They were placed in the zip-locked plastic envelope for the duration of their quarantine. I have handled the envelope itself only for the purposes of delivery to you, and I have done so wearing single-use plastic gloves and a mask. I delivered the envelope to a pre-arranged outdoor location for your collection.

Once you have finished with the materials you will place them in the zip-locked envelope, noting the date and time, and contact me to arrange collection. We will follow the same safety protocol described in the paragraph above for the collection process.

Cracks in the Pavement, consent form

A4 folded down to A5 to result in 4-page leaflet

Pages 4 & 1

CRACKS IN THE PAVEMENT

Please RETURN the inner form

CONSENT FORM



Please read the information sheet before completing this form. If you are happy to participate in this project please fill out and sign the form over-leaf and return it to me alongside the other materials in the pack.

Pages 2 & 3

I, _____ [insert full name], agree to participate in the research project outlined on the information sheet led by Luise Vormittag (LV), research student at London College of Communication, UAL. The purpose of this document is to specify the terms of my participation in the project.

PLEASE TICK TO AGREE

1. I have been given sufficient information about this project. ☐

2. My participation is voluntary. ☐

3. I have been given information about safety precautions that are in place to protect me and others from possible infection with Covid-19 while participating in this project. I have satisfied myself that these measures are sufficiently rigorous for my protection. ☐

4. I understand that participation in this project involves going on a walk by myself along a pre-determined route in East London. I am happy to walk on this route by myself and take full responsibility for my safety and wellbeing while on this walk. ☐

5. I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the project at any time. ☐

PLEASE TICK TO AGREE

6. I understand that I have the right to revoke my contribution to the project wholly or in parts at any time before the production of (the) final output(s). ☐

7. I understand that I will be credited for my contribution in whichever way I wish (real name, pseudonym or anonymity). I will indicate how I wish to be credited on the Walkers' Register on the reverse side of the map. ☐

8. I agree that LV will use my contribution in (a) collectively produced output(s), and that this/these output(s) will be distributed and exhibited through multiple channels, both in printed form and online. ☐

Additional arrangements, comments or requests:

_____

_____

I understand the procedures described above and agree to participate in this project.

_____ [Signature] London, _____ [Date]

Feedback: Write Women into History

Discussion on 18 May 2022, via Zoom

Attendance 8 members of the Hackney HOWLers Writing Group

Frequent themes:
Project transported me back to earlier times, both activities and result
Receiving package – receiving care and support
Anxiety about drawing

Transcript:

LV: Thinking back to the arts session we held on 10 February 2021: You had received a pack of art materials and knew that I was going to lead a "creative session": What (if anything) do you remember thinking about the activity before it took place?

Woman 1:
I was looking forward to the session and when I received the Letraset I was really happy, because it brought me back to – partly – to making leaflets, back in the day, feminist stuff, you know and using Letraset. I didn't know it still existed, obviously. It was great. And it seemed appropriate given we were talking about the history, and the Letraset was part of the history. But I'm one of the people who is a bit arty, so I didn't feel intimidated by it.

Woman 2:
I felt really excited when I got your package. I remember, you dropped it over on your bicycle I think. It was fantastic. And inside there were all these delights. There were paintbrush, ink, pens and pencils and Letraset – I was like – Oh, wow! I was really excited. I mean, I didn't know what was going to happen to do with it. I suppose I don't normally draw, I doodle but I don't draw. So, the slight apprehension only came later. My one thing was – oh, it was just lovely.

Woman 3:
I felt really thrilled, I felt it was like my birthday or something. This package – and you don't get many packages, you know. And it was sent to me in [location outside London], so I felt included. Because I'm ill it's difficult for me to access things. If I had had to get this material myself I would have felt "Where do I get it? Have I got the right stuff?" – it's too difficult. So it was really nice that it was all there.
I did feel a bit anxious – "Will I be able to do this?" Because of my illness. Will it be too tiring?
But I was able to do it, actually. And it felt really special. I felt privileged and this was really a kosher thing we were doing, with this professional help and this package. It made me feel good about myself, that I was of value. That I could be worthy of getting this package.
And I still use some of the things, I haven't used them all up, so I've used them again.

Woman 4:
I was completely terrified, actually. [laughter] And I decided, I have to say – affirmation whether you want it or not, you're going to get an affirmation: I just thought you were completely brilliant, from beginning to end. Not just about helping us get the cover done, but you basically saved our lives in terms of getting the book into production and everything. We could never ever have coped with that. Well, we probably could, but it would have caused us…

Woman 5:
No!

Woman 4:
[laughter] Anyway, it was just like – you've just been fantastic all the way through.

I suppose that relates to me being terrified, because I already liked you and trusted you, and you'd been coming and sitting in on our sessions. So I thought: "Oh well, Luise is not going to make us do anything that's too awful!" [laughter]. And I'll just go with the flow. I'm not sure whether this was during the main lockdown, or a bit after that, but you were heroic with cycling around Hackney and delivering stuff to us. And there were no visitors, and [this] felt just marvellous.
And I loved the Letraset, because I was part of a feminist news magazine back in the 70s, where we used Letraset all the time – a bit like [name] was saying.
I've still got my little package and I haven't used it since, but I hope one day I will be able to.

Woman 6:
I can't really remember what I thought about it, but I did really like the concept of bringing art into it. And of course that was useful for a cover, [inaudible]. Although I am an artist I do collage, so I was still a bit in trepidation, like a lot of the other people about the Letraset, uniquely I didn't get on [inaudible], but I used the paintbrush. [inaudible].

Woman 5:
I'm someone who is very wary about art, really, because I'm not confident with art at all. And I thought it sounded totally peculiar [laughter]. It was amazing when we got that set… I couldn't remember how to use Letraset, I don't remember using it, I had a few false starts with it.
I was amazed how well that cover came out.
I think I was drawing [name] – and I was quite pleased with myself, actually. To be given that… I was more or less chucked out of art at the earliest opportunity. So yeah, I enjoyed it. I must say, I do like that cover actually. I think the cover is good, and I think it works well. And it was lovely the idea of having all of our faces on it. Although I'm not sure which one I am. [laughter]
I don't know where the Letraset is [now], I have to be honest. It was nice to do something different. It wouldn't have worked well as the first session. I think it had to have some trust, that it was a good idea, and we got to know you, and you were giving us an enormous amount of help getting the whole thing together, really. Because of that relationship I was prepared to give it a go. If someone had come along and suggested it off the cuff, I just would not have been….[willing to do it].

[interruption]

LV: Again, thinking back to the arts session we held on 10 February 2021: You were drawing each other in break-out rooms, and you were making designs for placards (many of you used Letraset for this). What do you remember from the session itself? How did you experience it?

Woman 1:
I enjoyed it, but the person I was doing it with was very unconfident and kept saying "Oh I can't draw, I can't draw." And I don't know that she felt any better at the end of it. She really like the drawing I did of her, she said: " Oh, I look good!", so I think that was a positive. But I don't think it overcame her – and I don't think she sent you a drawing in the end. She's one of the people who says, just like [name] said earlier: "oh, I can't draw." She didn't manage to overcome that in the actual session. But, she really liked the drawing I did of her… so that was good.

Woman 3:
The exercises to loosen you up were really helpful. It made your flow much easier, the work you did was better because of that. But also in your head you thought: "I've not got to be perfect!" You know, just do it with your left hand and I thought that was great for really making me feel I can do it, it didn't have to be wonderful, perfect. That was excellent.

Woman 2:
Yeah, I was drawing [name], and she was drawing me. [Name] – I'll tell you where you are! You're on the cover, bottom right. I felt a kind of nervousness about drawing someone. But then I think it was okay. I felt okay about it in the end. Not entirely confident, because it's not something I would normally do, but I really enjoyed the whole thing. And I think you were quite reassuring, saying you're not looking for perfection. I wasn't looking for that in my own drawing either…. It was great, because its not something I would normally do, I enjoyed drawing and using the paintbrush and the ink, I just really

enjoyed all that. You gave us paper as well, so that was something that was really nice, also.

Woman 7:
I liked getting the materials. It felt like a present coming through the post. The idea of playing around with papers, and letters, and drawing materials was quite fun. It was playful. So I enjoyed anticipating that we were going to play, rather than be very serious-minded, because we are all very serious people [joking].

[chat about technicalities of current Zoom meeting]

Woman 7 continues:
So I was quite looking forward to it. And also I trusted you, Luise, that it would be a nice session. Because I already got the feeling that you would have planned it well and be thinking about it well. The whole session was a bit awkward at first, getting to grips with – can we do this, can't we this, what is it going to be like. But certainly the idea that it doesn't need to be realistic was helpful. So I enjoyed it. It was fun.

And the placard bit – I found that a bit more difficult. I don't know whether I ran out of time… I didn't use the Letraset in the end, I did a hand-written one. Partly because I wanted it to look home-made, as those posters were. Often the placards were home-made. They were scrawled on a piece of cardboard or paper, they weren't a printed placard. I wasn't terribly happy with how that looked in the end. It didn't quite convey what I wanted it to convey.

Woman 4:
I was in a pair with another person who was totally like: 'Oh no, I can't draw! No! I can't draw! Oh my god, how are we going to do this?!' Anyway, so the drawing bit was quite taxing, really. But then we were able to encourage each other. "We can do it!" So that was kind of handy. We both produced something [laughter], although my picture of her made her looks 40 years younger than she is. I wasn't sure, I thought it was interesting that Luise put the bodies on, because us just doing the faces, I really couldn't imagine how that was going to turn out.

I really loved doing the Letraset. I did 0-Level art, and I did all the crafty bits, like calligraphy. I really love lettering and also I was on this feminist news magazine where we used a lot of Letraset and I learned how to use it then. I just thought that was very therapeutic. I could imagine spending quite a lot of time, if I only had it, developing my Letraset skills [laughter].

On the whole it was good.

Woman 8:
Well I as usual had the opposite experience. As you probably all know for me the drawing bit was a complete and total nightmare. It's my idea of total horror having to draw anything. I was told by the art teacher when I was about 12 that I was totally useless, and that put me off for life. And I was partnered with [name], who is incredibly good at art. She did this really good picture of me. And she was perfectly happy for her to take up all the time. I hadn't quite understood what we were supposed to do. So I got bullied and harassed, mainly by [name] [life-partner], into doing a different version, many weeks later, when it was really my last – time's up – kind of thing. Anyway, I absolutely hated doing the art. But I actually liked the Letraset. I found it very therapeutic, very relaxing. I just kinda liked it. It was fun.
If I'd know that you had to do art, I would have never joined this group. [laughter]

Woman 6:
I remember for the portrait using one of the techniques I think you suggested to us, about using a continuous line. And it went better, I'd only done that once before in an online Zoom workshop. It went better than I thought. Usually with a portrait you get lots and lots of facial expression and I think that saved the day, really. So I was quite pleased with how it turned out. Same with the picture of me, although the person who did it said 'It doesn't really look like you', actually it was quite nice anyway, I didn't mind.

For the placard, I didn't use the Letraset, I used the paintbrush, the paint. What I liked about that is it

seemed authentic to how they were originally done at the time. One of the ones I did was the national abortion campaign one. It was quite an experience to do that really because it was as if doing it for that purpose, as they would have, so I felt engaged with it, with the campaign and the mood of the time. It was great really. Not sure what the word is, not sure if it's 'cathartic' or something else, quite therapeutic in a way. I enjoyed that more than I expected to, really.

Woman 5:
I think I've said a bit about drawing [name], in terms of the placards, I really enjoyed. I didn't enjoy using the Letraset, I didn't know we could write them ourselves, I thought we had to use the Letraset. [laughter]
But I really enjoyed reconnecting with the placards. I'd kept a postcard of one of them on the shelf where I work, it's a kind of feminist symbol. I really enjoyed thinking about what placard to use and thinking back to the placards. Feeling quite inspired by it, really. Less inspired by the Letraset, I have to admit. The Letraset kind of broke, I wasn't good at it, you know.

LV: Now that the cover design is completed: What do you make of it? When you look at the artwork: What do you see?

Woman 3:
I will have to affirm here, in spite of you not wanting affirmation. I'm really going to affirm big time.
I think it's a fantastic cover. I have it on my computer, among other picture, as I was using it in on Facebook, to advertise out book launch. It really sings out. It really sticks out. Amongst a whole set of pictures, it really sticks out. I feel so proud, that this was my placard, this is my drawing of [name]. And I really like that nobody would know that. I feel proud of it, but I don't feel a need for it to be recognised by anyone that I did these bits. It really feels like a collective thing.

The diversity – you know – that every drawing is a different style, yet it fits together as a whole. I think you did a fantastic job and I really do think it's amazing that we are there, you know, these are pictures of us, and this is me by [name], although now I'm not even sure if that was me, but it doesn't matter, you know. It doesn't matter at all… and it's BY us, you know, by every one of us. And yet, you have put your skills as an artist, you know, to put them into these blocks, to put the colour, to do the bodies… Look at my little picture of [name] – what makes it are her hands, the body, holding the placard.

What I would say is, that's an example of someone using her skills as an artist to empower us all. You empowered us, maybe some people didn't manage it, but to be able to represent ourselves and express ourselves and create something visual, which we couldn't have done on our own. So, you know, what a triumph! I really admire you.

I'm sorry if this is too much affirmation and I will now shut up.

Woman 1:
I like the fact that it wasn't all Letraset and some of us did writing, so it had that mixture, which I think worked well, that some of them are handwritten and some of them are Letraset, so you can see the difference. It looks all higgledy piggeldly.
I won't repeat things that [name] said, because it would just be boring. But that's my added little bit.

Woman 3:
Do you agree with me, [name]?

Woman 1:
I do! I agree with you.
But also, I find myself like you, like you [thinking] "uh, yeah! I did that one!"

Woman 7:
I think the cover is absolutely wonderful. I think it speaks of the time, the colours, were just brilliant.

The style of it is very in keeping with second wave feminism, somehow. It's not modern, in the sense of being of now. It really does conjure up what we were.

I like the quirkiness of it. All the different faces looking out. I mean I know, who people are, but I don't think that matters, I agree with that. It doesn't matter whether we look like we think we look. It really doesn't matter. But you can see that it's this group of individual women, with individual character and style. I thought you did a really brilliant job with that. It's impressive. Everyone I've given it to has really liked the cover. I've had lots of positive feedback. I think it really stands out. If it were on a stand – I'd be drawn to it, because its different. It draws me in. It's fun.

Woman 4:
In fact I have here an A2 poster of the front cover which can be used on occasions when we have a stall. It just stands out as an item of design. It was brilliant to use that illustration of [name] in a prominent [way], the whole thing is just brilliantly designed.

I showed it to my partner, I didn't say anything, just showed it to him, and he said: 'Oh, that is so of the women's liberation movement!' It just did exactly what it was designed to do. That's great as well. And the colour schemes and everything.

Woman 8:
I liked the cover, I really liked it, but I have one hesitation. Contrary to what you just said, [name], I felt that the extra big picture of [name]– it felt completely tokenistic. And very unfortunately several women have said that to me as well.

Woman 5:
I had mixed feelings about the cover, right. It's grown on me. But I thought – it does look very retro, it does look very like the 70s and the 80s, and are people going to take it seriously? Should it look more slick? Should it look more of the time, now? Rather than of the time, then? But I actually feel it does work well. But it took a while for me to feel like… there is this amateur-ish look, does this do justice to the writing? But its grown on me and people have had on whole quite positive reactions.

Woman 4:
It's a general issue in publishing really – to what extent you make the cover relate to the content.

Woman 2:
I really like it, it obviously reflects the fact that the book is a collection of different women's histories, and that's what the cover is. I think it's a really clever, terrific bit of design. I had no idea what you'd turn our various portraits into and you somehow unified them but also retained their individuality.

In a way – although it is retro, we wouldn't have produced something quite like that, then. It has something contemporary about it as well.

[More discussion of why one woman / placard had to be enlarged….. (to make title)]

Woman 7:
What I want to say in the end, Luise, is that you were very respectful of us. I must admit, I was anxious about that issue, whether somebody who wasn't of our experience and generation would get it. I really want to say that I thought you were extremely sensitive to the mood and the atmosphere and the content of our book, and of us as women. I think that's a real achievement, because you were not there. It could have been disastrous, if we had had to argue with you. But we didn't have to argue with you. That's a great credit to you.

Woman 4:
We haven't said anything about the inside design, because that was the other aspect of what Luise did for us. You know – fantastic design inside. I really want to thank you for that. And you did that really sensitively as well. You made sure that everybody had an illustration to go with their article. I think you were just fantastic really, the way you blended in with us and our funny little ways [laughter].

Woman 7:
Yes, and your attention to detail in the principles of our group, that was very good. I really think that's important, that you could do that, that you could connect with us in such a way, to make it a process in which we felt we'd been fairly respected and represented by you.

Woman 4:
Working in the community – I'm sure there are quite a lot of times where artists get parachuted into a community and the community feels that they have had somebody just dumped on them. And I never felt that about you at all.

Woman 3:
You know – you helped us, but you didn't do it for us. We did it ourselves.

Feedback: Cracks in the Pavement

Online survey, Sept / Oct 2021

13 responses (from a total of 21 parties)

Frequent themes:
Mindful of surroundings/ discovered new things about neighbourhood
Connection to others via map / project (or lack of connection and a desire for connection!)
Renewed love of neighbourhood
Document of a moment in time/ lockdownppreciation

Other repeat comments:
Desire to do other walks too.
Anxiety about perceived lack of creative ability, and strategies to overcome this
Comments about cold temperatures
People doing walk at a time that was unusual for them (dawn or dusk) and therefore seeing things differently

RESPONDENT 1

Can you describe what you remember from your walk? What was it like going on the walk? How was it different from other walks?

I remember that it was a nice day, sunny and a little brisk but not cold. Going on the walk was a fun activity to do with my husband and daughter. We were just emerging from lockdown at that point, my daughter was still homeschooling, so it was a nice excuse to get out and about. Though not far from where we lived, we hadn't visited that part of the borough in a while. It was different to other walks because we tried to be more conscious and observant of our surroundings, knowing that we would later be updating the map based on what we had seen and experienced along the way.

Now that you have a copy of the finished map: What do you make of it?

It is a lovely object to look at and it's nice to see our contributions alongside those of other participants. It is interesting to think about the various spaces and landmarks along the route that are significant to people.

In the leaflet I sent you I offered some of my initial thoughts on the project. Do you have any thoughts on the overall project?

I like the idea of a map co-produced by walking strangers walking the same route, though I wonder if the incentive to participants was to contribute different things, rather than show those places/spaces/ things that multiple people or everyone find interesting or significant. Ie, there were many layers but not a lot of overlap, if that makes sense.

RESPONDENT 2

Can you describe what you remember from your walk? What was it like going on the walk? How was it different from other walks?

It was a very familiar walk but I looked at things I was seeing with a more searching ete [eye?] and that was good.

Now that you have a copy of the finished map: What do you make of it?

It's gorgeous and full of interest for a first time or a repeat walker.

In the leaflet I sent you I offered some of my initial thoughts on the project. Do you have any thoughts on the overall project?

You could always do some more!

RESPONDENT 3

Can you describe what you remember from your walk? What was it like going on the walk? How was it different from other walks?

My main memory is that it was very cold! As an illustrator I'm fairly used to drawing things while out and about, picking out details, stopping to record things of interest. Going on a 'drawing walk' there's a mindset you slip into, a certain way of seeing/looking at things, which I really enjoy. You sort of become a camera, scanning your surroundings for visually interesting details. On this walk, I recorded thoughts, memories, and associations much more than I usually would, and I suddenly realised how I really feel about my local area. Sort of made me contemplate all the small everyday things that I usually take for granted – usually you've always got other stuff at the forefront of your mind!

Now that you have a copy of the finished map: What do you make of it?

When I opened it up, I was curious how it had developed, and then studying it in more detail somehow made me really happy, I couldn't stop smiling. It's so lovely seeing other people's thoughts and responses to places we all know so well and share as a neighbourhood. Looking at the other maps – all of which are very familiar routes and part of what I'd describe as 'home' – did instantly fill me with joy, too. I'm not sure why, perhaps the fact that using simple means, people have collaboratively turned these shared (but separate) 'everyday' experiences into interesting, curious, beautiful objects. A small, personal celebration of an area, something that 'belongs' to all of us.

In the leaflet I sent you I offered some of my initial thoughts on the project. Do you have any thoughts on the overall project?

It was a lovely experience, particularly considering the circumstances (the lockdowns and so on).

Thank you for involving me in this project! It was really fun!

RESPONDENT 4

Can you describe what you remember from your walk? What was it like going on the walk? How was it different from other walks?

I remember feeling unsure about what I might find of interest as I know the street so well. I found I was looking in more detail than I would normally and then started noticing buildings artworks and how treelined the street was. I actually started feeling very lucky to live here. I decided to take photos of things of interest so I could document them better when home.The walk was different because I felt like it was purposeful. By documenting it visually it is know cemented in my mind.

Now that you have a copy of the finished map: What do you make of it?

I love the layers and how playful the map is. I also feel like it is marking a moment in time visually. Something wonderful to keep as a reminder.

In the leaflet I sent you I offered some of my initial thoughts on the project. Do you have any thoughts on the overall project?

This project me has a therapeutic element, with a way of engaging people with their community. The power of art making enables individuals to process their feeling and thoughts on a deeper level.

An exhibition of the project would be lovely.

RESPONDENT 5

Can you describe what you remember from your walk? What was it like going on the walk? How was it different from other walks?

I remember it being like a walk in a new location even though I knew the neighbourhood well. It was like seeing my surroundings through new eyes! I was very mindful of using all my senses to record whatever I came across. The northern part of my route was a revelation as I had never been along those streets before. It was a very cold day and my hands were frozen! It felt good to take time to inspect my environment at leisure rather than just hurrying from point A to point B.

Now that you have a copy of the finished map: What do you make of it?

I think it is rather beautiful. It is great to see the others' observations. They were quite different from mine even though we all did the same route! We all recorded our observations in different ways, too. I plan to get the map framed!

In the leaflet I sent you I offered some of my initial thoughts on the project. Do you have any thoughts on the overall project?

I think this was a very imaginative way to make use of the restrictions under lockdown. London is a big city and it is very easy to become locked into patterns of behaviour and travel without really observing what is on our own doorsteps. It was a great way to step away from our laptops and smartphones and to be in the moment in our own neighbourhoods.

Thank you, Luise. It was fun helping you out with your project. Quite a big task with multiple participants at multiple locations. And making it Covid secure as well! Good luck with your doctorate.

RESPONDENT 6

Can you describe what you remember from your walk? What was it like going on the walk? How was it different from other walks?

I did a walk in reverse to the one my friend has chosen.

On reflection I realised how different that experience seem to be as what I identified and she identified with vastly different. It was good not to have to plan my walk for the day as someone had already done it. I found a new park that I never knew existed. Also there was a small bit attached to the church in Mildmay which was a beautiful side building and I've taken a photograph of it and subsequently drawn it. I noted a wonderful espalier of trees near the end of my journey which again gave me some

inspiration for my garden.

Now that you have a copy of the finished map: What do you make of it?

So interesting to see the diversity of walks in a very small area, peoples views and the range of places and objects of interest.

In the leaflet I sent you I offered some of my initial thoughts on the project. Do you have any thoughts on the overall project?

A very comprehensive overview Which was well executed and explained.

Well done. An original and unique project. It was a pleasure to be part of it.

RESPONDENT 7

Can you describe what you remember from your walk? What was it like going on the walk? How was it different from other walks?

We really enjoyed the walk! It's a walk we do a lot but it was a cold day and very quiet soon after Christmas. We noticed lots of lovely details like the arches over the entrances to Arnold Circus, the reflection in the tiles of the Birdcage pub, the patterns in the flag stones, on the lamp posts and even the drains and manhole covers. Columbia Road especially was incredibly rich in beautiful details we hadn't noticed before. We had never really stopped to look at each of the mosaic murals properly.

Now that you have a copy of the finished map: What do you make of it?

We are not particularly artistic or creative so we were a bit worried about staring the map, but it feels like the next walkers sort of followed our lead and added more details - I don't think you would know that different groups of people did the first three versions. The fourth walker went in a completely different direction and added the colourful rug design, which is really nice.

In the leaflet I sent you I offered some of my initial thoughts on the project. Do you have any thoughts on the overall project?

I loved the idea of the walk and the map. Both activities were really great things to do during the winter lockdown, which was a really miserable time.

I wasn't not too sure about the community aspect of it, but I hoped that perhaps other people would do a walk that they hadn't done before or would see the things that we pointed out on the map that they wouldn't have noticed otherwise. Perhaps the community aspect came out more for the subsequent walkers who worked on the map.

I would like to walk the other routes one day.

I would really like to meet the other walkers, from our own route and the others. I was wondering if it would be possible to exhibit the maps somewhere and perhaps we could all meet at that?

Or even just meet outdoors somewhere on the route(s) such as the Birdcage pub on Columbia Road or the park opposite. People might like to meet with the other collaborators on their map to talk about what they liked and what they did; or even with all the groups? This might help explore the community aspect of the project too. Thank you, Luise, for this great experience.

RESPONDENT 8

Can you describe what you remember from your walk? What was it like going on the walk? How was it different from other walks?

It was different because I walked the route at dusk, something I had not done before; before people had drawn the blinds/curtain or shut the shutters so you could be nosey and see into their lit rooms. It was a ver familiar walk and I was trying to listen out for things to note which I would not do on a normal walk along the route.

Now that you have a copy of the finished map: What do you make of it?

Love it. A real keep-sake. I put the date on it so when referring back to it in future I can ensure I know when the routes were walked.

In the leaflet I sent you I offered some of my initial thoughts on the project. Do you have any thoughts on the overall project?

I'd like to see the other walks in the same large format as you sent me for the walk I was involved in. It would be interesting to see comments different people made on the same routes they all took. Could these walk-maps be part of a small exhibition at Hackney Libraries/Hackney Museum or some place else where there is exhibition space?

A lovely project to be involved in and very well and clearly organised for participants. Thank you. Maybe repeat it in years to come as it has reflected different areas at specific points in time.

RESPONDENT 9

Can you describe what you remember from your walk? What was it like going on the walk? How was it different from other walks?

My lockdown walk I did every week, so you don't really look anymore, just a quiet form of mediation in which you feel the landscape changing as the season change.

Now that you have a copy of the finished map: What do you make of it?

It's maybe a bit too much like a map, I like some of the others which feel more like a story book

In the leaflet I sent you I offered some of my initial thoughts on the project. Do you have any thoughts on the overall project?

Amazing. Perfect for the moment when we were all struggling to connect. Keep it going.

RESPONDENT 10

Can you describe what you remember from your walk? What was it like going on the walk? How was it different from other walks?

Reminded me of the joy of leaving the house to work!

Now that you have a copy of the finished map: What do you make of it?

A nice lockdown memory.

In the leaflet I sent you I offered some of my initial thoughts on the project. Do you have any thoughts on the overall project?

–

RESPONDENT 11

Can you describe what you remember from your walk? What was it like going on the walk? How was it different from other walks?

I went very early in the morning so it was different in that I don't normally get up at six am and go walking. I also don't normally follow a set route and tend to meander around more but I'm a great map reader and I knew the places I visited so I really enjoyed it.

Now that you have a copy of the finished map: What do you make of it?

The finished map is beautiful and I'm thinking of framing it. I love seeing other people's thoughts about the walk I did and also seeing the other maps of the different walks in the booklet. I might try doing some of the other walks.

In the leaflet I sent you I offered some of my initial thoughts on the project. Do you have any thoughts on the overall project?

I think this is an amazing project. I love the way it combines art, thinking, history, writing with maps. I'm a geographer so it's a really interesting concept to combine cartography, which is quite directed, with a freer artistic and spiritual approach.

It was really nice to meet Luise, if only briefly. I've been a great walker all of my life and I grew up in the inner city and my father was constantly taking me on walks and could find something interesting for me to look at anywhere - from an industrial estate to a pub car park. My mum is an amateur botanist and similarly encouraged me to look at the local flora and fauna. I'm very nosy about people too so this project combines everything that I love about walking in urban areas. I think Luise set up the project very well - it was clearly explained and fun. I love the idea of people doing the walk over and over again. This mirrors the way people have used paths over the span of human existence - the path being broken and then being walked on over and over and becoming more established or sometimes existing for a while then being abandoned. I think Luise managed it really well so that people felt more connected during a really difficult time. She is encouraging us to use our basic skills as homo sapiens - we are hunter gatherers and so out physiology and brain are set up for walking and looking and then discussing and dissecting the information afterwards. This project does this perfectly so it encourages people to use their most basic human skills and also provides a really rewarding end result in the beautiful maps. I also really appreciated speaking to Luise and receiving the packages. Thank you very much.

RESPONDENT 12

Can you describe what you remember from your walk? What was it like going on the walk? How was it different from other walks?

I felt a little nervous to begin with as I was taking notes and didn't want to miss anything but I also wanted to relax and enjoy it.

Now that you have a copy of the finished map: What do you make of it?

I love it! I have 3 kids and I'm rarely able to indulge in my passion for my own art so it's a huge treat to be part of this finished product.

In the leaflet I sent you I offered some of my initial thoughts on the project. Do you have any thoughts on the overall project?
It felt so good to be part of it. I'd like to see it in an exhibition with all the maps up on the wall.

I'd love to do something like this again!

RESPONDENT 13

Can you describe what you remember from your walk? What was it like going on the walk? How was it different from other walks?

I remember the signs in particular; the Two Kingdoms sign at the beginning of the walk; the civic signs exhorting us to behave compliantly with regard to Covid 19 regulations; how the hand-written signs about earwig houses and food banks offered a citizen counterpoint to the professional glossy government signs. The walk was different because I was more mindful of my surroundings, the people I saw on the walk and the trees, flowers, signs I observed.

Now that you have a copy of the finished map: What do you make of it?

I love it! Especially the observations of the other walkers. It makes that favourite walk of mine have many more dimensions, observational and emotional.

In the leaflet I sent you I offered some of my initial thoughts on the project. Do you have any thoughts on the overall project?

Initially I was intrigued but not clear about how it would work. I loved doing the walk and the thought that other people were also going to do the walk. I wondered what other people's responses to the sights, sounds, smells of the walk might be. It was mysterious in a way because we didn't meet each other on the walk. A connection under pressure which, I suppose, can sum up the experience of lockdowns.

Thank you very much for inviting me to participate. I am going to try to do the other walks from the maps you have provided. I'd be happy to meet other participants to share feelings and responses if that is a follow-on you might be thinking about.